

# **Coaches Handbook Outline**

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# **East Bridgewater Youth Soccer Association(EBYSA)**

## **Welcome:**

The EBYSA would like to thank you for volunteering your time and sharing your passion for the game of soccer with the youth of East Bridgewater. We hope that you will find this handbook to be a valuable resource as you prepare for and throughout the season.

## **Philosophy:**

The East Bridgewater Youth Soccer Association is dedicated to promoting the game of soccer, at all levels, to the youth of East Bridgewater. We are committed to providing all who participate with an equal opportunity to learn and enjoy the game through the development of individual skill, teamwork, fitness and fair play. Recognizing that coaches are one of our most valuable resources; we will work diligently to provide them with educational opportunities and the necessary assistance to be the best teachers and leaders possible.

## **Board Members**

President	Dave Floeck	<a href="mailto:dfloeck@comcast.net">dfloeck@comcast.net</a>
Vice President	Vicki Maderia	<a href="mailto:vickmad@comcast.net">vickmad@comcast.net</a>
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Special Assistant to League	Bobbi Resendes	
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# Coaches Code of Conduct

The Board of Directors of Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association, Incorporated (Mass Youth Soccer) and the leaders of the affiliated Leagues are concerned about the conduct of all coaches and referees during games at all levels, from recreational to premier to ODP.

We want to ensure that games are fair, positive and enjoyable experiences for all of the children and adults involved. A soccer game should be friendly and unifying - a spirited social and athletic occasion for players, coaches, referees and spectators.

To clarify expectations of coach conduct, we jointly expect all coaches to conform to this code of conduct.

- Before, during and after the game, be an example of dignity, patience and positive spirit.
- Before a game, introduce yourself to the opposing coach and to the referee.
- During the game, you are responsible for the sportsmanship of your players. If one of your players is disrespectful, irresponsible or overly aggressive, take the player out of the game at least long enough for him/her to calm down.
- During the game, you are also responsible for the conduct of the parents of your players. It is imperative to explain acceptable player and parent behavior in a preseason meeting.
- Encourage them to applaud and cheer for good plays by either team. Discourage them and you may need to be forceful and direct from yelling at players and the referee.
- During the game, do not address the referee at all. If you have a small issue, discuss it with the referee calmly and patiently after the game.
- If you have a major complaint, or if you think the referee was unfair, biased, unfit or incompetent, report your opinion to your League. Your reactions will be taken seriously if they are presented objectively and formally.
- After the game, thank the referee and ask your players to do the same.

## **We stress two points:**

Referees - especially young and inexperienced ones - are like your players and yourself, in that they need time to develop. You can play an important role in helping them to improve by letting them concentrate on the game. You can help by encouraging them, by accepting their inevitable, occasional mistakes and by offering constructive post-game comments. On the other hand, you could discourage and demoralize the referees by criticizing their decisions, by verbally abusing them and inciting - or even accepting - your own players' overly aggressive behavior.

Your example is powerful, for better or worse. If you insist on fair play, if you concentrate on your players' enjoyment of the game and their overall, long term development, and if you support the referee, your players and their parents will notice. If you encourage (or allow) your players to play outside the rules, if you're overly concerned about results, and if you criticize the referee harshly, your players and their parents will also notice. Think about what you're doing during a game! Uphold the Spirit of the Game! If you follow the expectations described above, the spirit of the game will be alive and well in Massachusetts and will grow, along with the enjoyment of all.

Coaches who don't follow the expectations described above will be disciplined or removed.

# Players' and Coaches' Equipment

## **Players:**

All players are expected to have the following equipment for all:

### *Practices:*

- Soccer Ball
- Drink - Water or Gatorade
- Appropriate footwear - cleats, sneakers, turf shoes
- Shin Guards

### *Games:*

- Uniform
- Soccer Ball
- Drink - Water or Gatorade
- Appropriate footwear - cleats, sneakers, turf shoes
- Shin Guards

## **Coaches:**

### *Practices:*

- *Practice plan - Lesson plan*
- Extra Soccer Ball or 2.
- Appropriate footwear - cleats, sneakers, turf shoes
- Look the part - Shorts, T-shirt, etc
- Scrimmage vests
- cones/markers

### *Games:*

- Soccer Balls and cones for warm up
- Watch - Rotate players evenly
- Basic first aid kit

# Good Coach

A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.

**The following characteristics are traits that exist in all good coaches.**

**Patience-** This is probably the most important characteristic. Children are so very different. Each one has varied potential and skill levels. A good coach is one who recognizes each child as an individual and he/she encourages that child to perform at his/her very best level.

**Respect** – A good Coach never singles out a child for making a mistake and he/she does not allow parents or the other team members to do so either. Players, parents, officials, and opponents should be treated with respect at all times.

