



U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

QUICK NAVIGATION

Use this page like a menu.

Ages 9-10 | Technical skill connected to purposeful 7v7 play

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

60-75 minute practices | 7v7 | goalkeeper | referees and standings | Size 4 | guided 1-3-2-1 formation

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

FORMATION / TEAM SHAPE

COACH QUICK REFERENCE

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8-WEEK CURRICULUM

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TEAM SHAPE & GAME
APPLICATION

Tip: open your PDF viewer's Bookmarks/Outline panel for a collapsible list of every week and activity. External SoccerXpert and SoccerDrive links remain live throughout the guide.



U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITY LIBRARY INDEX

Click an activity to jump directly to its field-ready reference page.

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Build Out & Advance

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Conditioned 7v7 Match Play

2v1 to Goal

QUICK NAV

WEEK 1

OVERVIEW

U10 Player Development

Connecting technical skill to purposeful 7v7 team play.

At U10, players continue refining dribbling, passing, receiving and finishing while learning to recognize common game situations. Regular 7v7 matches give players more defined team responsibilities while preserving the touches, involvement and decision-making benefits of small-sided soccer. Coaches should introduce team concepts without replacing creativity, repetition and small-sided play with tactical lectures.

Program structure

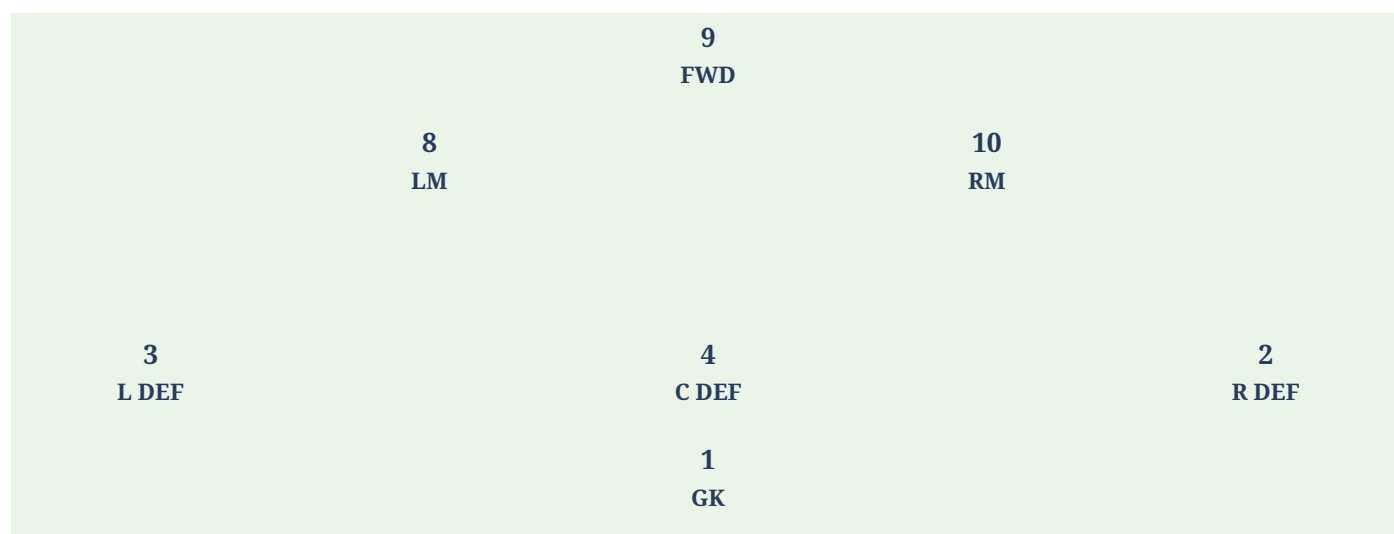
Typical session	Approximately 60-75 minutes
Frequency	Normally 1-2 practices per week, plus regularly scheduled games
Game format	7v7
Goalkeepers	Yes; rotate and develop multiple players whenever practical
Game official	Referee assigned for scheduled games
Scores / standings	Yes; results are part of competition, but development remains the coaching priority
Ball	Size 4
Primary formation	1-3-2-1

