

Understanding Your Role and Your Players

Your Role is Significant!

You are one of the very brave souls who has ventured into the wonderful world of coaching. You have embarked on a journey that will most likely have you learn more than you'll ever possibly be able to teach. As a coach of 6 and 7 year olds, you have become a significant person of influence in your player's sports experience.

With that said, it's extremely important that you take your responsibility seriously. Your example and coaching style has the potential to release the very best in the kids you coach. Many of you can remember the positive and negative ways that different coaches impacted you when you were playing youth sports. Embrace the role models that encouraged your efforts and celebrated your attempts. Use the following material to reacquaint yourself with where 6 & 7 year olds are developmentally and adjust your expectations of their abilities accordingly.

Things you should know about your players

The following is taken directly from the Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual, copyright 2002, US Youth Soccer

Some general characteristics of the U8 player include:

- >Continuous motion, still no sense of pace
- >Attention span is a bit longer but still easily distracted
- >More inclined toward small group activities / flip-flop between egocentric and cooperative play.
- >Skeletal system is still growing; be sensitive to possible injuries around joints
- >Easily bruised psychologically. Crave approval from significant adult influences. Like to show off!
- >Improved eye-foot coordination, but it's very jerky with little sense of touch
- >More into imitation of sports heroes
- >Balance is developing, still favor the use of dominant foot
- >Cardiovascular and temperature regulation systems are less efficient than adults. Heart rate peaks sooner and core temperature rises faster and takes longer to recover and cool down.
- >Concrete thinking still prominent but language and ability to recall events is enhanced.
- >Limited ability to do more than one task at a time. However, the simple task of controlling a ball demands most their attention, leaving a diminished ability to make good tactical decisions.
- >Effort is synonymous with performance; they feel if they tried hard, they performed well, regardless of outcome.

Implications for training U8 players include:

- >Give brief directions, repeat when necessary.
- >Many activities of short duration
- >Lots of water breaks
- >Limit training sessions to 60 min.
- >Continue to stress individual skill development and confidence handling the ball.
- >Begin to introduce the "two players-one ball" concept. Training activities should really begin shifting toward developing a "team" concept and sharing the ball with their teammates.
- The more we share, the more success we will have creating scoring chances.

Coaching Do's and Don'ts

Coaching Do's:

- >**Be Prepared** - Spend 5-10min. Thinking through your training session prior to the arrival of kids. Anticipate questions and/or difficulties based on behavioral knowledge of your players. Know what you're going to do and how you are going to introduce, start, and make appropriate adjustments during your training session to maximize fun and learning.
- >**Be Organized** - Have your field set up, equipment out and staged for practice to begin before players start arriving. Enlist the help of parents to help with the various tasks involved in set up or transitions between activities. If there is information to communicate, make sure it is written down so it can be handed out to parents at the end of practice.
- >**Be Positive** - Always focus on what players do right and what they attempt to do. Encouragement always works better than focusing on what isn't going well.
- >**Be Enthusiastic** - enthusiasm is contagious and can make a huge difference in a players desire to play, practice, and continue to work on skills that don't come natural.
- >**Be Honest** - be a person that demonstrates great character and integrity. Do what you say. Keep your commitments. Admit your failures and do what's appropriate to make things right.
- >**Be Fair** - do your best to create equity among your players with the attention and encouragement you give them.
- >**Be a Leader** - do your best to show kids how to have fun in a safe environment. Demonstrate discipline and enforce team rules with equity. Interfering with other players learning should not be tolerated and is best handled by short periods of exclusion and / or parental involvement.

Coaching Don'ts:

- >**Don't Run Laps** - Laps are an old school discipline tool that discourage and defeat the morale of players that don't have a body shape that's conducive to running longer distances. The aerobic benefit of running laps for a U8 player is zero. Activities should be organized by what is developmentally appropriate, dynamic in nature, free in movement, requires elemental decision making and is fun for the player.
- >**Don't Use Lines** - if you want to encourage misbehavior with young players, put them in a line and make them wait to take a turn. Lines more often than not kill positive momentum, quality touch repetition and skill acquisition. Use interactive, dynamic activities as portrayed in your U8 Certification DVD from US Youth Soccer, the games and activities described in the Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual and included in the age appropriate curriculum that follows.
- >**Don't Lecture** - Keep your instructions to the team brief and to the point. Let them get started in the activity or game and make corrections along the way. Remember to use guided discovery type questions to enable players to solve problems and come up with creative solutions to the challenges that come with playing the game. Your kids are still concrete, linear thinkers. Give them one or two things to take action on and look for successes to praise and great attempts to acknowledge with enthusiasm.

Elements of a Great Training Session

Training is Developmentally Appropriate - Activities and games need to be geared for not only your age group, but take into consideration the cognitive, (thinking & learning), and psychosocial, (psychological & sociological) development of your specific mix of players.

Coaches Communication is Clear, Concise & Correct - All directions need to be specific and understood by the player to be effective. Direction also needs to be brief and to the point. Keep activity going. Don't lecture. Make sure you are giving correct information using appropriate soccer terminology.

Training Activities & Games Progress from Simple to Complex - Make sure that the training session is organized and thematic, progressing from simple movement, ball handling, decision making activities to more complex exercises that help players make the connection to the actual game.

