



The purpose of this curriculum is to help standardize “best practice” soccer training throughout the Grand Island Soccer Club (GISC). Through licensure courses, our annual coaching clinic, and ongoing support of our club; specifically the Director of Coaching (DOC), the GISC works to educate all of our coaches. We believe that we need to do more to connect with coaches on a consistent basis.

This curriculum will serve as a bridge for those connections in that the DOC and other club leaders can disseminate this curriculum to all coaches in order to develop coaching consistency within age groups and a developmental progression across age groups. The curriculum can stand on its own to teach all coaches what our club considers the best plan for developing players. At the same time, both club leaders and all member coaches can utilize our coaching staff and DOC for constant consultation and/or clarification whenever needed.

Please understand that every child varies in their development and these are strictly guidelines. Guidelines are meant to be flexible as all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. It is important we challenge all players at a level that befits their ability. Likewise, it is imperative we challenge our coaching staff and each other.

The information is not solely based on observation and experience in soccer, but also on research and practice in psychology, child development, physiology, child education, and learning theory. We hope all coaches will use this curriculum to guide not only their players, but their entire coaching staff to help insure that our players are being provided the best soccer environment possible.

The coach's long term goal is to assist the player in developing a love for the game and to prepare the player to successfully recognize and solve the challenges of the game. To that end, it is imperative that coaches become interested in and cognizant of issues and vital virtues such as: an understanding /appreciation for the art of teaching in a progression, motivation, sportsmanship, dedication, commitment, giving up one’s goals for the good of the larger group, challenging an adolescent’s skill set and mental framework and taking on the great responsibility of developing a love for the sport. It is vital that the coach approaches soccer with these things in mind.

**“We should measure success in coaching by how long it takes the player to no longer need the coach”**



## Basic Ideas To Consider When Coaching Youth Soccer

The most fundamental skill in soccer is **individual mastery of the ball** and the **creativity** that comes with it. This should be a priority in training and matches and throughout a player's early years. As this skill is mastered, the rest of the game becomes easy - both to teach and to learn. Training should be built around facilitating the development of the skills necessary to move and control the ball well. As these individual skills and the creativity to make them come alive in the game are developed to a level of competence, the finer points, first of passing skill and later of team organization can be taught..

Coaching soccer can be confusing at times because the game changes dramatically as the players improve in both skill and physical ability. When coaching young, developing players, as well as adolescent players, the Grand Island Soccer Club (GISC) feels it is helpful to keep the following ideas at the forefront:

- 1) Set up situations where the players can learn by playing the game. The game is the best teacher for young players.
- 2) At times, coaches can be more helpful to a young player's development by organizing less, saying less and allowing the players to do more. Set up a game and let the kids play. Keep most of your comments for before and after practice and during water breaks. Comments should be kept short and simple. Be comfortable organizing a session that looks like pickup soccer.
- 3) Teaching and learning the game of soccer is a process: make your goals seasonal, as well as daily and weekly. Often, at the younger ages, the developmental efforts of one season are not noticeable in children until sometime in the next season.
- 4) Set age-appropriate goals i.e., know what the child is able to do at that age. Create the proper balance between challenging your players and frustrating them.
- 5) From a developmental standpoint, the young ages are the best ones for learning skills. Spend the time now encouraging this growth. By the age of 17 the capacity to pick up new motor skills begins to wane, while the ability to conceptualize team organization, tactics and strategy increases. As a coach, work with these strengths, not against them.
- 6) Do not expect games and practices to look like professional soccer. If you want to use high level soccer as a teaching tool, focus on the individual skill level of professional players, not their organization. Give your players opportunities to see what older, more skilled players, i.e. a high school, college player or an older brother or sister, can do with the ball. On occasion, invite some of these players to participate in your practice. Use them to model



good soccer qualities. Let your players learn by experiencing the game alongside or against these better players. Older players can also be used as "neutral players." In this case, the neutral player helps whichever team has the ball i.e. he or she never defends. Maybe the neutral player has limited touches and/or can't score, but he or she gives the team with the ball a better chance of keeping the ball. By helping to maintain possession, the neutral player(s) helps the game maintain some rhythm, and gives the kids a clearer picture of the game's possibilities.

7) Recognize and understand how the skills learned at each age are connected to preparing the player to move into the next phase of his or her development. Know what the next level of play is, and the general tools that your players should carry with them as they move on. Help them to be prepared. Witness a training session or match at the next age group up. Take your players to a match.

8) Allow your players to develop these requisite skills in an environment where the main goal is to have fun with the ball.

9) The value of matches is that they provide players with an opportunity to showcase their newly acquired skill and creativity. It is always nice to win, however that should not be your focus at the younger age groups.

10) Have a clear idea of what you want to accomplish at practice. Create exercises/games that replicate and repeat the movements and situations that are found in soccer and that allow the player to grow comfortable and confident with the ball at his or her feet. Encourage players to move with the ball at his or her feet and deal with boundaries, opponents, teammates and goals. Keep in mind that soccer is a pretty simple game. If you're involved in soccer long enough, you begin to realize that all the many little drills and ideas that work are really just variations on the same basic concepts. As long as the parameters that you have established in your exercises/small-sided games are true to soccer ( goals for scoring and defending), creates the problems that you want the kids to solve (protecting the ball while dribbling, etc.), and allows your players to be challenged and find some success, you're on the right track. Essentially, once you find a drill you like decrease the space and time that is available to players, the drill becomes that much better and age appropriate.