U10 coaching lens

- Technical quality still matters: first touch, passing weight, receiving body shape and ball control should be coached every week.
- Use 1v1 through 5v5 activities to create frequent decisions before expanding into 7v7 team play.
- Teach width, depth, support, pressure, cover, balance and transition as simple game principles.
- Use the 1-3-2-1 as a reference shape, but rotate players through roles and avoid permanent specialization.
- Winning is welcome. The larger goal is developing players who understand why and when to dribble, pass, support, defend and finish.

1-3-2-1: A Teaching Shape

The 1-3-2-1 gives U10 players clear reference points across the field: one goalkeeper, a back line of three, two midfielders and one forward. The shape creates natural width from the outside defenders, central support through midfield and depth from the forward while remaining simple enough for developing players to understand.



COACH NOTE

The numbering above is a teaching reference. Coaches may simplify labels for players. Rotate players through multiple positions and teach what each line is trying to accomplish rather than demanding rigid locations.

Simple responsibilities

- Goalkeeper: protect the goal, communicate with the back three, and restart possession with simple rolls, throws or passes.
- Three defenders: protect central space, provide width when building from the back, support one another and step forward together when the team has possession.
- Two midfielders: connect the back line to the forward, provide passing angles underneath and around the ball, support attacks and recover centrally when possession is lost.
- Forward: provide depth, threaten the goal, check toward the ball when useful and become the first defender when possession is lost.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 1

BALL MASTERY & FIRST TOUCH

PRIMARY FOCUS	SECONDARY FOCUS
Ball control and purposeful first touch	Scanning before receiving
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE	
See the picture early. First touch should prepare the next action.	

1. Arrival Ball Mastery | 8-10 min

Every player with a ball: inside/outside touches, sole rolls, pull-backs, cuts and changes of speed.

2. First Touch Gates | 12 min

Pairs pass through gates. Receiver uses the first touch to move through or away from the gate into useful space.

3. Receive, Turn & Play | 12-15 min

Receive from a server, open the body, turn and play to a new target.

4. 4v4 Four-Goal Game | 15 min

Score in either of two goals. Players must scan and recognize where space is available.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-22 min

Free play. Coach only first touch, scanning and use of space.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 2

PASSING, RECEIVING & SUPPORT

PRIMARY FOCUS	SECONDARY FOCUS
Accurate passing and receiving	Movement after the pass
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE	
Pass with purpose. Move immediately to help again.	

1. Pass & Move Gates | 10 min

Pairs score by passing through a gate, then moving together to a new gate.

2. Y Passing | 12-15 min

Receive with an open body and play to the next branch of the Y.

3. 3v1 / 4v1 Rondo | 12-15 min

Keep possession by creating angles around one defender.

4. 4v4 + Targets | 15 min

Teams connect with end targets to score. Reward support ahead, beside and behind the ball.

5. Game Play | 18-22 min

Coach passing options, support angles and movement after the pass.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 3

1v1 ATTACKING & DEFENDING

PRIMARY FOCUS	SECONDARY FOCUS
Confident 1v1 attacking	Balanced individual defending
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE	
Attack with a plan. Defend under control.	

1. 1v1 Move Warm-Up | 8-10 min

Ball mastery with feints, cuts and changes of speed.

2. 1v1 to Gate | 12 min

Attacker scores by dribbling through a gate; defender counters to the opposite gate.

3. 1v1 to Goal | 15 min

Attacker receives and attacks goal under pressure.

4. 2v2 Directional Game | 15 min

Add a teammate and require players to recognize when to dribble and when to combine.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-22 min

Reinforce brave attacking and patient defending.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 4

2v1 & COMBINATION PLAY

PRIMARY FOCUS Using a teammate to beat pressure	SECONDARY FOCUS Timing and supporting angle
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Commit the defender, then choose: dribble or pass.	