**Sportsmanship**—My definition of sportsmanship is to teach kids to work together as a team in order to achieve a common goal. It also means teaching kids to respect other players as well as each other. Insults are not tolerated. Mistakes are team mistakes, and they are used as teaching tools for the next game.

**Ability to Teach** - Sounds simple, right? It's not. How many times has a parent signed up a child for a sport, only to have a well-intentioned father decide to coach? He may or may not know the sport. He may or may not relate well to his players. There is a huge difference between the team whose members do what is yelled at them, and the team whose members actually understand what to do and why. A good coach teaches his players basic fundamentals, explains concepts and enables his/her players to think logically when making a play.

**Love of Kids** - They have the energy to make every practice and every game a new experience for coaches and parents alike. Without their vision and energy, sports would be dull and unappreciated. They offer a day to-day challenge for coaches, which is contagious and which is motivation for everyone involved in athletics at all levels.

**Love of the Game** - Coaches must love their sport, and, more importantly, must show their players enthusiasm for every aspect of the game. This would include techniques and tactics. The love of the game must also show to the players the love for fair-play, respect for the opponents, officials, and spectators, and positive reinforcement for teammates. Only a good coach who loves the game can provide the correct aspects involved in the winning and losing of competition.

**Prepared** - Coaches must be prepared for practices and games. A well organized and well run practice is the greatest opportunity for our players to improve. If we are unorganized, our players will lose focus and miss the opportunity to better themselves.

# Theory of Coaching

## What is Player Development?

*The game is already in each child; we as coaches need to create a game environment: Activities that the child wants to participate in because they are fun.*

- Players being exposed to playing all positions.
- Every player has a ball for practice.
- Activities designed to maximize the number of touches by each player at practice.
- Rules modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Equipment modified for players according to their age group characteristics.
- Activities designed to promote thinking, not doing drills.
- De-emphasize winning/losing. We do not need to keep standings, statistics, etc.
- Kids at the beginning of practice are waiting for the coach to tell them what to do. This is extremely negative. What we as coaches should be doing is creating an environment where the kids play the game. What a coach can do to create this environment at the beginning of practice:
  - ❖ As the first kids arrive at practice, place 2 small goals so they can play 1 vs. 1.
  - ❖ As another child arrives, have them jump in and make it 2 vs. 1.
  - ❖ Keep adjusting the field size as new players show until they are all playing a game.
  - ❖ Do this for about 15 minutes, and then begin practice.

# Player Development Guide

U-6	U-8	U-10	U-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dribble with all surfaces using both feet</li> <li>• Dribble past someone</li> <li>• Introduce how to stop the ball (soft first touch)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dribble with all surfaces using both feet</li> <li>• Dribble past someone or out of trouble</li> <li>• Receiving the ball</li> <li>• Shooting technique</li> <li>• Introduce Passing (not a major focus at this age level)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with dribbling focus from U8</li> <li>• Passing with inside and outside of both feet</li> <li>• Shooting with both feet--- using laces</li> <li>• Receiving the ball with all parts of body</li> <li>• Heading</li> <li>• 1 v 1, 2 v 2 concepts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with U-10 focal points</li> <li>• Accuracy of passing (long and short)</li> <li>• Shooting (Accurate &amp; power)</li> <li>• Receiving with all parts of the body</li> </ul> <p><b>Tactics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support positions</li> <li>• Receiving the ball with pressure</li> <li>• Combination Play</li> <li>• Pressure vs Containing</li> </ul>

# Instructional Soccer

## *Age Group Skill Priorities*

### *U-6*

**Dribble with all surfaces of the feet**

**Dribble out of trouble**

**Dribble around someone**

**Learn rules of the game**

**Objective:** To provide a fun and active environment where players receive many touches on the ball. Whenever possible, all players should have a ball to maximize their comfort level with the ball.

### **Things to remember when coaching young players:**

Playing soccer at this young age is meant to give the players a feel for the game and a positive introduction to athletic training and competition. Kids at this age usually have an abundance of energy, which allows them to run around, and start and stop without much trouble. This abundance of energy also makes it very difficult for them to sit still and focus for any length of time. Therefore, as coaches we must be short in giving instructions and long on giving the kids an opportunity to perform. **Remember that the game is still the best teacher.**

Coaching through positive reinforcement seems to be the most effective method when dealing with kids at this young and impressionable age. Statements like “Johnny I really liked the way you dribbled with your head up” sends a message to the other players that dribbling with your head up is what the coach is looking for. Having Johnny do a quick demonstration for the team before you get into your activity would be a rewarding experience for all. (*Encourage players to try new things*) Remember that kids at this age tend to be visual learners so it is important that they see exactly what you are talking about. When the kids are playing a game, it is important for the coach to look for the skills that have been taught and see where the players need work. During a game, the coach should be a quiet observer, giving a limited number of instructions, while taking mental

notes on the players' execution of previously taught skills. These mental notes should be used in planning the next practice session with the team.