11) Don't be afraid to experiment to find what works best.

12) Coaches and parents should think of themselves more as facilitators, monitors, guides or even participants, to provide a rich environment for the kids to learn from and enjoy.

13) The GISC is blessed to have some wonderful coaches with vast experiences. Use the resources in this club.



**Overview**-The GISC Training Programs follow a researched and proven approach to player development. The following information introduces to each of our coaches an operating philosophy and the methods and structure that are used to deliver sessions.

**Curriculum Structure**-To help meet the varying needs of the GISC soccer community, the training programs curriculum is driven by both age and ability. It is very common that players of the same age can be at completely different stages of learning. Having a 'sliding scale' curriculum allows players of staggered abilities to develop at their own pace. The following three curriculum levels are offered:

#	Level	Ages	Description
1	Beginner	4-5	Non directive activities focusing on FUN, fundamentals and ball familiarity.
2	Developmental	6-12	Structured activities focusing on basic individual techniques and game awareness. An introduction to some team tactics
3	Competitive	13-19	Structured activities, extensive but realistic activities focusing on correct application of technique through tactical understanding. Heavier emphasis on tactics and responding to tactics of your opponent.

**Curriculum Matrix**-Each curriculum incorporates the four cornerstones to the successful development of the young player (**Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Psychological**). The amount of time that is allocated to each area within a session, season and training year is based on the following matrix:

Age	Technical	Tactical	Physical	Psychological
4 & 5	90%	0%	5%	5%
6 & 7	85%	5%	5%	5%
8 & 9	80%	5%	10%	5%
10-12	70%	15%	10%	5%
13 & 14	60%	20%	15%	5%
15+	50%	25%	15%	10%



**Coaching Methodology**-The training program curriculum is delivered based around five key methods:

(1) Specific (2) Progressive (3) Repetitive (4) Competitive (5) Guided.

A description of each method is offered in the table below:

#	Method	Description	Age Group
1	Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appropriate to age and ability</li> <li>• Part of a structured development plan</li> <li>• 1-2 main topics per session</li> <li>• Clear learning objectives</li> </ul>	
2	Progressive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple to game related</li> <li>• Difficulty increases with competency</li> <li>• Conditions of the practice adapt</li> <li>• Part of a structured development plan</li> <li>• 2 main topics per session</li> </ul>	
3	Repetitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High frequency of realistic situations</li> <li>• Development of skills through constant rehearsal</li> <li>• Engage players through a variety of activities</li> <li>• Part of a structured development plan</li> <li>• 2-3 main topics per session</li> </ul>	
4	Competitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training replicates game play intensity</li> <li>• Speed of play</li> <li>• Decision making under pressure</li> <li>• Direction and transition</li> <li>• Methods to score</li> </ul>	
5	Guided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Player centered environment</li> <li>• Opportunity to solve soccer problems through trial and error</li> <li>• Ownership and responsibility</li> <li>• Encourage self expression</li> </ul>	



With this methodology the role of a coach is to facilitate learning and to effectively recognize and act on important teachable moments. The coach MUST attempt to identify how each player learns best.

Coaches can be certain that all three learning styles will be represented on a given roster.

## What are the types of learning styles?

### ● Visual Learners:

*Players who are visual learners learn through seeing...*

These players need to see the coach's body language and facial expression to fully understand the content of a lesson. They tend to prefer sitting at the front of the group to avoid visual obstructions (e.g. people's heads). They may think in pictures and learn best from visual displays including: diagrams, illustrated books, overhead transparencies, videos, flipcharts and hand-outs. During a lecture or classroom discussion, visual learners often prefer to take detailed notes to absorb the information.

### ● Auditory Learners:

*Players who are auditory learners learn through listening...*

They learn best through verbal lectures, discussions, talking things through and listening to what others have to say. Auditory learners interpret the underlying meanings of speech through listening to tone of voice, pitch, speed and other nuances. Written information may have little meaning until it is heard. These learners often benefit from reading text aloud and using a tape recorder.

### ● Tactile/Kinesthetic Learners:

*Players who are kinesthetic learners learn through, moving, doing and touching...*

Tactile/Kinesthetic persons learn best through a hands-on approach, actively exploring the physical world around them. They may find it hard to sit still for long periods and may become distracted by their need for activity and exploration.



**Sample Session Structure: 90 minutes**

Section-coaching time (mins)	Theme	Key Points
Warm up- 15 minutes	Ball Mastery & Light Stretching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Related to the main activity objective</li> <li>• One ball per player to maximize ball touches</li> <li>• Unopposed practice related to core competencies at specific age groups</li> <li>• Coach creates environment conducive to a high success rate</li> </ul>
Two Main Activities- 10 mins each for 20 minutes	Skills Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focuses on the daily learning objective(s)</li> <li>• Depending on level of learning objective is generally introduced in the following sequence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non opposed – completed in isolation</li> <li>Semi opposed – some token pressure</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Break 15 minutes	Juggling & Break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ball juggles when heart rate is raised</li> <li>• Non-active soccer education</li> <li>• Water</li> </ul>
1-2 More Main Activities 10 mins each for 20 minutes	Skills Based/Tactics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build into fully opposed – full pressure</li> <li>• Lots of small sided activities 1v1, 1v1+1,1v2, 2v2, 2v3</li> <li>• Older age groups; add team tactics</li> <li>• Additional pressure-tighter confines</li> </ul>
Conditioned/Free Play 20 minutes	Game Specific Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4v4 is preferred structure, the smaller the of players involved the higher the frequency of learning moments</li> <li>• Restrictions are used to help emphasis the required learning outcomes.</li> <li>• Role of the coach in this phases is more the observer, allow for lots of free play</li> <li>• Make suggestions/corrections and start play up again</li> </ul>
	Free Play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No restrictions/conditions or coach interaction</li> </ul>