1. Partner Passing on the Move | 10 min

Pass while moving through space with changing angles.

2. 2v1 Attacking Rondo | 12-15 min

Two attackers use spacing and quick decisions against one defender.

3. 2v1 to Goal | 15 min

Attack goal with a numbers advantage; defender counters if possession is won.

4. 4v4 + Neutral | 15 min

Neutral player gives the team in possession an extra passing option.

5. Game Play | 18-22 min

Look for wall passes, overlaps and simple combinations without forcing them.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 5

SHOOTING & FINISHING

PRIMARY FOCUS Clean striking and shot placement	SECONDARY FOCUS Creating the shooting window
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE See the target. Set the ball. Finish with purpose.	

1. Ball Mastery to Finish | 10 min

Dribble, perform a move and finish quickly.

2. Dribble & Shoot | 12-15 min

Attack space at speed, set the ball and finish before getting too close.

3. Attack Then Defend | 15 min

After shooting, immediately transition to defend the next attacker.

4. 4v4 + Goalkeepers | 15 min

Game-like finishing with realistic pressure and rebounds.

5. Game Play | 18-22 min

Encourage players to recognize when the shot is on and value placement over power.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 6

TEAM DEFENDING

PRIMARY FOCUS	SECONDARY FOCUS
Pressure and cover	Compact team shape
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE	
Closest player pressures. Teammates protect the space behind.	

1. Defensive Footwork | 8-10 min

Close space quickly, slow down, stay balanced and guide the attacker.

2. 1v1 Defending | 12 min

Defender protects goal and tries to force attacker away from danger.

3. 2v2 Pressure & Cover | 15 min

Nearest defender pressures while teammate provides cover.

4. 4v4 Four-Goal Defending | 15 min

Defenders must communicate and protect multiple threats.

5. Game Play | 18-22 min

Reinforce pressure, cover, compactness and recovery after being beaten.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 7

TRANSITION, WIDTH & SUPPORT

PRIMARY FOCUS	SECONDARY FOCUS
Reacting to possession changes	Expanding and recovering
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE	
When we win it, spread. When we lose it, recover.	

1. Transition Ball Warm-Up | 10 min

Players change direction or role immediately on a coach cue.

2. 1v1 Transition | 12 min

After attacking, player immediately becomes defender against the next opponent.

3. 3v2 Transition | 15 min

Attack quickly with numbers; defenders delay and protect central space.

4. 5v5 Transition Game | 15 min

Reward quick expansion after winning possession and recovery after losing it.

5. Game Play | 18-22 min

Coach the first few seconds after each turnover.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 8

TEAM SHAPE & GAME APPLICATION

PRIMARY FOCUS Connecting the 1-3-2-1	SECONDARY FOCUS Solving match problems
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Use the shape to help each other, then play the game.	

1. Technical Review | 10 min

Choose a short ball activity based on the team's needs.

2. Unit Shape Walk-Through | 10 min

Show the goalkeeper, back three, two midfielders and forward where support comes from in the 1-3-2-1.

3. Build Out & Advance | 15 min

Begin with goalkeeper possession and work through lines under increasing pressure.

4. Conditioned 7v7 | 20 min

Use one simple condition tied to a recent team need.

5. Free 7v7 Play | 15-20 min

Remove conditions and let players solve the game with brief coaching only.

Game connection: Use the scheduled match to reinforce this week's theme. Keep sideline instruction brief enough that players still make decisions themselves.

Grid Dribbling

PURPOSE

Develop close control, scanning, turns and changes of speed.

Setup

Create a 20x20-ish grid with scattered cones. One Size 4 ball per player.

How It Works

Players dribble freely. Near cones or traffic, use smaller touches; in open space, push the ball farther. On command, perform a pull-back, inside/outside cut or turn and accelerate away.

