



U4 SOCCER SPROUTS

QUICK NAVIGATION

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Ages 3-4 | Fun-first, parent-assisted introduction to soccer

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

45-60 minute sessions | 1-2 sessions per week | 3v3 small-sided play | no goalkeepers, referees, or scorekeeping

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

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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.



U4 SOCCER SPROUTS

ACTIVITY LIBRARY INDEX

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Soccer Sprouts

A fun-first introduction to movement, the ball and the joy of playing.

Soccer Sprouts is NSFC's introductory soccer program for the youngest players. Sessions build confidence through movement and play while introducing running, jumping, balance, coordination, dribbling and kicking.

Program structure

Session length	45-60 minutes
Frequency	Normally 1-2 sessions per week
Play format	3v3 small-sided play
Goalkeepers / referees / score	None
Parent role	Parent-assisted participation; one parent/guardian on the field

U4 coaching lens

- Fun-first introduction to soccer
- Coordination, balance and movement skills
- Ball familiarity through age-appropriate games
- Listening and following simple instructions
- Positive reinforcement and confidence building

COACH NOTE

At this age, imagination is a coaching tool. A cone can be a castle, a ball can be treasure, and a dribbling grid can become a jungle. Keep the activity moving and let the story create the repetition.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 1

MEET THE BALL

PRIMARY FOCUS Ball familiarity	SECONDARY FOCUS Listening and movement
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Have fun with your ball.	

1. Welcome & Movement | 5-8 min

Simple running, jumping, stopping and balance games with parents participating.

2. My Ball & Me | 8-10 min

Every player has a ball. Explore toe taps, stopping the ball, gentle kicks and moving it with different parts of the foot.

3. Dribble Adventure | 10 min

Players dribble around cones or landmarks while the coach uses simple imaginative commands.

4. Red Light, Green Light | 8-10 min

Green means dribble, yellow means slow, red means stop the ball. Nobody is eliminated.

5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min

Finish with simple 3v3 soccer. No goalkeeper, referee or scorekeeping.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 2

STOP, START & TURN

PRIMARY FOCUS Dribbling control	SECONDARY FOCUS Balance and direction changes
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Can you stop it? Can you turn it?	

1. Movement Warm-Up | 5-8 min

Run, skip, hop and freeze. Add the ball once players are comfortable.

2. Big Touch / Little Touch | 8 min

Players experiment with small touches in traffic and bigger touches into open space.

3. Dribbling Gates | 10 min

Scatter two-cone gates. Players dribble through a gate, turn, and find another.

4. Traffic Lights | 8-10 min

Repeat familiar stop/start commands and add 'turn around' or 'slow motion.'

5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min

Allow the game to teach direction, sharing space and chasing the ball.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 3

KICK TO A TARGET

PRIMARY FOCUS Controlled kicking	SECONDARY FOCUS Aiming and confidence
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Look at the target, then kick.	

1. Ball Warm-Up | 5-8 min
- Toe taps, gentle dribbles and stopping the ball.
2. Knock It Down | 10 min
- Players kick toward cones or soft targets from short distances.
3. Goal Hunt | 10 min
- Use several small cone goals. Players dribble to a goal and kick through it.
4. Clean Your Yard | 8-10 min
- Two groups gently kick balls from their side to the other. Keep it playful and safe.
5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min
- Celebrate attempts to move the ball toward goal.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 4

DRIBBLE AROUND TROUBLE

PRIMARY FOCUS Changing direction	SECONDARY FOCUS Awareness of people and space
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Find the open grass.	

1. Follow the Leader | 5-8 min
- Coach or parent leads simple movement with a ball.
2. Cone Forest | 10 min
- Players dribble through scattered cones without touching them.
3. Sharks & Minnows - U4 | 8-10 min
- Players dribble across while a coach or parent provides light pressure. No elimination.
4. Find Open Grass | 8 min
- Coach points to open areas and players dribble toward them.
5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min
- Use only simple cues such as 'find space' and 'keep going.'

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 5

KICK TOWARD GOAL

PRIMARY FOCUS Dribbling into shooting	SECONDARY FOCUS Recognizing a target
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE See the goal and go for it.	

1. Dribble & Stop | 5-8 min
- Review familiar touches and stopping.
2. Dribble Then Kick | 10 min
- Players dribble a short distance and kick into a wide goal.
3. Score Anywhere | 10 min
- Several small goals are placed around the area; players choose one and score.
4. Treasure Goals | 8 min
- Each goal is a treasure cave. Score, collect an imaginary treasure, then find another.
5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min
- Let players discover when to dribble and when to kick.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 6

PLAYING TOGETHER

PRIMARY FOCUS Sharing the ball	SECONDARY FOCUS Simple teammate awareness
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Can you find a friend?	