- U-8**
- Dribble with all sides of both feet**
  - Dribble out of trouble**
  - Dribble past someone**
  - Shielding**
  - Soft first touch**
  - Introduce proper shooting technique**
  - Introduce passing**

Although U8 children may begin to be far more physically and maturationally advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and we should allow them to work in pairs (coach selected) often. Similar to the U6 children, we need to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

#### *Typical Characteristics of U8 Players*

- *tend to play well in pairs* – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- *are now able to take another's perspective* – they now have a sense of how other's are feeling
- *still unable to think abstractly* – still do not have this capability, be patient
- *heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults* – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- *still much prefer playing to watching* – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- *limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task)* – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- *have an understanding of time and sequence* – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”
- *many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play* – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible
- *extremely aware of adult reactions* – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently



- *seek out adult approval* – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age
- *begin to become aware of peer perception* – a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this
- *wide range of abilities between children at this age* – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player
- *some will keep score* – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age
- *beginning to develop motor memories* – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements
- *less active imaginations than U6 players* – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year-olds allowed will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imaginations, just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

## **The U8 Age Group**

This is the age where players can begin to understand the concept of working with a teammate. The notion, or willingness, to intentionally pass the ball to someone is just beginning to take hold. Coaches and parents will have more success encouraging players to pass the ball in the seven to eight year old age group. In this age group, the player begins to think beyond their personal needs and actively begins to cooperate with a teammate. However, players in this age group must continue individual ball work.

## **Role of Coach**

The role of the coach in the U8 age group is to be a sensitive and patient teacher with an enthusiastic and imaginative approach. It is helpful if they have the ability to demonstrate and very important that they understand technique.

## **License Requirement**

The U6/U8 State Youth Module is required. The “Y” License is recommended.



## The U8 Player Characteristics

### *Mental/Psychological (cognitive)*

- Short attention span, but better than U6
- Love to use their imagination...pretend
- Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time
- Beginning to solve simple soccer problems (i.e. pass to a teammate)
- Some understanding of time and space relations

### *Physical (psychomotor)*

- Beginning to develop physical coordination
- Improvement in pace regulation
- Skeletal system is growing; growth plates near joints
- Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adult's; heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover
- Catching skills are still not developed
- Improvement in dribbling and kicking
- Love to run, jump, fall and roll

### *Socially (psychosocial)*

- Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop
- Sensitive...dislike personal failure in front of peers
- Negative comments from peers and adults carry great weight
- Limited experience with personal evaluation...effort is synonymous with successful performance
- Inclined more toward cooperative activities (small groups)
- Inclined to establish and cooperate with friends
- Desire social acceptance; want everyone to like them
- Influential person in their life is their father or significant parent
- Like to play soccer because it is FUN; intrinsically motivated; play for enjoyment



## What to Teach U8 Players (Game Components)

### Techniques (skills):

#### Dribbling

- With outside of the foot
- Change of speed and direction

#### Receiving

- Ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of foot
- Bouncing balls with various body parts
- Ball lifting and juggling

#### Passing

- With toe, inside of foot and laces
- Throw-ins

#### Shooting

- With toe, inside of foot and laces

#### Tackling

- Toe-poke

#### Catching

- From self and from partner
- Rolling, bouncing, and air balls

### Psychology (mental and social):

- Working in pairs
- Sportsmanship
- Dealing with parental involvement
- “How to play” (social cooperation)
- Emotional management

### Fitness (movement education):

- Introduce the idea of warm-up
- Agility
- Leaping
- Tumbling
- Eye/foot & eye/hand coordination

### Tactics (decisions):

- Being exposed to all positions
- 1 v 1 attacking
- 1v1 defending
- 2v1 attacking
- Introduce the names of positions
- Shape (triangles)



### **Rules:**

Review the kick off  
Review the goal kick  
Review hand ball  
Review physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)  
The corner kick  
Direct kicks  
Throw-ins

## **US Youth Soccer Modifications to The Game**

Playing numbers: 4v4 (no goalkeepers)  
Field Dimensions:  
    Length 25-35 yards  
    Width 20-30 yards  
Goal Dimensions:  
    Height 6 feet  
    Width 18 feet  
Duration: four 12-minute quarters  
Ball: number 3

## **The Training Session**

### ***General Information***

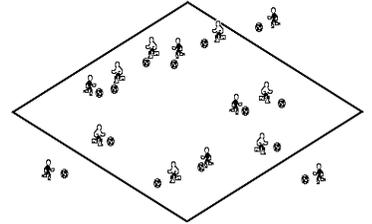
- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.
- ✓ Light coaching on simple technique is appropriate (dribbling, passing and receiving)
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, and 3v3 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 4v4 game without goalkeepers.
- ✓ The duration of the training session should be 60-75 minutes.