Make the Training Area Safe and the Right Size - Take precautions when setting up your training area to look for objects that cut jeopardize the safety of players, i.e., holes, sprinklers, sticks, glass, rocks, animal feces, etc. Make sure you are using appropriate sized grids and playing areas to maximize players ability to touch and control the ball and make timely decisions that simulate the game.

Training that Encourages Decision Making - Incorporate activities and games that promote appropriate game like decision making by players. Resist the temptation to over coach and direct. Let players make the decisions on the field. When you stop play to make adjustments, use guided discovery questions to encourage kids to solve their own game related problems.

Training that Always Relates to the Game - Every element of the training session should have some implication for playing the actual game. Tie everything you do back to the game!

Play - Have Fun - Find A Way To Praise Every Player

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Warm up Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 3yd. goals @ both ends. Line players up along one touch line of the grid - two arm lengths apart - every player with a ball.	>Have players begin doing toe taps on the ball - alternating feet, gradually increasing speed for 30 sec. *Stretch - feet together, legs straight, bend down and pull head to knees. Hold for 10 sec. >Have players begin doing toe taps again - this time moving the ball forward, back, right and left at your direction for 30 sec. *Stretch - Feet shoulder width apart, toes straight ahead, reach thru legs, behind ankles and hold for 10 sec. >Knock ball between feet. Start slow and gradually build up speed for 30 sec. *Stretch - squat down with both heels touching - place elbows between knees and push out, spreading knees for 10 sec. >Knock ball between feet. Move the ball forward, back, right & left at coaches direction for 30 sec. *Stretch - squat down, extend left leg out to the side, slide left hand down left leg while pulling head to left knee. Switch >Dribble ball across grid - every step a touch - using inside & outside of foot. Return using the left foot in the same way. Repeat. >Pull the ball across the grid - every step a touch - using the bottom of the right foot to pull the ball. Return w/left foot. Repeat.	Proper weight & direction of touch Balance & Coordination Body shape & position - head down, shoulders slightly bent, weight on front or balls of feet. When dribbling and pulling the ball - emphasize that this isn't a race to see who can finish first. Focus should be on the weight and direction of the touch & keeping the ball inside your body frame.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Two Players One ball Activity Divide grid in half - Randomly space 6 @ 1 step gates inside one of the 12.5 x 20 grids.	>Every pair has a ball as they step into the grid with the gates. Each pair tries to pass cleanly through as many gates as they can in 30 sec. (if player hits a gate with the ball it doesn't count.) *Rest for 30 sec. then go again and try to break your record. >Do the same activity passing with the right foot only . *Rest for 30 sec. then go again and try to break your record. >Do the same activity passing with the left foot only . >Do the same activity but now have the coach or a parent helper become a gatekeeper, (someone who randomly blocks entrance to a gate). Continue counting to see how many gates can be passed thru in 30 sec. *Rest for 30 sec. then go again and try to break your record. >Repeat activity by eliminating one passing pair and let them become gatekeepers. (let every pair take a turn at being gatekeepers). <i>(Add restrictions - i.e., players hit a cone they do 3 "I'm a Star's" & resume.)</i>	Be aware of where gates are Keep ball under control Know where other players are going to avoid them Get eyes up and look around Communicate where you want to move. Focus on a properly weighted pass & a good soft touch reception of the pass.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break

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8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity 2 v 1 to goal	<p>>2 offensive players, P1 & P2, stand 10 yds apart on one side of the grid. Defensive player, D1, stands in the center of the grid 15 yds away, between P1, P2 & the goal.</p> <p>>P1 dribbles ball directly @ D1 while P2 sprints wide around the back of P1 while communicating "I'm coming around left" (or right).</p> <p>If D1 stays in front of P1, P1 passes ball in the path of P2 who receives the ball and passes the ball through the goal.</p> <p>If D1 cheats toward P2 as they make the run, P1 dribbles ball past D1 and passes ball thru the goal.</p> <p><i>Rotate positions every turn so that all players get practice in each role!</i></p>	<p>Speed of dribble right at Defender.</p> <p>Speed of run & communication by P2</p> <p>Decision making by P1, recognizing whether they should pass or dribble based on the position of the defender.</p> <p>Defender always delays attack of player with the ball, exercising patience, waiting for the ball to be mistouched so they can steal it.</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team.	<p>>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player.</p> <p>>Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground.</p> <p>>GK's are allowed, but may only use their feet.</p>	<p>Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions. Players are much more familiar with shapes than positions. 4 players should always try to form a diamond to offer each other maximum support . It doesn't matter which player is where at any given time as long as the playing shape is maintained.</p> <p>Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - When you stop play to correct something, ask players what is wrong with their shape. Ask them what shape they are in. Ask them what shape they should be in. Ask them how to fix it. Resume play after players adjust their position to fix their shape.</p>

