



U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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Ages 7-8 | Purposeful individual skill and team decision-making

PROGRAM SNAPSHOT

Approximately 60 minutes | 1-2 practices per week | 4v4-6v6 | scheduled games | goalkeeper introduction

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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.



U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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U8 Player Development

The bridge from introductory soccer to purposeful team play.

At U8, NSFC begins asking players to solve more soccer problems while preserving the fun, active environment developed at U4 and U6. Players should receive many touches, learn to use teammates, experience both attacking and defending, and begin recognizing useful space. Scheduled games provide a place to apply the week's theme; they are not a reason to abandon development for results.

Program structure

Typical session	Approximately 60 minutes
Frequency	Normally 1-2 practices per week, plus regularly scheduled games
Game format	7v7
Goalkeepers	May be introduced and rotated; avoid early specialization
Game official	Normally a coach or parent; no formal referee required
Scores / standings	No standings; development and game understanding remain the priority
Ball	Size 3

U8 coaching lens

- Individual ball skill still comes first. Do not turn U8 into a tactical lecture.
- Use 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v3 and 4v4 games to teach decisions naturally.
- Introduce simple positional shape, but rotate players and avoid labeling children by one permanent position.
- Teach goalkeeping as a skill experience: ready position, using hands safely, simple distribution and confidence - not specialization.
- Games should reinforce the weekly learning theme. Winning is welcome; development determines success.

Formation & Position Guidance

A visual framework - not fixed positions.

NSFC coaches may use guided shape to help U8 players understand width, depth, support and recovery. The exact shape should match the number of players on the field and whether a goalkeeper is being used. Players should rotate through roles during the season.

Suggested starting shapes

- 4v4 without goalkeeper: diamond - 1 deeper player, 2 wide/supporting players, 1 higher player.
- 4v4 with goalkeeper: goalkeeper + 1 defender + 2 higher/wide players.
- 5v5: goalkeeper + 1 defender + 2 wide/supporting players + 1 forward, or a simple 2-2 shape without a goalkeeper.
- 6v6: goalkeeper + 2 defenders + 2 midfield/support players + 1 forward, or a simple 2-2-1 shape.

What coaches should actually teach

- When we have the ball: spread out enough to give the ball carrier options.
- When we lose the ball: recover toward our goal and help.
- The closest player pressures the ball; teammates protect useful space behind and beside them.
- After passing, move again. Do not admire the pass.
- Everyone attacks and everyone defends; roles change as the ball changes.

COACH NOTE

Formation is a teaching aid at U8. If players are staring at spots on the field instead of playing soccer, simplify the instruction and let them play.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 1

BALL MASTERY & SPACE

PRIMARY FOCUS Ball control and purposeful dribbling	SECONDARY FOCUS Scanning and changing direction
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Keep it close in traffic. Push it into space when you can.	

1. Arrival Ball Mastery | 5-8 min

Every player with a ball: toe taps, foundations, inside/outside touches, pull-backs and free dribbling.

2. Grid Dribbling | 10 min

Players dribble through a grid with scattered cones. Use small touches near traffic and larger touches into open space.

3. Dribbling Gates | 10 min

Players find and dribble through many cone gates. Encourage looking up before choosing the next gate.

4. 1v1 Reaction Gate Challenge | 10-12 min

Pairs react and compete to dribble through a target gate. Keep rounds short and rotate opponents.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-22 min

3v3 or 4v4. Coach only the theme: control, space and confident dribbling.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 2

PASS, RECEIVE & MOVE

PRIMARY FOCUS Inside-foot passing and first touch	SECONDARY FOCUS Movement after the pass
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Pass with purpose. Receive it so your next play is easier.	

1. Ball Warm-Up | 5-7 min

Dribble, turn and finish with several short partner passes.

2. Passing Through Gates | 10 min

Pairs pass through scattered gates, then move together to a new target.

3. First Touch to Space | 10 min

Partners pass; receiver takes the first touch to the side into open space before returning the ball.

4. Pass & Move Gates | 10-12 min

Pass through a gate, then move to a new angle. Keep players from standing behind their pass.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-22 min

3v3 or 4v4. Praise players who pass and immediately move to help again.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 3

1v1 ATTACKING

PRIMARY FOCUS Confidence taking on an opponent	SECONDARY FOCUS Change of speed and shielding
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Make the defender choose - then attack the space.	