### **Some Recommended Games for U8 Players:**

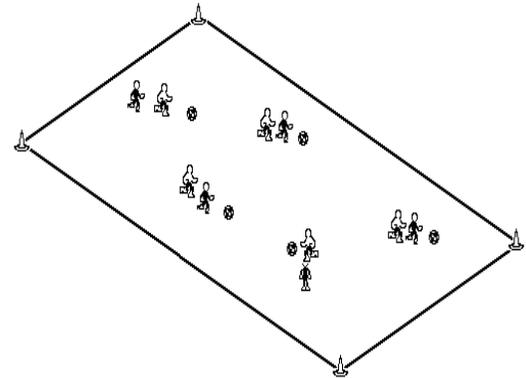
- 1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.



- 2) Knock Out---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times).

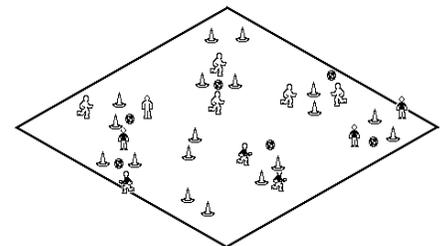


- 3) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.



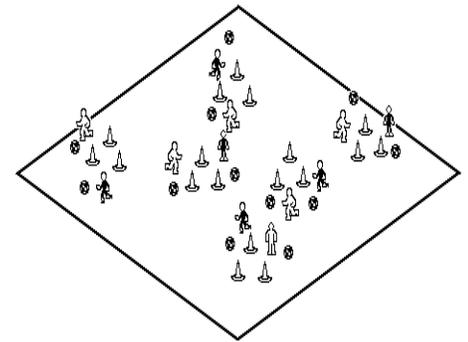
- 4) Marbles---Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1 immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back. etc. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back.

- 5) Gates Passing---Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

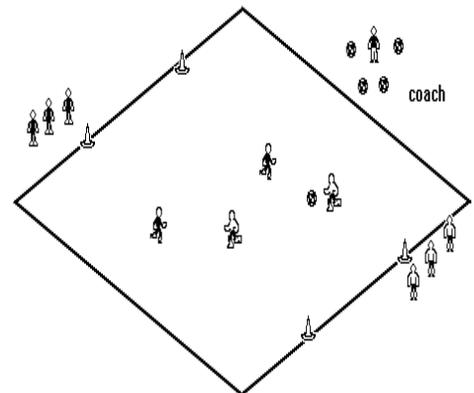




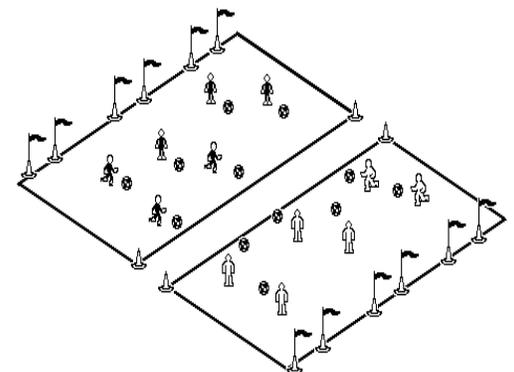
- 6) Triangle Tag---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither play can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag.



- 7) Get Outta Here---Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling "get outta here" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played and play 2 vs. 2 or 3 vs. 3.



- 8) Clean Your Backyard--- Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.





- 9) 2 vs. 1 keepaway---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keepaway. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.
- 10) 1 vs. 1 to Endlines---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player's endline. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4.

Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-10	<p><b>Continue with dribbling foci from U8</b></p> <p><b>Passing with inside and outside of both feet</b></p> <p><b>Shooting with both feet---using laces</b></p> <p><b>Receiving the ball with all parts of body</b></p> <p><b>Heading</b></p> <p><b><u>Tactical Priorities</u></b></p> <p><b>Basic Attacking Ideas</b></p> <p><b>Basic Defending Ideas</b></p> <p><b>Comprehend 1 vs 1 concepts</b></p> <p><b>Comprehend 2 vs 1 concepts</b></p> <p><b>Introduction to 2 vs 2 concepts</b></p> <p><b>Comprehend roles of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> defenders</b></p> <p><b>Comprehend roles of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> attackers</b></p>

As we move up the age ladder from the U8 level to the U10 level there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for young players of this age. However, there are also many similarities. Just as in parenting, it is important to be consistent in coaching and we must make sure that we follow a progressive trend of development for young players. To this ends, we need to continue to focus on technique during our practices, as we did at the younger ages. Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and comfortability with a ball at their feet.

*Typical Characteristics of U10 Players*

- *attention span lengthens from U8---they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions*
- *they start to think ahead and think "If this, then that"*



- *they are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play*
- *demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility*
- *they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts*
- *children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure*
- *players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”*
- *players at this age are extremely rule bound—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live*
- *there is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams this is still a crucial age for technical skill development*

## **The U10 Age Group**

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. Small-sided games continue to be the method of choice for this age group. This is an appropriate time to introduce some of the basic **Principles** of play:

### **Attacking Principles**

***Penetration***  
***Support***  
 Mobility  
 Width  
 Depth (length)  
***Improvisation (deception, creativity)***

### **Defensive Principles**

***Recovery (Immediate Chase)***  
***Pressure***  
***Cover***  
 Balance  
 Compactness  
 Counter Attack

## **Role of Coach**

The role of the coach in the U10 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods.