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2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Two Players One ball Activity Set up 4 sets of gates in 1/2 of the grid.	>Every pair has a ball as they step back into the grid. Each pair goes to a gate and stand across from each other about 5yds apart. >Practice passing ball back and forth between gates. Emphasize proper technique - inside of foot, heel down-toe up, strike thru middle of ball, keeping it on the ground. Receive the ball by cushioning it with one foot then passing back with opposite foot. Have pairs count how many good passes, (passes that go cleanly thru the gate and they don't lose control of the ball), they can do in 30sec. <i>Repeat. Try to beat their record.</i> Progression >Receive pass and pull ball across body to the left using bottom of right foot then back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the left foot. Pass back thru the gate using right foot. <i>(Count how many passes & receptions you can do without messing up.)</i> >Receive pass and pull ball across body to the left using bottom of left foot then back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the right foot. Pass back thru the gate using the left foot. <i>(Count how many passes & receptions you can do without messing up.)</i>	Balance & Coordination Keep ball under control Keep feet moving all the time Ask for the ball everytime. Proper Passing technique - heel down/toe up Plant foot pointed toward target - proper weight Proper Receiving technique - receiving foot off ground, knee bent, receive ball on inside of foot by cushioning, (pulling receiving foot back slightly at impact). Receive ball using the bottom of foot by lifting receiving foot off the ground slightly while keeping heel down, toe up.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity/ Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity Organize into two groups of 4 with one ball per group 2 cones per group - 12yds apart - two players behind each cone	<p>>P1 & P3 - P2 & P4 paired behind cones facing each other</p> <p>>Player w/ ball passes to player opposite them and follows their pass to get behind player at opposite cone. (Repeat pattern and rotation counting the number of passes completed before a mistake is made).</p> <p>>Same rotation except now player passes ball - runs half way and asks for drop. Ball is played back to player who then returns a short pass to the player he passed to originally and continues running to get behind the player he just passed to. (P1 long pass to P2. P2 short pass to P1. P1 short pass to P2. P2 long pass to P3. P3 short pass to P2. P2 short pass to P3. P3 long pass to P4. P4 short pass to P3. P3 short pass to P4. P4 long pass to P1. P1 short pass to P4. P4 short pass to P1. P1 starts pattern over.)</p>	<p>Pass & Move</p> <p>Accuracy & proper weight of Pass</p> <p>Soft first touch</p> <p>Players in receiving position ask for ball "back" or "drop" every time.</p> <p>Don't compound a bad pass with another bad pass. Get control/possession & restart.</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 2 @ 12-14 min. Halves w/ 2 min. water break. Use 3' wide, double-coned goals in each corner.	<p>>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player.</p> <p>>Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground.</p> <p>>GK's are allowed, but may only use their feet.</p> <p>>Each team attacks two goals & defends two goals - emphasis is on changing point of attack when one goal area is crowded by using drop pass. Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players about next practice / game time and place.</p>	<p>Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions. Players are much more familiar with shapes than positions. 4 players should always try to form a diamond to offer each other maximum support . It doesn't matter which player is where at any given time as long as the playing shape is maintained.</p> <p>Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - When you stop play to correct something, ask players what is wrong with their shape. Ask them what shape they are in. Ask them what shape they should be in. Ask them how to fix it. Resume play after players adjust their position to fix their shape.</p>

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2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	<p>Two Players One ball Activity</p> <p>Set up 4 sets of gates in 1/2 of the grid.</p>	<p>>Every pair has a ball as they step back into the grid. Each pair goes to a gate and stand across from each other about 5yds apart.</p> <p>>Practice passing ball back and forth between gates. Emphasize proper technique - inside of foot, heel down-toe up, strike thru middle of ball, keeping it on the ground. Receive the ball by cushioning it with one foot then passing back with opposite foot. Have pairs count how many good passes, (passes that go cleanly thru the gate and they don't lose control of the ball), they can do in 30sec. Repeat. Try to beat their record.</p> <p>Progression</p> <p>>Receive pass and push ball to the right one step by using the bottom of the right foot. Pull ball back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the right foot and pass the ball through the gate using the inside of left foot. (Count # of good passes in a row - beat record)</p> <p>>Receive pass and push ball to the left one step by using the bottom of the left foot. Pull ball back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the left foot and pass the ball thru the gate using the inside of the right foot. (Count the # of good passes in a row - beat record)</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Keep ball under control</p> <p>Changing Direction</p>
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity 2 v 1 to goal Play across the width of the grid with an 8' double coned goal Emphasis on Wall Pass	>2 offensive players, P1 & P2, stand 10 yds apart on one side of the grid. Defensive player, D1, stands in the center of the grid 15 yds away, between P1, P2 & the goal. >P1 dribbles ball directly @ D1 while P2 sprints wide around the back of P1 while communicating "I'm coming around left" (or right). >If D1 stays in front of P1, P1 passes ball in the path of P2 who receives the ball and passes the ball behind D1, in the path of P1 who passes the ball into the goal. If D1 cheats toward P2 as they make the run, P1 dribbles ball past D1 and passes ball thru the goal. <i>Rotate positions every turn so that all players get practice in each role!</i>	Speed of dribble right at Defender. Speed of run & communication by P2 Decision making by P1, recognizing whether they should pass or dribble based on the position of the defender. P1 continues run after making pass to P2 and asks for the ball to be passed back to him Defender always delays attack of player with the ball, exercising patience, waiting for the ball to be mistouched so they can steal it.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 2 @ 12-14 min. Halves w/ 2 min. water break. Use 8' wide, double-coned goals.	>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player. >Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground. >GK's are allowed. They may use their hands. No punting! >Try to create 2 v 1, wall pass situations in the game. Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players about next practice / game time and place.	Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions. Communication - emphasize "smart talking" giving their teammates directional information, "I'm on your right, Drop, switch the ball left, through, split, up the line," etc. Posses the ball - pass purposefully, hold the ball and wait for help - shield and protect. Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - What is our shape like? Are we possessing the ball? What kind of information are we giving to our teammate who has the ball? Have the players decide the appropriate action then resume play.