1. Move of the Day | 7-8 min

Practice one simple move: pull-back, inside/outside cut, or body feint.

2. 1v1 With Gates | 12 min

Attacker receives from defender and scores by dribbling through a gate under control.

3. Protect the Ball | 8-10 min

Players learn to place their body between the defender and the ball.

4. 1v1 to Multiple Goals | 10-12 min

Give attackers more than one target so they must recognize where space is available.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-20 min

3v3 or 4v4. Encourage appropriate 1v1 attempts rather than forcing a pass every time.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 4

DEFEND & RECOVER

PRIMARY FOCUS 1v1 defending	SECONDARY FOCUS Transition after winning or losing the ball
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Get close, slow down, stay between the ball and goal.	

1. Mirror Movement | 6-8 min

Partners mirror lateral and forward/backward movement without a ball, then add a ball.

2. 1v1 Corner Goals | 10-12 min

Defender works on angle and patience while attacker tries to dribble through a corner gate.

3. 1v1 Transition | 10-12 min

As soon as one attack ends, the player must react to the next attacking or defending job.

4. 2v2 Defending | 10 min

Two defenders learn pressure and simple cover without over-coaching.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-20 min

Reward quick recovery and players helping behind the first defender.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 5

SHOOTING & GOALKEEPER INTRO

PRIMARY FOCUS Accurate finishing	SECONDARY FOCUS Goalkeeper confidence and safety
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Set the ball, see the target, finish under control.	

1. Dribble & Finish | 8-10 min

Dribble from different angles and finish into a wide target. Accuracy before power.

2. 1v1 50/50 to Goal | 10-12 min

Players compete for a ball and finish. Rotate any goalkeeper frequently.

3. Goalkeeper Basics Station | 8-10 min

Introduce ready position, getting the body behind the ball, safe hands, and simple roll-out distribution.

4. World Cup / Numbers to Goal | 10-12 min

Use a small-number finishing game that creates repeated shots and quick decisions.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-20 min

Use goalkeepers if appropriate, but rotate. Encourage shots when the opportunity is real.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 6

SUPPORT & 2v1 DECISIONS

PRIMARY FOCUS Creating a passing option	SECONDARY FOCUS Dribble-or-pass decisions
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Help the player with the ball - give them an angle.	

1. Pass & Move Warm-Up | 6-8 min

Short passes with immediate movement to a new supporting angle.

2. 2v1 to Goal | 12 min

Two attackers solve one defender. Let players discover when to pass and when to dribble.

3. Support Triangle | 10 min

Three players keep useful angles around the ball with short passes and movement.

4. 3v3 Four-Goal Game | 10-12 min

Multiple goals reward scanning, width and changing the point of attack.

5. Small-Sided Game | 18-20 min

Ask one question during stoppages: Where can you move to help the ball?

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 7

TRANSITION & TEAM SHAPE

PRIMARY FOCUS Reacting when possession changes	SECONDARY FOCUS Width, depth and recovery
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE When the ball changes teams, our job changes immediately.	

1. Transition Tag with Ball | 6-8 min

Short reaction game: on command, players change direction or target with the ball.

2. 1v1 Transition | 10 min

Fast attack-to-defense repetitions.

3. 2v2 Transition | 10-12 min

Pairs attack, lose/win the ball, and reorganize together.

4. 4v4 to a Small Gate | 12 min

Use a directional small-sided game to reinforce support, pressure and balance.

5. Game Simulation | 18-22 min

Play the expected game format. Use guided shape only as much as needed to help spacing and recovery.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can make decisions themselves.

U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT | WEEK 8

PLAY, REVIEW & CONFIDENCE

PRIMARY FOCUS Applying the season skills	SECONDARY FOCUS Decision-making and enjoyment
WEEK'S COACHING MESSAGE Play the game. Show what you know.	

1. Player-Choice Ball Warm-Up | 5-7 min

Players select favorite ball-mastery movements from the season.

2. Favorite Skill Game | 8-10 min

Repeat the activity the group learned most from or enjoyed most.