## **License Requirement**

The U10/U12 State Youth Module is required. The “Y” License is recommended.

## **The U10 Player Characteristics**

### ***Mental/Psychological (cognitive)***

- Lengthened attention span
- Ability to sequence thought and actions; begin to think in advance of the ball...anticipate
- Ability to remember, follow more complex instructions and solve higher-level problems (i.e. simple combination play)
- Developing ability to focus and stay on task
- More understanding of time and space relations

### ***Physical (psychomotor)***

- Gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power; this is related to body size and muscle mass
- Motor performance includes a variety of motor tasks that require speed, balance, flexibility, explosive strength and muscular endurance; pace factor is developing quite well
- Gross and small fine motor skills becoming refined
- Children this age are in a linear growth mode (head to toe)
- Height can approach 5 feet and weight can approach 80 pounds

### ***Socially (psychosocial)***

- Self-concept and body image are important
- Less Sensitive...but still dislike personal failure in front of peers
- Begin to initiate play on their own...they want to play
- Becoming more serious about their play
- Inclined more toward small group and team activities
- Peer group attachment and pressure becoming significant
- Adults outside the family become influential (coach, teacher, etc.)
- Gender differences becoming more apparent



## What to Teach U10 Players (Game Components)

### *Techniques (skills):*

#### **Running with the Ball**

- At speed
- Under Pressure

#### **Passing**

- With outside of the foot
- Heading

#### **Instep Drive**

- Shooting
- Crossing

#### **Receiving Ground Balls with the Inside and Outside of Foot**

- Away from pressure
- Past opponent

#### **Receiving Air Balls**

- With the Instep (cushion) and sole, inside and outside of the foot (wedge)

#### **Throw-In**

- Short and long distances

#### **Moves in Dribbling**

- Half-turns
- Step-overs

#### **Introduce Heading**

- Juggling (alone and in small groups)
- Feet in contact with the ground
- Introduction to jumping

#### **Tackling**

- Balance foot and contact foot (block tackle)

### *Goalkeeping (skills)*

#### **Ready Stance for Goalkeepers**

- Foot positioning
- Body posture

#### **“W” Grip**

- Positioning of thumbs
- Fingers spread

#### **How to Hold a Ball After a Save**

- Ball to chest
- Forearm protection

#### **Catching Shots at the Keeper**

- Body alignment path of ball

#### **Punting**

- Distance and accuracy



**Throwing**

- Bowling
- Over-arm

**Goal Kicks**

- Distance and accuracy

**Psychology (mental and social):**

- Working in groups of 3-6
- Staying focused for one entire half
- Sensitivity; learning how to win, lose or draw gracefully
- Sportsmanship
- How to handle parental involvement
- Communication; emotional management

**Fitness (conditioning):**

- Endurance
- Range of motion-flexibility
- Proper warm-up is now mandatory
- Introduce cool-down

**Tactics (decisions):**

- Roles of 1<sup>st</sup> attacker and defender
- Roles of 2<sup>nd</sup> attackers and defenders
- 2v1 attacking (simple combinations)
- Man-to-man defending
- Throw-ins to teammate's feet
- Introduction to the tactics of set plays/restarts (goal kicks, corner kicks, other free kicks)
- Introduction to setting up walls

**Rules:**

- Review Fouls and Misconduct



## US Youth Soccer Modifications to The Game

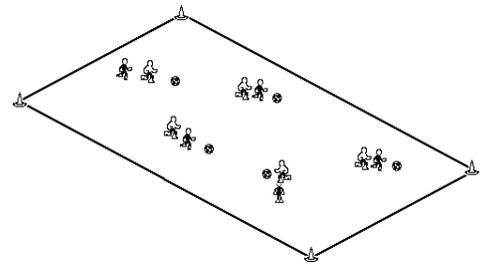
Playing numbers:	6v6 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	45-60 yards
Width	35-45 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
Duration:	two periods of 25 minutes
Ball:	number 4

## **The Training Session**

- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- ✓ Coaching technical skills is very important at this age as well as light tactical concepts.
- ✓ The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique, or passing and receiving, or combination play.
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as 3v3, 4v3, 4v4, 5v4 and 5v5 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 6v6 game with goalkeepers if possible (5 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team).
- ✓ The duration of the training session should be 75-90 minutes.

### Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

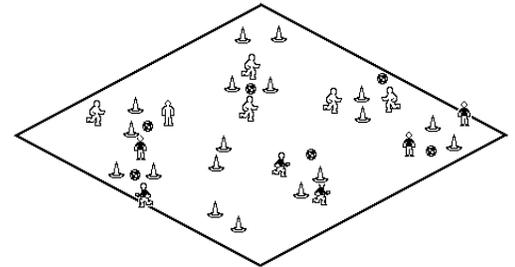
- 1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move.  
*Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.  
*Version 3:* Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other's balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own. Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times. You do not want players sitting out.
  
- 2) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show





technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

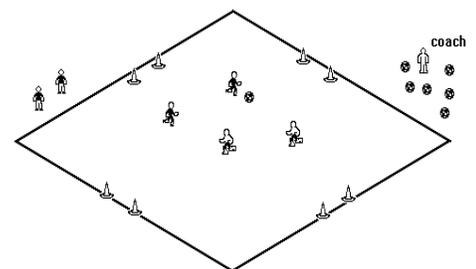
- 3) Gates Passing---Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.