1. Partner Roll & Kick | 8 min

With parents or partners, gently roll or pass the ball back and forth.

2. Passing Gates - Intro | 8-10 min

Two players stand on opposite sides of a wide cone gate and pass through it.

3. Find a Friend | 8 min

Players dribble until the coach calls 'friend,' then gently pass toward a nearby partner.

4. Team Treasure | 8-10 min

Pairs work together to move a ball toward a target.

5. 3v3 Free Play | 12-18 min

Praise sharing and helping without requiring passes.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 7

ATTACK & RECOVER

PRIMARY FOCUS Reacting after the ball changes	SECONDARY FOCUS Effort and persistence
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Keep trying - get your ball back.	

1. Movement Review | 5-8 min

Favorite movement and ball commands from prior weeks.

2. Protect Your Ball - U4 | 8 min

Players keep their ball close while a coach provides gentle pressure.

3. Chase It Back | 8-10 min

Coach nudges a player's ball away; player quickly recovers and continues.

4. Mini 1v1 | 8-10 min

Very short 1v1 rounds to a wide cone goal with adult support.

5. 3v3 Free Play | 15-20 min

Keep interruptions minimal and celebrate recovery effort.

U4 SOCCER SPROUTS | WEEK 8

SOCCER CELEBRATION

PRIMARY FOCUS Review and confidence	SECONDARY FOCUS Enjoyment and independence
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Look how much you can do now.	

- 1. Player Favorites | 5-8 min
Let players choose favorite warm-up movements.
- 2. Favorite Dribbling Game | 8-10 min
Repeat the group's favorite dribbling activity.
- 3. Favorite Kicking Game | 8-10 min
Repeat a familiar target or scoring activity.
- 4. Family Challenge | 8 min
Parents and players complete a simple dribble-and-kick course together.
- 5. Extended 3v3 Play | 15-20 min
Finish the season with soccer, encouragement and celebration.

My Ball & Me

PURPOSE

Build comfort touching and controlling a soccer ball.

Setup

Every player has a Size 3 ball and personal space.

How It Works

Use simple commands: stop it, tap it, roll it, kick it gently, move around it, and dribble a few steps.

Coach Watches For

- Players are engaged rather than waiting.
- Both feet get opportunities.
- Parents assist without doing the activity for the child.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add colors or animal movements.
- Ask players to copy the coach.
- Let a player choose the next move.

Red Light, Green Light

PURPOSE

Teach stop/start control and listening.

Setup

Players line up with a ball on one side of a small area.

How It Works

Green = dribble. Yellow = slow. Red = stop the ball. Add turns or silly movements as players improve.

Coach Watches For

- Ball remains reasonably close.
- Players learn to stop the ball under control.
- Nobody is eliminated.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add 'purple light' = turn around.
- Let players call the colors.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Red Light, Green Light](#)

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

Dribbling Gates

PURPOSE

Encourage controlled dribbling toward a visible target.

Setup

Scatter many pairs of cones throughout the area, creating wide gates.

How It Works

Players dribble through any gate, then choose another. Parents can help point out open gates.

Coach Watches For

- Head occasionally comes up.
- Players change direction.
- Gates are wide enough for success.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Count gates for 30 seconds.
- Use only the right or left foot briefly.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Dribbling Through Gates](#)

[SoccerDrive - Gatekeepers Dribbling Activity](#)

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

Cone Forest

PURPOSE

Develop awareness and direction changes.

Setup

Scatter individual cones randomly in a grid. One ball per player.

How It Works

Players dribble through the 'forest' without hitting trees. Use stories: quiet forest, windy forest, fast animals, sleepy animals.

Coach Watches For

- Small touches near cones.
- Safe spacing.
- Fun and imagination remain the priority.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Add a few 'magic' cones that require a turn.
- Parents become stationary trees.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - The Flag Game \(tight-space dribbling\)](#)

[SoccerDrive - Improve Your Dribbling](#)

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

Goal Hunt

PURPOSE

Connect dribbling to a controlled kick toward goal.

Setup

Create several wide two-cone goals around the area.

How It Works

Players dribble to any open goal, kick through it, collect the ball, and find another.

Coach Watches For

- Players approach under control.
- Kick is aimed rather than simply powerful.
- Many repetitions with minimal lines.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use different goal sizes.
- Have parent and child alternate scoring.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - U4-U8 Drill Library](#)

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

3v3 Free Play

PURPOSE

Let children experience the actual game in its simplest form.

Setup

Use a small field with two goals. No goalkeeper, referee or scorekeeping.

How It Works

Play 3v3 when numbers allow. Restart simply and quickly. Adults help with boundaries and encouragement, not constant direction.

Coach Watches For

- Participation and enjoyment.
- Players move toward the ball and goals.
- Coach avoids over-stopping play.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Rotate groups often.
- Use multiple small fields if attendance is high.