3. 1v1 / 2v1 Challenge | 10 min

Mix individual attacking with a simple teammate decision.

4. Small-Sided Tournament | 12-15 min

Short 3v3/4v4 rounds. No standings are necessary; rotate opponents and roles.

5. Extended Game | 20-25 min

Finish with the normal game format. Coach lightly and observe growth.

Game connection: Use the scheduled game to reinforce this week’s theme. Keep sideline instruction brief so players can 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 3 ball per player.

How It Works

Players dribble freely. Near cones or traffic, use smaller touches; in open space, push the ball farther. On coach 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 - U8 Dribbling Drill Library](#)

[SoccerDrive - Improve Your Dribbling](#)

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

Dribbling Gates

PURPOSE

Encourage scanning, directional changes and controlled acceleration.

Setup

Scatter many two-cone gates throughout the area. Each player has a ball.

How It Works

Players dribble through a gate under control, look up, choose another gate and change direction toward it.

Coach Watches For

- Players look before choosing the next target.
- Ball stays close enough to turn.
- Players accelerate into open space after the gate.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Count unique gates in 45 seconds.
- Require a turn immediately after a gate.
- Add one or two passive defenders.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - U8 Drill Library](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Dribbling Library](#)

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

Passing Through Gates

PURPOSE

Build inside-foot passing accuracy, receiving and communication.

Setup

Scatter cone gates. Pair players with one ball. Start on opposite sides of a gate.

How It Works

Pass through the gate to the partner. Receiver controls the ball, both players move to a new gate, and repeat.

Coach Watches For

- Plant foot beside the ball.
- Use inside of foot with ankle firm.
- Receiver prepares before the ball arrives.
- Players communicate and move together.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Make gates narrower.
- Require first touch to one side before passing.
- Add a time challenge without sacrificing technique.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U8 Passing Drills](#)

[SoccerXpert - U8 Drill Library](#)

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

First Touch to Space

PURPOSE

Teach players to receive the ball into useful space rather than stopping it underneath themselves.

Setup

Pairs 6-10 yards apart with a cone slightly to the receiver's left and right.

How It Works

Partner passes. Receiver opens the body and takes the first touch toward one side, then passes back from the new angle.

Coach Watches For

- Receiver is ready before the pass.
- First touch moves away from pressure/into space.
- Touch stays close enough for the next action.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Coach calls left/right late.
- Add a passive defender behind the receiver.
- Progress to pass, receive, then dribble through a nearby gate.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Receiving Drills](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 First Touch + Passing](#)

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

Pass & Move Gates

PURPOSE

Connect passing with immediate movement and support.

Setup

Use several gates. Pairs or groups of three share one ball.

How It Works

Pass through a gate, then move to create a new angle or move together toward another gate. The passer should not remain in the same spot.

Coach Watches For

- Pass then move.
- Support player creates a visible angle.
- Players scan before receiving.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use groups of three for a simple support triangle.
- Require the receiver's first touch away from the gate.
- Add a passive defender.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U8 Passing Drill Library](#)

[SoccerXpert - U8 Drill Library](#)

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

1v1 Reaction Gate Challenge

PURPOSE

Build quick reactions, deception and confidence attacking a defender.

Setup

Create a small grid with target gates. Work in pairs.

How It Works

On the start signal, attacker tries to use a change of direction or speed to dribble through a target gate while defender reacts and prevents the score.

Coach Watches For

- Attacker keeps ball close near defender.
- Use a feint or change of speed.
- Defender stays balanced and watches the ball.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Switch attacker/defender every repetition.
- Add a second scoring gate.
- Make the space wider for beginners.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 1v1 Reaction Gate Challenge](#)

[SoccerDrive - 1v1 With Gates](#)

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

1v1 With Gates

PURPOSE

Teach attacking moves and basic 1v1 defending in a directional game.

Setup

Use a 12x12-ish grid with two scoring gates. Defender starts with the ball.

How It Works

Defender passes to attacker and closes down. Attacker scores by dribbling through a gate under control. If defender wins it, defender attacks the opposite gate.