Coach Watches For

- Players use both feet and multiple surfaces.
- Head comes up between touches.
- Touch size changes with available space.
- Turns create a real change of direction.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Reduce or expand the grid.
- Add colored cones that trigger different turns.
- Challenge players to escape pressure after each move.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - U10 Dribbling Drill Library](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

First Touch Gates

PURPOSE

Improve receiving direction and first-touch purpose.

Setup

Scatter cone gates around the grid. Players work in pairs with one ball.

How It Works

Pass through a gate. The receiver uses the first touch to move the ball through or away from the gate, then finds another gate.

Coach Watches For

- Scan before receiving.
- Open the body when possible.
- First touch prepares the next action.
- Pass weight matches the distance.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Make gates smaller.
- Require a weak-foot first touch.
- Add passive pressure after the pass.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Receiving Drills](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Practice Plans](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

Y Passing

PURPOSE

Teach open body receiving, passing accuracy and movement.

Setup

Set three cones in a Y. Players pass forward; receiver opens to one side and plays to the next point. Follow the pass.

How It Works

Keep the pattern moving with short lines. Allow the receiver to choose the side based on a cue or available space.

Coach Watches For

- Check shoulder before the ball arrives.
- Receive side-on.
- First touch sets the pass.
- Move after passing.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add a defender in the center.
- Use one-touch returns where appropriate.
- Run both directions.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Y Passing Drill](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

3v1 / 4v1 Rondo

PURPOSE

Develop support angles, scanning and quick possession decisions.

Setup

Create a small square. Three or four attackers keep the ball from one defender.

How It Works

Rotate the defender after a win, mistake or short time period. Keep rounds competitive and active.

Coach Watches For

- Do not hide behind the defender.
- Create a new angle after every pass.
- Receive across the body when possible.
- Play quickly only when the picture demands it.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Adjust grid size.
- Progress from unlimited touches to two-touch.
- Add a second defender for stronger groups.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 2v1 Possession](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Practice Plans](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

1v1 to Gate

PURPOSE

Build confident attacking and controlled defending.

Setup

Create a lane with two small target gates. One attacker and one defender play at a time.

How It Works

Attacker scores by dribbling through a target gate. If defender wins it, defender counters through the opposite gate.

Coach Watches For

- Attacker changes speed and direction.
- Defender closes quickly, then slows down.
- Stay balanced; do not stab at the ball.
- Protect the most dangerous route.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use two gates to create choice.
- Progress to goal with goalkeeper.
- Start defender from different angles.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U10 Defending](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

2v1 to Goal

PURPOSE

Teach the ball carrier to commit a defender and use the extra player.

Setup

Two attackers begin against one defender and attack a goal. Defender counters to a gate if the ball is won.

How It Works

Keep repetitions fast. Rotate all players through attacking and defending roles.

Coach Watches For

- Attack with speed.
- Support player creates a clear angle.
- Pass when the defender commits.
- Do not run side-by-side too close together.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add a recovering defender.
- Progress to 3v2.
- Start from different field channels.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - 2v1 Drills](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

Attack Then Defend

PURPOSE

Connect finishing with immediate defensive transition.

Setup

Use two attacking lines. First player attacks goal and shoots; immediately after the shot, the opposite player attacks and the shooter becomes defender.

How It Works

Keep the next ball ready so transition is immediate.

Coach Watches For

- Finish without unnecessary touches.
- React immediately after the shot.
- Recover goal-side.
- Defender pressures under control.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Start from different angles.
- Add a goalkeeper.
- Progress to 2v1 transition.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 1v1 Transition Drill](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

2v2 Pressure & Cover

PURPOSE

Teach the relationship between first and second defender.

Setup

Two attackers go toward goal or gates against two defenders.

How It Works

Nearest defender pressures the ball. Second defender covers behind and inside, adjusting as the ball moves.

Coach Watches For

- Communicate who pressures.
- Cover at a useful angle and distance.
- Protect central space first.
- Switch roles as the ball travels.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Progress to 3v3.
- Add a counter target for defenders.
- Vary starting positions.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U10 Defending Practice](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

3v2 Transition

PURPOSE

Develop numbers-up attacking and recovery defending.