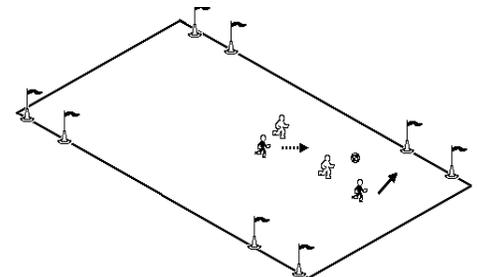
- 4) 1 vs. 1 To lines---In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other. *Version 2:* Make the grid larger and make this a 2 vs. 2 or a 3 vs. 3 game.

- 5) 1 vs. 1 To Two Small Goals---Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

- 6) 2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals---Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three, you must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of 2 on deck, they come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately.

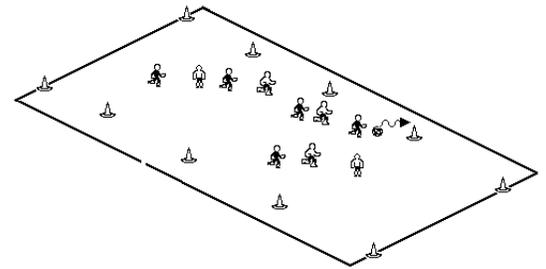


- 7) 2 vs. 2 To Four Small Goals---In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other. *Version 2:* 3 vs. 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.





4 vs. 4 Endzone Game---Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.



- 8) Triangle Goal Game---Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues. *Version 2:* Use two balls at the same time.
- 9) 4 vs. 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs. 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

### US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 10's play 6 vs 6 (*including a goalkeeper*)  
Field Size: 45 to 60 yds long X 35 to 45 yds wide  
Ball: #4



**Age Group**    **Skill Priorities**  
U-12            **Continue with all U-10 foci**  
**Speed Dribbling in Traffic**  
**Ability to chip the ball**  
**Accurately play long passes**  
**Offensive/Defensive Heading**  
**Power/Accuracy Shooting**

**Tactical Priorities**  
**Communication**  
**Basic Support Positions**  
**Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure**  
**Combination Play**  
**How and when to switch the point of attack**  
**Pressure vs Containing**  
**Proper 2 vs 2 roles**  
**Introduction to all roles in 3 vs 3**

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly. Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely. Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases.

It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes. The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years old with a range of 7 to 14; for boys it is age 12 with a range of 9 to 16. As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group. Some players may pick up skills quickly, where as others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation. In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and to keep the game fun.

#### *Typical Characteristics of U12 Players*

- *all children are maturing at different rates*



- *players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise*
- *players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations*
- *they like to solve problems*
- *peer evaluation is a constant*
- *egos are sensitive*
- *coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt*
- *technique still needs to be reinforced constantly*
- *playing too much can lead to overuse injuries*
- *playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out*
- *this is the dawn of tactics!*
- *keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things*
- *ask for feedback from them---they will tell you how things are going*
- *try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them*
- *keep it fun!!!*

## **The U12 Age Group**

The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. Players at this age can be extremely self-critical. This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is an appropriate time to introduce and teach basic **Principles** of play:

### **Attacking Principles**

***Penetration***  
***Support***  
***Mobility***

### **Defensive Principles**

***Recovery (Immediate Chase)***  
***Pressure***  
***Cover***



*Width*  
*Depth (length)*  
*Improvisation (deception, creativity)*

*Balance*  
*Compactness*  
*Counter Attack*

## **Role of Coach**

The role of the coach in the U12 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods. Specifically, individual and small group tactics should be the focus of the training sessions.

## **License Requirement**

The U10/U12 State Youth Module is required. The “Y” License is recommended.

## **The U12 Player Characteristics**

### ***Mental/Psychological (cognitive)***

- Fertile period for learning...eager to learn
- Ability to sequence thought and actions and perform more complex tasks...can simultaneously run, strike a ball and think!
- Ability to use more abstract thought to meet the demands of the game (i.e. well-timed overlapping run)
- Use their teammates to solve game problems
- Training must replicate the game

### ***Physical (psychomotor)***

- Continue to gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power
- Flexibility training is key to prevention of injury
- More confident with physical technical demands above their waist (receiving with the chest; heading the ball)
- Goalkeeping skills are becoming refined
- Children continue to be in growth spurts
- Overuse injuries occur when age appropriate development is ignored
- Height can be well over 5 feet and weight can be 100+ pounds
- The age range for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 7-14, with the average being 10 years of age
- The age range for the beginning of pubescence in boys is 9-16, with the average being 12 years of age



### *Socially (psychosocial)*

Gender differences are more apparent

Whether a child enters puberty early or late has important psychological implications regarding relationships with their teammates

Spend more time with their friends and less time with their parents

Children tend to conform to peer pressure

Developing a conscience, morality and a scale of values



## What to Teach U12 Players (Game Components)

### *Technique (skills):*

#### **Dribbling**

- To beat an opponent (penetration)
- To possess (shielding)

