



U8 Division Supplemental

Coaching is all about the experience of the player. Positive coaching is one the basic philosophies.

Goals for the season

The primary goal with this age group is to begin developing skills, as a player, in ball handling, passing and shooting. Coaches should begin emphasizing spacing on the field. If their teammate has the ball there is no reason for them to go to the ball, but rather they should find open space on the field. The emphasis should still be on having fun with the sport and not competition.

Three goals for this season:

1. Players should be able to recognize where their teammates are on the field, and find an appropriate space on the field.
2. Players should begin developing passing skills.
3. Players should recognize they should not be taking the ball from their teammate.

Characteristics of U8 Children

- Attention span is beyond a U6 but still not extended.
- Inclined more towards group activities.
- Still in motion-twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements.
- Still very sensitive. Psychologically easily bruised.
- Dislike personal failures in front of peers.
- Ridicule from the coach in front of the group is very destructive.
- Little or no concern for team activities
- Boys and girls are still quite similar in physical and psychological development.
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence.
- Developing physical coordination; ie most can easily ride a two wheel bike at this point.
- Can run, jump, climb and roll more easily.
- Catching skills not developed
- More into imitation of the "big guys;" sports heroes are becoming important.
- Still lack sense of pace – Go Flat Out! Will chase the ball until they drop.

Team Management – Your parent/coach meeting should include the following;

Identify you philosophy of Coaching and goals for the season.

At U6 and U6 age group your philosophy should be something similar to, "Success and excellence for this team will be measured in the number of players who continue playing next season, and how much fun they have during the season. Winning is not a measure of success."

Collect Player Information

Medical information (asthma, allergies, etc), family situations that may affect the child's participation or the ride home.

Collect Parent Information

It is important to be able to reach a parent in case of an injury or bad weather. Coaches should obtain work and cell phone numbers and email addresses of all parents. Much of this information should be provided to you by the division coordinator.

Identify Player Responsibilities

Discuss expectations of the parents concerning communications with the coach; ie what is required if their child cannot a game or practice. Emphasize that although you will always remain behind with the players if a parent is late; the expectation that parents pick up their child immediately at the end of practice. In addition clarify schedules, snacks, uniform, etc.

Address Communication Issues

If parents have concerns, encourage them to call or email you on a non game or practice day and definitely not after a game. This allows for a cooling off period. If needed appoint a team coordinator and determine how all communications will be undertaken.

Parental Sideline Behavior

Identify appropriate and inappropriate sideline behavior and decide together how inappropriate adult behavior on the sidelines will be addressed. Some topics of conversation concerning sideline behavior are;

- Children want cheerleaders to applaud their success; not adults yelling instructions. Think of the soccer field as a playground not a sports venue.
- What's appropriate at a sport stadium with adult athletes is NOT appropriate for young children at play.
- Focus on the process of playing and not the outcome.
- Unlike the adult game, kids playing soccer do not see the other team as the enemy. The other team is full of their friends.
- Cheer ANY and ALL success on the field. It DOES NOT matter which player OR team.
- Don't keep score.
- Don't care who wins or loses, they are having fun and that is the objective NOT winning or losing.

Planning Your Coaching Session

- Session duration: 45-60mins
- All players must have a ball
- Necessary coaching equipment – Cones, pinnies, extra balls
- Session progression – Warm up, fundamental, match related, match condition followed by the game.
- Player equipment – Ball, cleats, appropriate clothing, shin guards, water bottle

The game is the Best Teacher

The game presents problems for the players. Players must solve problems. Using games in training creates realism. Players are motivated and challenged to learn through the game. The main emphasis of the session should be dribbling and shooting games that allow each player plenty of opportunity to experience the ball at his or her own pace. Games where there are multiple goals are perfect for this age group. Also encourage activities where there are multiple opportunities to change direction and to vary how fast the players run.

Session progression;

1. Warm up
2. Fundamental Activity – This would be an activity in which players will work on
3. Match Related – Small Group
4. Match Condition – Large Group
5. Game

Sample

Topic: Dribbling

	Activity	Description
Warm Up	Toe Touches / Tick Tocks	Every player with a ball; have each player tap the top of the ball with their toe. Give players a chance to practice and then complete the task again timing them for 30 seconds. Completely the task a second time and tell players the goal is to beat their first score.
Fundamental Individual	Gates	Set up cones in pairs randomly around the field to create mini goals. Each player with a ball will dribble through the gates. Always players one time to go through gates to get a feel for the drill. Give the players 45 seconds to count how many gates they can dribble through.
Match Related Small Group	Pirates Gold	Create 5 squares with cones. One in each of the corners and one in the middle. Have each player place their ball in the middle square and any extras. Assign two players to each of the outer squares. When the coach says go players must go to the center square and dribble one ball back to their square. When all the balls are gone in the middle players may begin attacking other squares to acquire more balls.
Match Related Large Group	Sharks and Minnows	Mark off an assigned area as the shark tank. Depending on number of players assign 1 or more players the shark. Shark will not have a ball, rather they will chase the minnows (who are dribbling with a ball) around the tank to tag them. If a player gets tagged they should complete 20 toe touches before returning to the tank.
Game		Mark off an assigned area for 3 v 3 match. Goal is scored when a player dribbles the ball across the goal line.