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8-10 minutes	<p>Warm up</p> <p>Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 8' goals @ both ends.</p> <p>Dribbling Ladder</p> <p>Set to parallel lines of cones up at 2yd intervals one line off set from the other</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p>	<p>>Every player with a ball on one side of the grid.</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their right foot. Repeat.</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their left foot. Repeat.</p> <p>>Every player weaves their way thru the cones by knocking the ball quickly between their feet. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player weaves their way thru the cones by pulling the ball with their left foot as they're moving right and their right foot as they're moving left. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their right foot. However, this time they do a complete circle around the right cone using the outside of their foot. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their left foot. However, this time they do a complete circle around the right cone using the outside of their left foot. Repeat</p> <p>>Circle up & go thru stretching routine</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Change of Direction</p> <p>Maintain spacing</p> <p>Focus on weight & precision of touch, not speed.</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	<p>Two Players One ball Activity</p> <p>Set up 4 sets of gates in 1/2 of the grid.</p>	<p>>Every pair has a ball as they step back into the grid. Each pair goes to a gate and stand across from each other about 8yds apart.</p> <p>>Practice passing ball back and forth between gates. Emphasize accuracy of pass and count # of good passes in a row. Beat record.</p> <p>>Receive pass and pull ball across body to the left using bottom of right foot then back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the left foot. Pass back thru the gate using right foot.</p> <p>>Receive pass and pull ball across body to the left using bottom of left foot then back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the right foot. Pass back thru the gate using the left foot.</p> <p>>Receive pass and push ball to the right one step by using the bottom of the right foot. Pull ball back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the right foot and pass the ball through the gate using the inside of left foot. <i>(Count # of good passes in a row - beat record)</i></p> <p>>Receive pass and push ball to the left one step by using the bottom of the left foot. Pull ball back to the middle of the gate using the bottom of the left foot and pass the ball thru the gate using the inside of the right foot. <i>(Count the # of good passes in a row - beat record)</i></p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Keep ball under control</p> <p>Soft First Touch</p> <p>Feinting & Deception</p> <p>Changing Direction</p> <p>Accurate Pass</p>
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

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8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity Organize into two groups of 4 with one ball per group 2 cones per group - 12yds apart - two players behind each cone	P1 & P3 - P2 & P4 paired behind cones facing each other >Player w/ ball basses to player opposite them and follows their pass to get behind player at opposite cone. (Repeat pattern and rotation counting the number of passes completed before a mistake is made). >Same rotation except now player passes ball - runs half way and asks for drop. Ball is played back to player who then returns a short pass to the player he passed to originally and continues running to get behind the player he just passed to. (P1 long pass to P2. P2 short pass to P1. P1 short pass to P2. P2 long pass to P3. P3 short pass to P2. P2 short pass to P3. P3 long pass to P4. P4 short pass to P3. P3 short pass to P4. P4 long pass to P1. P1 short pass to P4. P4 short pass to P1. P1 starts pattern over.) >Same rotation except now player passes ball - runs half way and asks for drop. Ball is played back to player who then returns an angled pass to the player he passed to originally who has side shuffled to his right approximately 5 yds. The player with the ball now makes a long pass to the player in the opposite line and repeats the pattern. (P1 long pass to P2. P2 short pass to P1. P1 short angled pass to P2. P2 long pass to P3. P3 short pass to P2. P2 short angled pass to P3. P3 long pass to P4. P4 short pass to P3. P3 short angled pass to P4. P4 long pass to P1. P1 short pass to P4. P4 short angled pass to P1. P1 starts pattern over.)	Pass & Move Accuracy & proper weight of Pass Soft first touch Players in receiving position ask for ball "back" or "drop" every time. Don't compound a bad pass with another bad pass. Get control/possession & restart.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 2 @ 12-14 min. Halves w/ 2 min. water break. Use 3' wide, double-coned goals in each corner.	>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player. >Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground. >GK's are allowed. They may use their hands. No punting! >Try to create 2 v 1, wall pass situations in the game. >Each team attacks two goals & defends two goals - emphasis is on changing point of attack when one goal area is crowded by using drop pass. Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players about next practice / game time and place.	Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions. Players are much more familiar with shapes than positions. 4 players should always try to form a diamond to offer each other maximum support. It doesn't matter which player is where at any given time as long as the playing shape is maintained. Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - When you stop play to correct something, ask players what is wrong with their shape. Ask them what shape they are in. Ask them what shape they should be in. Ask them how to fix it. Resume play after players adjust their position to fix their shape.

