



K, 1st, 2nd Grade Coach Education



U6/U7 Age Group Characteristics:

- Remember that U6/U7 players are children, NOT miniature adults
- Children have wonderful imaginations at this age, try to use those imaginations in your practice as it will help keep them captivated
- There is only one toy and that is the ball...make sure everyone has their own toy (you may wish to have a couple extras with you at each practice for those who have forgotten to bring their own)
- Do not expect children at this age to understand passing as that means they are giving their toy away. They are only focused on themselves.
- Children at this age have 2 speeds...really fast and stopped
- Children at this age heat up extremely fast (lots of water breaks)
- Speak to the children at their level. Kneel or bend down and make sure you have gained eye contact
- Make sure all players are always in your view
- Focus on dribbling, motor coordination, and social development
- Practices should never last more than 1 hour and should really be 45-50 minutes in length
- Children do not want to listen to you speak, they want to play. Be clear, concise, and direct with your words and try to keep the players playing as much as possible
- If playing games where there are special roles (e.g., a few players start as sharks or as ice monsters) make sure you give every player a chance to be "special"
- If you find particularly shy players, try to pair them up with friendly, mature children who can help create a social bridge
- If you have a particularly angry/aggressive player, immediately set firm conditions to control this behavior and ensure the safety of the larger group
- If you are concerned about the behavior of any player, contact that child's parents to either inform them or seek advice as to how to work with the player most effectively
- No laps, no lines, no lectures!
- Effort equals performance at this age! This means the more supportive we are the more enthusiastic the kids become.
- Have fun!!!

Skill Priorities:

U6/U7:

Dribble with all sides of the foot

Dribble out of trouble

Dribble past someone

Soft First Touch



U6/U7 Sample Lesson Plan:

Intentional Free Play:

Have a field set up for players to scrimmage in. When they start arriving, have them join the field and play anywhere from 1v1 to 4v4. If you have more players, set up a second field and have them start off with playing 1v1 to 4v4.



Body Part Dribble:

All players dribbling a soccer ball. The coach calls out a body part (elbow! - knee!) and the players then touch their ball with that part of the body.

Coach: Vary the body parts, number of body parts they call out and rate at which they call them out.



Red Light/Green Light:

All players are dribbling freely in a 25x35 yard grid. When the coach says “red light” the players must stop and put their foot on the ball. When the coach says “yellow light” the players must dribble slowly, and when the coach says “green light” the players must dribble fast.

Coach: Control the frequency of light changes.

Variation 2: Add other light colors and actions (i.e.: “purple light” = hop back and forth over the ball, “orange light” = run around the ball, “black light” = dance, and “blue light” = hide behind the ball.)



Get “Outta” There:

The coach sets up a 25x35 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The players are divided into two teams and positioned at either side of the coach. The coach has all the soccer balls and is in charge of serving the balls into the grid. The players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta there”.

Coach: Can make the games 1v1, 2v2 or 3v3. They should vary the service.



Scrimmage:

Play 2 small fields of 4v4. Set team of four up in a diamond shape (no GK's). If ball goes out the sides, players can either dribble in or pass in. (player's choice). If the ball goes out the end line by the attacking team, the defending team will place the soccer ball about 1-2 yds in front of the goal and kick it in (opposing team will start at midfield when this happens to allow the ball to be played in). If the ball goes out the end line by the defending team, the attacking team will place it at the corner and kick it in.

NOTE: Diamond moves together around the field. Gets big when your team has the ball (attack) and gets small when your team doesn't have the ball (defend).