#### **Feints with the Ball**

- Subtle body movements to unbalance the opponent

#### **Receiving Air Balls with Feet, Thighs and Chest**

- Away from pressure
- To beat an opponent

#### **Heading to Score Goals and for Clearances**

- Accuracy (direction)
- Timing

#### **Finishing**

- Chipping
- Bending
- Toe
- Introduce Half Volley and Volley Shooting

#### **Passing**

- Deceptive use of foot surface (toe, outside of foot, heel)

#### **Crossing to Near Post and Penalty Spot Space**

- Driven
- Flighted

#### **Introduce Slide Tackle**

- Timing
- Poke Tackle

### *Goalkeeping (skills)*

#### **Footwork for Goalkeepers**

- Post to post (lateral)
- Forward

#### **Throwing**

- Side-arm
- Round-house
- Baseball

#### **Kicking**

- Drop-kick

#### **Diving**

- Step and Collapse (low)
- Step and slide onto forearms and thighs (forward)

#### **Angle Play**

- Fast footwork
- Body shape



### **Introduce Parrying and Boxing**

- One hand
- Two hands

### **Psychology (mental and social):**

- Teamwork
- Confidence
- Desire
- Mental rehearsal
- Intrinsic motivation
- Handling distress
- How to learn from each match
- Sportsmanship
- Parental involvement
- Emotional management

### **Fitness (conditioning):**

- Speed
- Strength
- Aerobic exercise
- Proper warm-up and cool-down now mandatory

### **Tactics (decisions):**

- 2 v 1 through 3 v 3 attacking & defending
- Introduce the principles of play
- Verbal & visual communication for all players
- Half-time analysis
- Beginning to identify potential roles for players (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder &/or forward)
- Commanding the goalmouth by the goalkeeper
- Near post play by the goalkeeper
- Saving penalty kicks
- Simple set play patterns
- Speed in setting up walls

### **Rules:**

Offsides



## US Youth Soccer Modifications to The Game

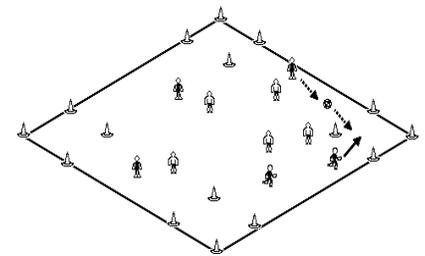
Playing numbers:	8v8 (with goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	70-80 yards
Width	45-55 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
Duration:	two periods of 30 minutes
Ball:	number 4

## The Training Session

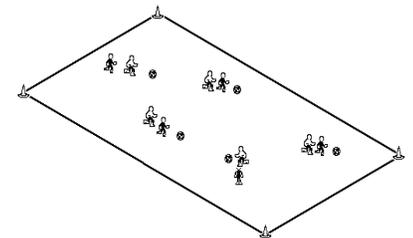
- ✓ The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- ✓ The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique and/or 1v1 decision making.
- ✓ Introduction to functional training (position specific) is appropriate.
- ✓ Small-sided directional games such as: 4v4, 5v4,5v5, 6v5, 6v6 and 7v6 should be included as well.
- ✓ Training should always conclude with a 8v8 game with goalkeepers if possible. (7 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team) The duration of the training session should be 90 minutes.

### Some Recommended Games for U12 Players:

- 1) Four Square Passing---Form a grid 35x35 with squares roughly 4 yards across in each corner. Two teams of 4 to 6 players try to score by passing the ball to a teammate who makes a run into one of the four squares. Players in the squares cannot be defended against they can pass or dribble the ball out. Balls out of play can be passed or dribbled back into play.

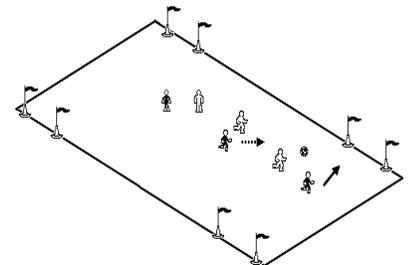
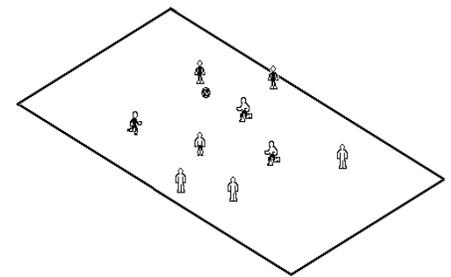