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8-10 minutes	Warm up Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 8' goals @ both ends. Boss of the Balls	>Have kids organize themselves into groups of 3-4. Each team has a ball. Coach sends balls toward outer reaches of the grid and directs teams that they must pass the ball a certain number of times with last pass being played to the coaches feet. Add restrictions as players catch on: such as ball must be touched by every player, ball can't be dribbled, etc. Coach may also move around so that passing strategy has to be adjusted. >Group that loses has to do 3-5 hillbilly push-ups, brazilians, I'm a star, flying dutchmen, before they attempt to retrieve ball again. >Circle up & do stretching routine	Cooperation & Communication Balance & Coordination Change of Direction Passing Accuracy
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Two Players One ball Activity Toss & Receive Divide 25 x 40yd grid into 4 equal grids Pair of players with one ball in each grid	>Partners take turns tossing the ball in the air within their grid while teammate without ball tries to receive and control the ball before it bounces twice. (Use the top of the foot, bottom of the foot, thigh) >Teammates in opposite grids take turns tossing balls into opponents grid for them to receive and control before the ball bounces twice. (One partner tosses to the opposing grid while one partner receives ball from opponents grid). Each successful reception of the ball is a point for the partner team. First team to 5 wins. Losers due 5 Brazilians and play game again. >Same as above but all teams of two toss & receive balls from one grid to the next in a clockwise pattern. Partners take turns tossing and receiving. Keep score as above.	Balance & Coordination Keep ball under control Use thigh or top of foot to Cushion the ball Use bottom of foot to trap the ball Soft first touch / be a sponge
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Receiving Activity Throw in & Receive Players work in pairs same grids as above	<p>>Teammates take turns practicing throw-ins while partner tries to receive and control the ball out of the air or after 1 bounce. When receives ball, they dribble to opposite side of grid as their teammate follows. Teammate that received the ball now becomes the thrower. Repeat several times.</p> <p>>Combine players from two grids so there is 4 players in each grid. One player tries to throw the ball into his partner. Partner tries to receive, control and dribble ball to other side of grid while one player from opposing team tries to intercept or disrupt control. Partners take turns repeating the exercise. <i>1 point is scored for each successful throw-in, reception, control and dribble to opposite side of grid. First team to 5 wins!</i></p>	<p>Proper throw-in technique two hands on ball, ball pulled straight behind head and thrown while both feet stay on the ground. Throw ball so other team can't get it</p> <p>Use feinting and change of direction to get open for throw-in. Soft first touch</p> <p>Protecting the ball from pressure</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 2 @ 12-14 min. Halves w/ 2 min. water break. Use 8' wide, double-coned goals.	<p>>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player.</p> <p>>Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground.</p> <p>>GK's are allowed. They may use their hands. No punting!</p> <p>>Try to create 2 v 1, wall pass situations in the game.</p> <p>Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players about next practice / game time and place.</p>	<p>Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions.</p> <p>Communication - emphasize "smart talking" giving their teammates directional information, "I'm on your right, Drop, switch the ball left, through, split, up the line," etc.</p> <p>Possess the ball - pass purposefully, hold the ball and wait for help - shield and protect.</p> <p>Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - What is our shape like? Are we possessing the ball? What kind of information are we giving to our teammate who has the ball? Have the players decide the appropriate action then resume play.</p>

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Warm up Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 3yd. goals @ both ends. Divide grid in half and move all players with a ball into the same grid. Remember All activities last for are run in 30 sec. intervals.	<p>>All players enter same half of grid.</p> <p>>Shoulder Tag - count the number of tags you can make in 30 sec. Play again and see if they can beat their record. *Rest for 30 sec. by balancing ball on top of left foot.</p> <p>>Begin adding one restriction at a time and a penalty for violating a restriction, such as hillbilly push-ups, etc.</p> <p>> Do 2 repetitions with each added restriction asking kids to count and beat their record each time. Add a balancing exercise into each rest period.</p> <p>>Variations on Shoulder Tag >Shoulder tag while trying to avoid being tagged. >Shoulder tag while dribbling a ball. You can designate a "shark" who enters the grid without a ball to try and as many people as possible in 30 sec. Tagged players do 3-4 brazilians, etc., and re-enter grid.</p> <p>>Stretching Routine</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Change of Direction</p> <p>Eyes up - awareness of what is going on around them.</p> <p>Avoidance</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Two Players One ball Turning Activity Set up 4 sets of gates in 1/2 of the grid.	<p>>Every pair of players has a ball as they step back into the grid.</p> <p>>Practice passing ball back and forth between gates 8 yds apart.</p> <p>>Continue exercise, but now everytime ball is received, player dribbles the ball in a complete circle using the outside of one foot then passes ball back to partner with opposite foot who repeats the process. (<i>Make sure players alternate feet they are dribbling the ball with.</i>)</p> <p>>Continue exercise, but now everytime ball is received, player takes a soft touch forward, body fakes turn left while placing right on top of ball and pulling it back and to the right. Dribble away from partner for a couple of steps then body fakes turn right while placing left foot on top of ball and pulling it back and to the left and face partner. Pass ball to partner using right foot. Partner repeats process.</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Keep ball under control</p> <p>Soft First Touch</p> <p>Feinting & Deception</p> <p>Changing Direction</p> <p>Accurate Pass</p>
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity Turning Under Pressure 1v1 to Goal Organize into two groups of 4, one ball per group. Divide 25x 40yd grid in half. Place 2yd double coned goals on opposite sides of each grid	<p>> Players stand in pairs, facing other pair in their grid 10yds apart in the middle of their grid, in front of their goals.</p> <p>> Player with ball passes to teammate opposite them who receives ball with a soft touch forward and then tries to turn by body faking right or left and pulling ball back with the bottom of foot in the opposite direction that they faked. Player who turned with the ball now attacks the goal they are facing and try to score by passing the ball through goal on the ground. Players switch lines and new pair repeat process. <i>(Whoever scores 3 goals first, wins. Play again. Switch pairings between grids to determine an overall champion.)</i></p> <p>Defense plays passively to encourage success of attacker. Pick up defensive intensity as attacking players become more proficient.</p>	<p>Accurate Passes</p> <p>Receiving Player Moves toward ball</p> <p>Soft First Touch</p> <p>Sell Fake with exaggerated movement</p> <p>Turn quickly, use deception, change of direction and change of speed to beat Defender and score</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 25x40 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 2 @ 12-14 min. Halves w/ 2 min. water break. Use 8' wide, double-coned goals.	<p>> Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player.</p> <p>> Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double coned gates on the ground.</p> <p>> GK's are allowed. They may use their hands. No punting!</p> <p>> Try to create 1 v 1 opportunities where players receive the ball with their back to the goal they're attacking, feint, turn and attack goal via 1v1 or 2v1 tactics.</p> <p>Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players about next practice / game time and place.</p>	<p>Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions.</p> <p>Communication - emphasize "smart talking" giving their teammates directional information, "I'm on your right, Drop, switch the ball left, through, split, up the line," etc.</p> <p>Possess the ball - pass purposefully, hold the ball and wait for help - shield and protect.</p> <p>Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - What is our shape like? Are we possessing the ball? What kind of information are we giving to our teammate who has the ball? Have the players decide the appropriate action then resume play.</p> <p>Let kids be the problem solvers - guide them to the appropriate answer.</p>