K, 1st, 2nd Grade Coach Education



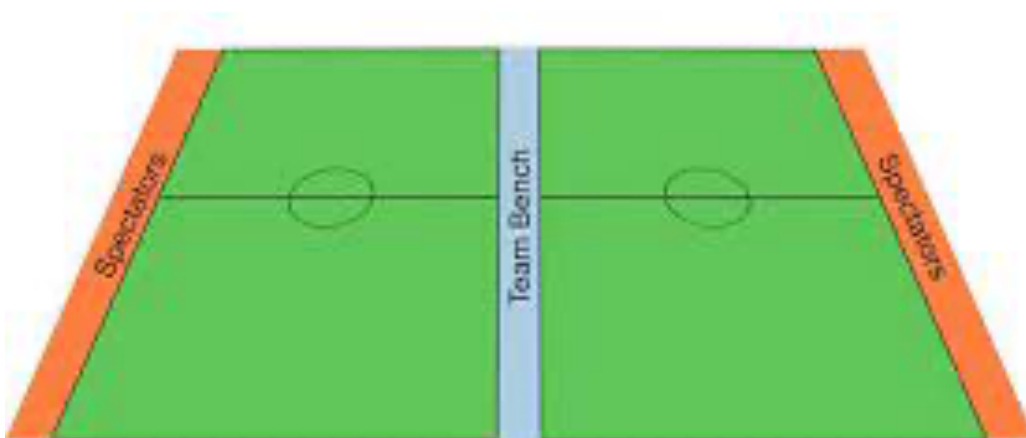
General coaching points:

- Keep your instructions to a minimum, these games are simple to understand and should stay that way. Do not talk for more than 20 seconds at a time and try to keep it much less than that
- By counting down the last 5 or 10 seconds of an activity you can add excitement to it
- If you see players not understanding or enjoying a game, be flexible and change it
- Keep all players involved all the time, do not have players knocked out who then sit and watch
- When sending players on a water break, have them go backwards or have them act like a rabbit or frog and hop. Have them act like a monkey or dinosaur, or anything else they come up with for fun and to help coordination skills.
- Be animated
- Change the inflection of your voice, do not be monotonous
- Have fun!

US YOUTH SOCCER U6 GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

- Under 6's play 3 vs. 3 to 4 vs. 4 (*without a goalkeeper*)
- Field Size: 30 yds x 20 yds to 35 yds x 30 yds
- Ball: Size 3

Suggested Set-up for 3v3 Fields Dual Mode





U7/U8 Age Group Characteristics:

- Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adults; a child's heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover
- Temperature regulation system is less efficient than adults; children elevate their core temperature more quickly and take longer to cool down than an adult
- Give water breaks frequently
- Players still have two speeds for the most part---stopped and really fast
- In general they have better body control than U6 players, however, players are still somewhat clumsy
- Many players love to fall down, even if it is on purpose
- The limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time leaves little or no capacity for "tactical" decision making
- Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance
- Great need for approval from adults such as parents, teachers, and coaches; like to show individual skills
- Easily bruised psychologically by adults; negative comments carry great weight
- Like to play soccer because it is "fun"; intrinsically motivated
- Team identity is limited; "I play on Coach Tom's team" or "I play on the Tigers." Club and league concepts are nonexistent
- There is a desire for social acceptance; they want everyone to like them
- Tend to work much better with partners than U6/U7 players
- They are very aware of not only what you say to them but how you say it. Make sure you are aware of your words and actions when communicating
- Practices should never last more than 1 hour
- No laps, no lines, no lectures!
- Have fun!!!!

Skill Priorities:

U7/U8:

Dribble with all sides of the foot

Dribble out of trouble

Dribble past someone

Soft First Touch

Introduce proper shooting technique

Introduce passing



K, 1st, 2nd Grade Coach Education



U8 Sample Lesson Plan:

Intentional Free Play:

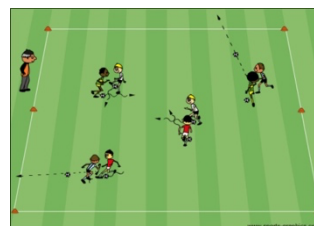
Have a field set up for players to scrimmage in. When they start arriving, have them join the field and play anywhere from 1v1 to 4v4. If you have more players, set up a second field and have them start off with playing 1v1 to 4v4.



Knock Out:

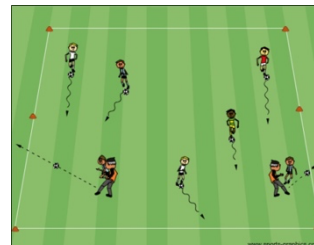
All players are dribbling in a 20x25 yard grid and are trying to knock other dribblers' balls outside the grid. Players must retrieve the ball quickly and get back in the game.