Coach Watches For

- Attacker receives away from pressure when possible.
- Accelerate after the move.
- Defender approaches quickly, then slows down.
- Defender tries to show attacker away from the easiest path.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Widen gates for success.
- Add a second pair of gates.
- Progress to 2v2.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - 1v1 With Gates](#)

[SoccerXpert - U8 1v1 Drills](#)

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

Protect the Ball

PURPOSE

Teach shielding, balance and persistence under pressure.

Setup

Pairs share one ball in a small space. Start with one player protecting the stationary or slowly moving ball.

How It Works

Protector uses body position to keep the opponent away from the ball without pushing. After a short round, switch roles.

Coach Watches For

- Body stays between defender and ball.
- Use arm for balance, not pushing.
- Ball stays within playing distance.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Begin stationary, then allow slow dribbling.
- Progress to winning the ball and escaping through a gate.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Protect the Rock](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Turning / Shielding Library](#)

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

1v1 Corner Goals

PURPOSE

Teach defenders to control angle while attackers recognize space.

Setup

Set a 20x20-ish grid with scoring gates in corners. One attacker, one defender, one ball.

How It Works

Attacker attempts to dribble through an available corner gate. Defender tries to curve the approach and force play away from the easiest target.

Coach Watches For

- Defender gets close under control.
- Body angle shows attacker away from goal.
- Attacker changes direction if one target closes.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use only two gates for beginners.
- Progress to 2v2.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - 1v1 Corner Goals](#)

[SoccerXpert - 1v1 Drill Library](#)

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

1v1 Transition

PURPOSE

Develop the immediate switch between attacking and defending.

Setup

Small field with two goals/gates and players ready to enter quickly.

How It Works

One 1v1 ends; the player who just attacked must immediately react to the next opponent or possession change. Keep repetitions fast.

Coach Watches For

- Players react instead of stopping after the play.
- First defensive job is to protect goal and pressure safely.
- New attacker uses the moment before defender is organized.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use cone gates instead of goals.
- Progress to 2v2 transition.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 1v1 Transition](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Transition Library](#)

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

Dribble & Finish

PURPOSE

Connect a controlled dribble to accurate shooting.

Setup

Use one or more wide goals. Start players from different angles and keep lines short.

How It Works

Player dribbles toward goal, takes a controlled setup touch and shoots. Retrieve ball and rotate.

Coach Watches For

- Last touch sets up the shot.
- Plant foot beside ball.
- Strike through center of ball with appropriate surface.
- Accuracy before power.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Alternate feet.
- Start from wider angles.
- Add passive pressure.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Shooting Drill Library](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Shooting Drills](#)

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

1v1 50/50 to Goal

PURPOSE

Combine competing for the ball, finishing and an optional goalkeeper experience.

Setup

Use a goal and two starting lines. Coach serves a ball into a fair central area.

How It Works

Two players compete to win the ball and score. If using a goalkeeper, rotate frequently so many players experience the role.

Coach Watches For

- Compete safely for the ball.
- Winner attacks quickly.
- Shot is placed on target.
- Goalkeeper starts balanced and tracks the ball.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use cone goal without goalkeeper.
- Serve balls at different angles.
- Let winner become goalkeeper for one repetition only.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 1v1 50/50 to Goal](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Goalkeeping / Shooting Library](#)

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

Goalkeeper Basics Station

PURPOSE

Introduce goalkeeper movement, safe handling and distribution without specializing players.

Setup

One small goal, several balls and 2-4 players per station. Coach or partner serves gentle balls.

How It Works

Show ready position, getting body behind the ball, collecting simple ground balls, and rolling the ball accurately to a teammate. Rotate every few minutes.

Coach Watches For

- Hands and body move behind the ball.
- Eyes stay on the ball.
- Keeper gets up and distributes quickly.
- Every player has the opportunity to try the role.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Progress from rolled balls to gentle kicked balls.
- Add side-to-side movement before the serve.
- Finish with roll-out to a moving teammate.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Goalkeeping Drill Library](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Goalkeeping Drills](#)

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

2v1 to Goal

PURPOSE

Teach the ball carrier to choose between dribbling and passing while the teammate creates support.

Setup

Small field with one goal/gate. Two attackers start against one defender.