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Warm up Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 3yd. goals @ both ends. Divide grid in half and move all players with a ball into the same grid. Remember All activities last for are run in 30 sec. intervals.	>All players enter same half of grid. > Body Part Dribble - every player dribbles around the grid any way they like while avoiding each other and going outside the grid. While players are dribbling, coach will call out a body part to stop the ball with. Last player to stop the ball correctly has to perform a task, hillbilly push-ups, toe taps, knocks, flying dutchmen, I'm a star, etc >Do several repetitions using, bottom of foot, knee, elbow, forehead, ear, nose, chin, bottom, etc.	Balance & Coordination Change of Direction Eyes up - awareness of what is going on around them. Avoidance
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Individual Possession Activity Shark Attack! 1 scrimmage vest to be worn by shark	>Every player enters grid with a ball. Choose 1 player be the shark. Have the shark put on a scrimmage vest. Shark stands by the coach while players with the ball dribble any way they want around the grid. At coaches command, "Shark Attack," the Shark is released into the grid to try and knock every players ball out of the grid in 45 sec. When a players ball is knocked out of the grid they must retrieve their ball quickly, do 3-4 hillbilly push-ups and re-enter the grid. <i>(Evertbody gets to be a shark at least once-even the coach!)</i> <i>(Keep score by counting the number of balls each shark knocks out of the grid)</i>	Movement Keep ball close to feet while dribbling. Avoiding pressure Protecting the ball from pressure Be calm, don't panic
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Possession Activity Knock Out!	<p>>Every player enters grid with a ball.</p> <p>>The game is called "Knock Out." The object of the game is to dribble around the grid trying to knock other players balls out of area while keeping your ball from being knocked out.</p> <p>>Play in 30-45 sec. intervals with 30 sec. rest between intervals. When players get knocked out, they can re-enter the grid after doing a specified number of hillbilly push-ups, brazilians, flying dutchmen or I'm a stars. Players keep track of the number of balls they knock out in a given period to determine a winner.</p>	<p>Movement / deciding when to attack</p> <p>Keep ball close to feet while dribbling.</p> <p>Avoiding pressure</p> <p>Protecting the ball from pressure</p> <p>Be calm, don't panic</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
10 minutes	King of the Pitch	<p>>Every player except one enters grid. One player stands outside grid with ball and serves ball into grid with teammates by throwing, punting, tossing, etc. Teammates fight to win possession of the ball and dribble the ball across line where ball was put in play from. Player who crosses line with ball now becomes server. Players accumulate 1 point every time they receive and cross line in possession of the ball. Play to 5.</p>	<p>Positioning - strength to ball</p> <p>Soft touch away from pressure</p> <p>Shielding & speed of seperation</p>
15 minutes	Play the Game Keep Away	<p>>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player.</p> <p>>Goals are scored only when a team completes 5 passes in a row (<i>Re-organize teams every other game</i>)</p> <p>Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players</p>	<p>Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions.</p> <p>Communication - emphasize "smart talking" giving their teammates directional information, "I'm on your right, Drop, switch the ball left, through, split, up the line," etc.</p> <p>Possess the ball - pass purposefully, hold the ball and wait for help - shield and protect.</p> <p>Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems -</p> <p>Let kids be the problem solvers - guide them to the appropriate answer.</p>