Coach: Have your players perform a skill task before re-entering the grid. i.e.: juggling 3-5 times, ball taps



British Bulldog:

All players are dribbling a soccer ball from one end to the other end of a 25x35 yard grid. The coach begins as the "bulldog" and tries to kick the dribbling players' soccer balls out of the grid. Once a player's soccer ball is kicked out of the grid, they become a "bulldog". To start each round, Bulldogs yell, BRITISH BULLDOG! Players with the ball yell, CHARGE!



Get "Outta" There with Numbers:

The players are divided into two teams, with each player given a number from 1-4 or 5 (depending on total amount of players). Players are positioned at either side of the coach, with multiple soccer balls, outside a 25x35 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells "Get outta there".

Coach: Can make the games 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3. They should vary the service.



Scrimmage:

Play 2 small fields of 4v4. Set team of four up in a diamond shape (no GK's). If ball goes out the sides, players can either dribble in or pass in. (player's choice). If the ball goes out the end line by the attacking team, the defending team will place the soccer ball about 1-2 yds in front of the goal and kick it in (opposing team will start at midfield when this happens to allow the ball to be played in). If the ball goes out the end line by the defending team, the attacking team will place it at the corner and kick it in.

NOTE: Diamond moves together around the field. Gets big when your team has the ball (attack) and gets small when your team doesn't have the ball (defend).





K, 1st, 2nd Grade Coach Education



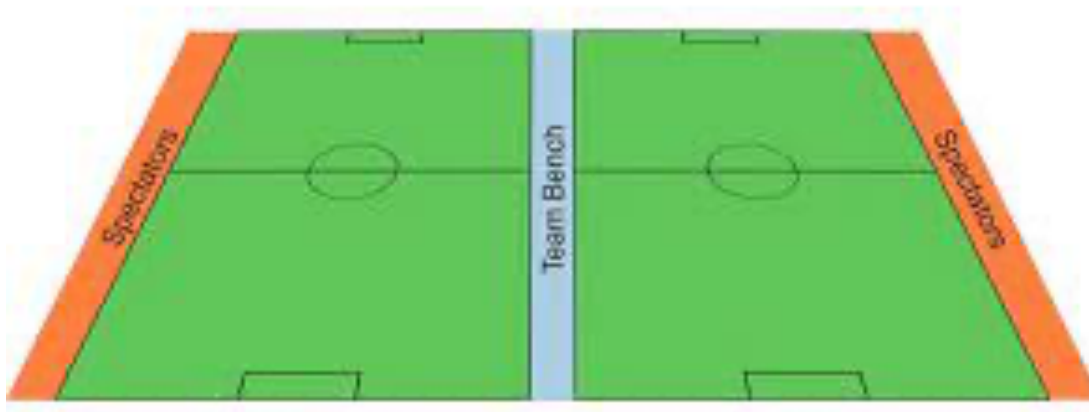
General coaching points:

- Focus on technical points of the game
- Teaching positions and elevated technical choices is not important
- Keep talking to a minimum and let players play
- Dribbling is still a primary focus, though passing and shooting become secondary topics at this age
- Keep all players involved all the time, do not have players knocked out who then sit and watch
- Be animated
- Change the inflection of your voice, do not be monotonous
- Have fun!

US YOUTH SOCCER U7/U8 GAME RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Under 7/8's play 4 vs. 4 (*without a goalkeeper*)
- Field Size: 35 yds x 30 yds
- Ball: Size 3

Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields Dual Mode





K, 1st, 2nd Grade Coach Education



General Notes:

- Dribbling forms the foundation for all other skills
- Young players generally do not get discouraged easily if they do not succeed
- To boot or not to boot?
- Encourage all skills vs only scoring
- Teach parents the correct phrases and let them know your goals for the season
- Guided Discovery/Slanty Line Theory
- Spacing for activities/games
- Player centered approach
- Game like experience
- Enjoyable environment
- Support individual growth

Resources:

Laura Ray, lauraraysoccercamp@gmail.com

(Website: <https://lauraraysoccercamp.com/>) (Instagram: lauraraysoccercamp / Facebook: Laura Ray Soccer Camp)

Mass Youth Soccer: <https://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/session-plans/>

App: <https://www.mojo.sport/>