How It Works

Coach serves to either attacker. Attackers try to score; defender delays and protects goal. Rotate roles often.

Coach Watches For

- Ball carrier recognizes defender position.
- Support player moves away from defender into a passing lane.
- Pass is made early enough to help.
- Defender delays rather than diving in.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Make field wider to help attackers.
- Add a time limit.
- Progress to 2v2.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U8 2v1 Drill Library](#)

[SoccerXpert - U8 Drill Library](#)

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

Support Triangle

PURPOSE

Introduce useful passing angles and movement after the pass.

Setup

Three cones form a triangle, 6-10 yards apart. Three players, one ball.

How It Works

Players pass around the triangle, but the key instruction is to prepare the body before receiving and move immediately after passing.

Coach Watches For

- Open body to see more of the field.
- First touch prepares next action.
- Passer stays engaged after the pass.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Reverse direction.
- One player becomes a light passive defender.
- Use a moving triangle rather than fixed cones.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - Passing / Receiving Categories](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Passing Drills](#)

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

3v3 Four-Goal Game

PURPOSE

Develop scanning, width, support and quick attacking decisions.

Setup

20x30-ish field with two small goals on each end line. Play 3v3.

How It Works

Teams may score in either of the two goals they attack. Multiple targets encourage players to recognize where defenders are not.

Coach Watches For

- Players spread enough to see both goals.
- Ball carrier changes direction when one side closes.
- Teammates create options instead of following the ball.
- Defenders recover and protect dangerous space.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Play 4v4 if needed.
- Require dribbling through a gate to score.
- Remove restrictions if they slow the game.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 3v3, 4-Goal Small-Sided Game Funino](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Small-Sided Games](#)

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

2v2 Transition

PURPOSE

Develop teamwork and immediate role changes in a realistic small-number game.

Setup

Small field with two goals or cone gates. Organize pairs with quick rotations.

How It Works

Play short 2v2 rounds. When possession changes, players immediately reorganize to attack or defend. Restart quickly after goals or out-of-bounds.

Coach Watches For

- One player pressures; teammate provides simple cover.
- Attackers separate enough to create two options.
- Players react immediately after losing or winning the ball.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use 2v2 tournament rounds.
- Progress to 3v3.
- Add goalkeepers only if field/goal size makes sense.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerDrive - U8 Small-Sided Games](#)

[SoccerXpert - U8 Drill Library](#)

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

4v4 to a Small Gate

PURPOSE

Connect individual skill to team support, penetration and defending.

Setup

25x35-ish field with a small gate/goal at each end. Play 4v4.

How It Works

Normal directional game. Teams attack one end and defend the other. Use this to coach spacing, support, pressure and recovery with minimal stoppages.

Coach Watches For

- Ball carrier has at least one useful option.
- Team spreads when attacking.
- Closest defender pressures; others recover.
- Players recognize dribble, pass or shot opportunities.

Easy Progressions / Variations

- Use a diamond starting shape.
- Play 3v3 if attendance is low.
- Add a goalkeeper only when appropriate.

COACH RESOURCE - SEE A SIMILAR ACTIVITY

[SoccerXpert - 4v4 Soccer to a Small Gate](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Small-Sided Games](#)

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

Coach Quick Reference

The page to revisit when practice or game day gets busy.

Practice habits

- Ball-based warm-up; no need for fitness laps.
- One clear theme per practice.
- Short demonstrations, then let players try.
- Avoid long lines; create multiple stations when possible.
- Use questions: What did you see? Where is the space? How can you help?
- Finish with meaningful small-sided play.

Game-day habits

- Use a simple shape, then allow players to play.
- Rotate positions and goalkeeper opportunities.
- Coach the weekly theme more than the score.
- Keep instructions brief while the ball is in play.
- Use substitutions and breaks for individual teaching.
- No standings: confidence, effort, decisions and improvement are the measures that matter.

External reference libraries

[SoccerXpert - Under 8 Soccer Drills, Games, and Exercises](#)

[SoccerDrive - U8 Soccer Drills](#)

These outside resources are optional supplements. NSFC program rules, safety expectations, age-group guidance and the activity adaptations in this guide remain the standard for NSFC coaches.