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	<p>Warm up</p> <p>Set up 25 x 40 yd. grid w/double coned 8' goals @ both ends.</p> <p>Divide grid in half and move all players with a ball into the same grid.</p> <p>Remember All activities last for are run in 30 sec. intervals.</p>	<p>>Every player with a ball and stand two arm lengths apart on one side of the grid.</p> <p>>Dribble ball across grid - every step a touch - using inside & outside of foot. Return using the left foot in the same way. Repeat.</p> <p>*Stretch-feet together, legs straight, grab ankles - hold for 10 sec.</p> <p>>Pull the ball across the grid - every step a touch - using the bottom of the right foot to pull the ball. Return w/left foot. Repeat.</p> <p>*Stretch - legs spread, grab ankles - hold for 10 sec.</p> <p>>Lifting - pick ball up to hands using feet. Have kids demonstrate different methods and have everyone try 3-5 times.</p> <p>*Stretch - squat, heels touching, spread knees with elbows, 10sec.</p> <p>>Juggling w/feet - hold ball waist high and drop to foot. Use top of foot, laces, to knock ball back up to hands. Alternate feet as you juggle ball across the field. (Feet low to ground -head down, watch foot hit ball) Try to increase # of touches in a row while alternating feet with each touch.</p> <p>*Stretch - squat down, extend left leg out to the side, slide left hand down left leg while pulling head to left knee. Switch</p> <p>>Juggle with thighs in same manner as feet - alternating touches shoulder high.</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Weight & Direction of Touch</p> <p>Eye/Foot Coordination</p> <p>Eye/Thigh Coordination</p>
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	<p>Dribbling Ladder</p> <p>Set to parallel lines of cones up at 2yd intervals one line off set from the other</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p> <p>o</p>	<p>>Every player has a ball as they step back into the grid.</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their right foot. Repeat.</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their left foot. Repeat.</p> <p>>Every player weaves their way thru the cones by knocking the ball quickly between their feet. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player weaves their way thru the cones by pulling the ball with their left foot as they're moving right and their right foot as they're moving left. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their right foot. However, this time they do a complete circle around the right cone using the outside of their foot. Repeat</p> <p>>Every player dribbles thru the cones, weaving their way thru by using the inside and outside of their left foot. However, this time they do a complete circle around the right cone using the outside of their left foot. Repeat</p> <p>>Circle up & go thru stretching routine</p>	<p>Balance & Coordination</p> <p>Change of Direction</p> <p>Maintain spacing</p> <p>Focus on weight & precision of touch, not speed.</p>
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Passing Activity 2 v 1 to goal	>2 offensive players, P1 & P2, stand 10 yds apart on one side of the grid. Defensive player, D1, stands in the center of the grid 15 yds away, between P1, P2 & the goal. >P1 dribbles ball directly @ D1 while P2 sprints wide around the back of P1 while communicating "I'm coming around left" (or right). If D1 stays in front of P1, P1 passes ball in the path of P2 who receives the ball and passes the ball through the goal. If D1 cheats toward P2 as they make the run, P1 dribbles ball past D1 and passes ball thru the goal. <i>Rotate positions every turn so that all players get practice in each role!</i>	Speed of dribble right at Defender. Speed of run & communication by P2 Decision making by P1, recognizing whether they should pass or dribble based on the position of the defender. Defender always delays attack of player with the ball, exercising patience, waiting for the ball to be mistouched so they can steal it.
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
10 minutes	Tactical Game Boss of the Balls	>Small sided, 4v4 game with no goal keepers. >Coach stands at midfield with all of the balls. Ball one is put into play and the game begins. As soon as a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds, the coach tosses or plays in another ball. When the coach runs out of balls, players run to collect and return all the balls and the game resumes again.	Possess the ball Pass & Move Communicate - smart talking Recover defensively when ball is lost - everyone goal side and mark a man
15 minutes	Play the Game Keep Away	>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player. >Goals are scored only when a team completes 5 passes in a row (<i>Re-organize teams every other game</i>)	Playing shape - emphasize shape rather than positions. Communication - emphasize "smart talking" giving their teammates directional information, "I'm on your right. Drop, switch the ball left, through, split, up the line," etc. Possess the ball - pass purposefully, hold the ball and wait for help - shield and protect. Use Guided Discovery Questions to solve problems - Let kids be the problem solvers - guide them to the appropriate answer.
Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players			

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Warm up Set up 20 x 30 yd. grid w/double coned 3yd. goals @ both ends.		
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
8-10 minutes	Two Players One Ball Activity		
2 Minutes	Water Break	2 Minute Water Break	2 Minute Water Break

Training Time Line	Activity Name & Organization	Activity Description	Coaching Points
8-10 minutes	Tactical Activity		
2 minutes	Water Break	Water Break	Water Break
25-30 minutes	Play the Game Remove middle dividing markers on main 20x30 grid. Divide kids into equal teams. Use colored scrimmage vests for 1 team. Play 4 @ 6 min. quarters w/ 1 min. water breaks.	>Let the game be the teacher. Try to make teams as even as possible. Be positive and celebrate effort and success equally. Try and find something positive to share with every player. >Goals are scored only when ball passes cleanly through the double comed gates on the ground. Players help pick up equipment before they leave - remind players and parents about game times, practice times, etc.	Playing shape - continue to emphasize shape over position. Continue working on Possession - keeping the ball away from the other team - put your body between opponent and ball. Introduce "Smart Talking" - smart talking is another expression for intelligent communication. In order to maintain playing shape and maintain possession of the ball, it is essential for players to give directional options to their teammates. "On your left," "On your right," "Drop," "Thru," "hold," "possess," "clear," are some of the basic commands we would like kids to practice using.

This checklist for evaluating a training session is taken directly from the Official US Youth Soccer Training Manual and expanded upon by WSYSA Instructional Staff Coach - Mike Osborn.

Are the activities fun?