- 2) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to





- properly shield. *Version 2:* make this competitive by breaking the group into two teams and seeing which team has more balls at the end of the time.
- 3) Colors-Warm Up---Half of the players in red pennies, half in blue. Teams playing together in the same space combine in the passing sequence blue-blue-red-red-blue-blue-red-red etc. etc. Ball can never stop, players can never stop moving, and ball cannot leave area of play. Coach can limit touch-count, mandate which foot to pass with or which side of foot to pass with as sees fit. When players can do first sequence adequately and without frequent errors change the sequence to blue-blue-blue-red-red-red-blue-blue-blue etc. etc. Stress communication and technical passing points throughout. Make this activity competitive by counting errors and setting goals by lowering allowed errors.
  - 4) 2v2+2 or 3v3+3---Three distinct teams in colors (red, green, white), one team starts as defenders and the other 2 teams play together to keep the ball away from the defense (so it is actually 4v2 or 6v3). When the ball is taken by the defense, the color (two/three players) they stole it from becomes the new defenders. Players must pay close attention to who the defenders are, to score the teams in possession must make 6 passes before losing possession. If they do this, both teams on offense receive 1 point.
  - 5) 2v2 with 2+2---In a grid 15x15 yards, each team has two players in the grid and two on the outside, on opposite sides from each other. The teams score by either making six passes (with teammate inside the grid or support players) or by executing a 1-2 (wall pass) with a support player. After 3 minutes switch inside and outside players.
  - 6) 5 Goal Game---4v4+2 in 35x40 yard grid. Five 2-yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The plus 2 players are always on the attacking team. The teams score by passing through any of the goals to a teammate. Must receive with inside of foot, then outside, weak foot inside/outside are different expectations that can be put on the players. First team to 10 points wins. Players need to be able to see where the open goals are, and receive with a “picture” of what is around them. With this in mind, if the players are advanced enough, the player receiving through the goal must play 1 touch. Coach could require receiving player to perform a feint before touching ball.
  - 7) 3v3 or 4v 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30x30 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. With three attackers the players now have the 1<sup>st</sup> attacker (ball) and 2<sup>nd</sup> attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1<sup>st</sup> defender (pressure), 2<sup>nd</sup> defender (cover),





- and 3<sup>rd</sup> defender (balance). This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets.
- 8) Bread and Butter---Typical 4 vs. 4 but with an additional 4 players who stand on outside of field and can be used by either team as outlets (with only 2 touches). If a team gets scored upon, they become the team on the outside and the outside team plays on the field. Use approximately a 20x25 yard area. Stress correct technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play. May restrict the players to 2/3 touch to force quicker decisions, and better body position before the ball arrives. Keep score and make the game competitive.
  - 9) 6v6 team touch---Play a normal 6v6 game except for the fact that every player on a team must touch the ball before their team can score. This forces players to show for the ball, to communicate, and to spread out the field. Version 2: If players are advanced, you can enforce a 3 or 2 touch limit on players.
  - 10) 8v8 dual sided goal---Using a coerver goal or setting up a goal in which the goalie must protect both sides of the goal, play 8 against 8. Both teams can score from either side of the goal. If a goalie makes a save she just punts the ball out. Teams must learn to change the point of attack and must give support to each other and communicate constantly. This will help teach teams to make the field big when on offense and to try to compact the field on defense.

\*\*\*\*\* Every practice should include a scrimmage\*\*\*\*\*

### US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 12's play 8 vs 8 (*including a goalkeeper*)  
 Field Size: 75 to 80 yds long X 50 yds wide  
 Ball: #4



**Technical Skill**

**Appropriate age**

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
<b>Passing</b>				
dominant inside foot	6	7	8	12
dominant outside foot	7	8	12	14
dominant "laces"	6	8	12	14
nondominant inside	7	10	12	14
nondominant outside	7	10	12	14
nondominant laces	7	12	14	16
short chipping	10	12	14	16
long chipping	10	12	12	14
drive pass	11	12	14	16
crosses	10	10	12	14
with head	12	12	14	16
with chest/other body part	14	12	14	16
receiving pass on foot all surfaces	10	12	14	16

<b>Trapping</b>				
foot instep	6	7	8	10
foot laces	8	10	12	14
foot outside	8	7	10	12
foot sole	8	7	10	12
thigh top	8	10	12	16
thigh inside	8	12	14	16
chest	10	12	14	16
head	10	12	14	16
trapping with turn 90'/180' all surfaces	10	12	14	14
trapping and shielding all surfaces	10	12	14	16

<b>Foot skills</b>				
dribbling inside/outside foot L/R	6	7	10	12
speed dribbling (laces) L/R	7	8	10	12
toe taps/triangles L/R	6	6	8	10
inside roll/outside roll L/R	6	8	8	10
pull back/push forward L/R	6	7	8	10
stepover L/R	6	7	8	10
combination drag back push forward	8	7	12	14
Vee... left and right	8	7	12	14
inside/outside cuts (snake)	7	8	10	12
inside foot cut "chop" L/R	8	8	10	12
outside foot cut L/R	8	8	10	12
inside/behind leg cut L/R	10	12	12	14
outside/inside circle L/R	6	8	8	10



### Technical Skill

### Appropriate age

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
the moves "stepover, maradona, cruyff .....mathews, scissors, rivolino, etc"	10	12	12	14

Shooting				
dominant lace/instep	6	7	8	10
dominant outside	8	10	12	14
nondominant inside/outside	8	10	14	16
from dribble left and right	8	10	12	14
volley / half volley	10	12	14	16
re-start, around/over wall	10	12	14	16
penalty shot	8	10	12	14
one timer from left and right	10	12	14	16
one timer from trap from other surface	10	12	14	16

Heading				
to clear	10	10	12	14
as a pass	12	12	14	16
as a shot	11	12	14	16
"flick on"	11	14	14	16

Juggling				
all surfaces	6	10	12	14

Shielding				
using left and right	8	10	12	14

Additional Skills				
Purposeful communication	10	12	14	16
Tackling	10	10	12	14
Defensive man to man marking	7	8	10	12

### Definitions

Level 1: introduce skill

Level 2: successful 50% time, no pressure

Level 3: successful 50% time with semi-active pressure

Level 4: MASTERED - successful 70% time with full active pressure