Setup

Three attackers play toward goal against two defenders. If defenders win the ball, they counter to gates or small goals.

How It Works

Serve the next ball quickly and rotate roles frequently.

Coach Watches For

- Attackers use width.
- Ball carrier recognizes the extra player.
- Defenders delay and protect the middle.
- Everyone reacts immediately on turnover.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add a recovering defender.
- Progress to 4v3.
- Set a time limit for the attack.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

Build Out & Advance

PURPOSE

Help players connect goalkeeper, defenders, midfield and attack.

Setup

Begin with goalkeeper possession in the 1-3-2-1. Position the back three across the field, two midfielders ahead of them and the forward providing depth. Start unopposed so players can see the passing lanes, then add pressure.

How It Works

The goalkeeper starts each repetition. The back three spread to create safe first options, the two midfielders move to support at different angles, and the forward stays high enough to provide depth. The team attempts to move the ball into the next zone while keeping the 1-3-2-1 relationships visible. As players understand the pattern, add opponents and allow them to choose whether to play through the middle or around pressure.

Coach Watches For

- Outside defenders create width while the central defender stays connected and available as a safe option.
- Midfielders should avoid standing on the same line; stagger so the player on the ball has a clear passing angle.
- The two midfielders connect the back three to the forward; the forward provides depth and can check toward the ball when needed.
- Receive with an open body when possible and use the first touch away from pressure.
- Goalkeeper scans both sides before distributing and uses the simplest safe option.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Begin unopposed with all seven players in the 1-3-2-1 so the passing picture is clear.
- Add three pressing opponents, then increase to five as the group becomes more comfortable.
- Finish with a full 7v7 phase and allow the build-out to happen naturally from goalkeeper restarts.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U10 Practice Plans](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

Conditioned 7v7 Match Play

PURPOSE

Apply the weekly theme in the actual U10 game structure.

Setup

Play 7v7 in the NSFC 1-3-2-1 with goalkeepers and normal directional play. Use only one or two simple conditions connected to the practice objective so the activity still looks and feels like soccer.

How It Works

Examples: require the build-out to begin through the back three, award a bonus for finding both sides of the field before scoring, reward a midfielder receiving between lines, or challenge the team to recover its 1-3-2-1 shape quickly after losing possession. Remove the conditions before the final segment.

Coach Watches For

- Coach only during natural stoppages or when a clear team-picture needs to be corrected; avoid constant instructions while the ball is moving.
- Reinforce the 1-3-2-1 relationships: back-three width, two midfield support angles, forward depth, and compact recovery when possession is lost.
- Rotate players through the back line, midfield and forward roles over time so formation learning does not become early specialization.
- Remove the condition for the final segment and allow players to solve the game in free 7v7 play.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use thirds or wide channels only when they help illustrate spacing.
- Restart from the goalkeeper to rehearse the 1-3-2-1 build-out.
- Finish with unrestricted 7v7 free play.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

[SoccerXpert - U10 Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

U10 Coach Quick Reference

WHAT U10 PLAYERS SHOULD HEAR OFTEN

Check your shoulder. • Can you play forward? • Move after you pass. • Give the ball carrier an angle. • Pressure the ball. • Cover your teammate. • Get wide when we win it. • Recover when we lose it.

KEEP THE PRIORITIES STRAIGHT

Scores and standings now exist, but they do not replace player development. Teach players to compete, solve problems and play to win while continuing to rotate positions, develop technique and create meaningful playing opportunities.

External coaching references

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

[SoccerDrive - U10 Soccer Drills](#)

External examples are supplemental. Use the NSFC setup, age adaptations and coaching expectations above.

NSFC curriculum structure was also informed by Northern United FC material previously supplied to NSFC. The external links above are intended to give volunteer coaches additional examples while NSFC standards remain the governing guidance.