Are the activities enjoyable to perform and will it keep their interest?

Are the activities organized? Are the objectives clear? (The activities don't need to be highly structured or without rules, but the purpose and guidelines of the activity need to be understood by all).

Are the players involved in the activities? Is there maximum participation of all players, or are some more active than others?

Is creativity and decision making being used? Are players decisions to move or employ a particular skill ever changing, or are they just repeating the same movement without thinking?

Are the activities presented in a way that moves and challenges players to progress from the simplest of movements and skills to movements and skills that require more complex movement and decision making.

Are you engaging kids using the process of asking guided discovery questions?

Are you asking kids to think about and articulate how the activities they are doing relate to the actual playing of the game?

Is there a way that you or your players would like to modify this training sessions activities or games to be more meaningful and/or fun?

Introduction to Soccer Terminology

Communication / "Smart Talking":

There are a variety of terms that are used by players and coaches to communicate intelligent information to one another. We have identified 21 terms for U8 players and coaches to introduce and use appropriately in training sessions and games. The terms are not in any specific order of importance, however, they are organized by general types of communication.

General Terms:

- >*Shape* - a one word description that relates to how players should space and organize themselves on the field of play. U6 players play with 3 on a side. Their playing shape goal would be to try and stay in a triangle to maximize passing lanes and dribbling options, giving each other width and depth support offensively and more compact pressure and cover support defensively.
- >*Hold or Stay* - a one word command that tells a player to stay where they are to either balance out the attack or providing defensive cover in case possession is lost, preventing a quick counter attack.
- >*Possess - a one word command to direct a teammate to keep the ball under control and protect it from the* opponent by passing or dribbling away from pressure or by putting their body between the ball and an opponent, shielding the ball.
- >*Near Post* - the post of the goal that is closest to the ball
- >*Far Post* - the post of the goal that is the farthest away from the ball

Offensive Terms:

- >*Carry* - Dribble the ball with speed into the space the opponent has given you.
- >*Cross* - To pass the ball across the field, typically sending the ball in front of the net or a tactical command to to change the point of attack.
- >*Time* - a one word command to a teammate that tells them they have time to control the ball, get their head up and make an appropriate tactical decision with the ball at their feet.
- >*Leave* - a one word command to a teammate to not touch the ball.
- >*Open Up* - to put your body in a position where you are facing the ball and your back is to the side or end line
- >*Width* - to sprint backwards or sideways toward the closest sideline while staying open to the ball, creating better passing options for the player in possession of the ball.
- >*Stretch the Field* - for the point player to move forward or to the goal that your team is attacking, creating open space in the midfield for the ball to be played or dribbled into.
- >*Cut Back* - typically communicated to a player who has penetrated the goal area with the ball and has no angle to shoot. Ball is played at a diagonal back in front of the goal to be finished by a supporting player.
- >*Square* - Ball played at a right angle to either the right or the left of the player with the ball.
- >*Through* - calling for a pass sent between or over the top of the last defender(s) to an offensive player

Introduction to Soccer Terminology

Defensive Terms:

- >*Clear* - a one word command to a teammate to not take any chances with the ball and clear it out of trouble as quickly and safely as possible.
- >*Mark Up* - a command to all teammates to transition into their defensive shape and get close to an opponent, preferably goal side & ball side.
- >*Recover* - a one word command to teammates to put chase on the ball after being dispossessed, and for the rest of the team to quickly get back into good defensive shape.
- >*I Got Ball* - defensive player who is closest to ball puts pressure on the player with the ball.
- >*Delay* - Player closes and stays goal side of the player with the ball, not trying to take the ball away, but just slowing down the players progress toward the goal until teammates can get back and give support.
- >*Cover* - Player who takes up a defensive position goal side of the defender who is putting pressure on the ball.

Date: _____
Time: _____

Field Place & Number: _____
Opposing Coach: _____

Opponent: _____
Referee: _____

Were you prepared and organized going into the game?

Were substitutions made in an organized and timely fashion?

Was the behavior of Fans and Coaches appropriate and encouraging?

Did the game start and end on time?

Was the playing area checked for safety concerns?

Were your players fully engaged?

Did your players have fun?

Did you and your players practice good sportsmanship?

Try to write down a positive comment for each player:

What will you emphasize at this weeks training sessions to be prepared for your next match?

Game Management Organizer

Roster

1.)	
2.)	
3.)	
4.)	
5.)	
6.)	
7.)	
8.)	

Who are the captains?

Who is Providing Snacks & Refreshments?

Who is managing the kids while you are on the field?

Pre Game Talk

Define which way you are going - make sure everyone understands!

Be a good sport - Be a good teammate - Try your best - Have Fun!

Keep our shape - keep the ball - keep talking to each other

Starting 1st Half

1.)	1.)
2.)	2.)
3.)	3.)
4.)	4.)

Substitutions 1st Half

1st Half Adjustment

List one or two things that the team did well offensively

1.)

2.)

Starting 2nd half

1.)	1.)
2.)	2.)
3.)	3.)
4.)	4.)

Substitutions 2nd Half

Name one thing to fix offensively

Name one thing to fix defensively

Notes:

Post Game Talk

List one thing done well by each player:

1.)

2.)

3.)

4.)

5.)

6.)

7.)

8.)

Thank Parents, snack provider & remind kids about next practice.