There are numerous "skills activities" that you can use with this age player that will develop their comfort level with the ball and have them smiling while they are doing it. I have listed a few below and there are many more listed on the **skills games** pages of this packet.

**1. Cone Hopping** – Spread out different colored discs (ex. Blue & orange) and have each player stand at a disc. You should have more discs than players. As a warm up you could have the players jog to discs of the same color as their starting disc. You could ask that they do a Karaoke, run backwards, and skip, etc from disc to disc. Now introduce a soccer ball and have each player 1. dribble to the same colored disc as their starting disc. 2. Roll ball using sole of the foot 3. Five ball touches when you get to a different cone 4. Dribble in a circle around cone before going to the next one.

There are numerous variations you can add to this activity. Be creative

**2. Red Light/Green Light** – Most everyone knows how this game is played. Now have players play it while dribbling the soccer ball. When coach yells red light, have players do "foot fire" (to keep the motor running). **Variation:** *Instead of calling out Red light/Green light, hold up discs to signal. This will force players to start dribbling with their heads up.*

**3. End Zone Soccer** – Set up a grid (size depends on number of players) and play 5 v 5. To score a goal the team must dribble the ball over the opponents end line. **Variation:** Have more than one ball in play at a time. Add a second ball and watch the intensity increase.

**4. Everybody is it** – Set up a grid and give every player a ball. Players must dribble around the grid and tag as many players as they can without leaving their soccer ball. Players should keep track of how many points they get. **Variation:** Split the team into two teams and make it a team competition. Add up all the points the white team got compared to the yellow team. **Variation: Hospital tag** – When a player gets tagged they must place their hand where they got tagged. If a player gets tagged a third time, having no more hands, they must go see the Doctor (coach), in the hospital, to receive treatment. The "Doctor" could heal the player by having them perform two head balls and then they can re-enter the activity. You pick the healing skill.

**5. Capture the balls** – Set up a grid with 4 home bases, marked with discs, in each corner. Place a number of soccer balls in the middle. Divide players into four groups and assign each group a corner/home base. On the coaches whistle, players gather soccer balls, using only feet, and dribble them back to their home base. Once the ball is in the home base the player should go get another ball, either from the middle or one of the other teams home bases. When the coach calls time, each team should count how many balls they have in their home base. The team with the most balls is

the winner. ***Tell players they may not prevent another team from taking a ball from their home base, no sitting on the balls and no blocking or pushing.***

**6. Body part dribble** – In a designated area, each player should dribble their ball using all parts of their foot. When the coach call out a body part the players must stop as quickly as possible and touch that body part to the ball. Vary the body parts ie; nose, elbow, both feet, head, etc

**7. Apple Picking** – Mark out a square, with a player in each corner with a ball. In the middle of the square, place a ball on top of a disc (the apple). On the coaches command the players should dribble clockwise, as fast as they can, around the square (tree). Once they get back to their starting position they dribble their ball into the middle and attempt to shoot their ball and knock the apple off the disc (branch). The first player to hit the apple and knock it off wins. Break the group up into teams, so while one player is going from each team, the others are cheering them on.

***Be creative when teaching the basic skills. It will make it more fun for the players and you will enjoy it as well.***

Ex. When teaching players how to do a throw in. Give each player a ball and line them up in a straight line. Place a number of discs in front of them and have them take a throw in and attempt to hit a disc. If they hit a disc they get one point. *Add a few different colored discs and make them worth more points.* Have players keep track of their points.

**Remember that the game is still the best teacher and the kids want to play. End every practice session with a game. Point out positive things that they are doing and encourage them to be creative.**

# Age Group Skill Priorities

## 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.

### **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, and 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. 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. *Another version would be to have ½ your players spread out and standing with their legs shoulder width apart. The other half of your players has a ball and must dribble around and pass the ball through their teammates legs. They may pass it from the front or back but may not go through the same "gate" twice in a row. Players should keep score of how many goals they score. Switch roles after a minute. Repeat 2 or 3 times.*

**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 player 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. Version 5: Number players off and coach calls number 31s, or 2s, etc.

**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 keep away**---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 vs. 1 continuous keep away. 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 End lines**---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one end line and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player's end line. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs.4

# Age Group Skill Priorities

## U-10

**Passing with inside and outside of both feet**

**Shooting with both feet---using laces**

**Receiving the ball with all parts of body**

**Heading**

**Tactical Priorities**

**Basic Attacking Ideas**

**Basic Defending Ideas**

**Comprehend 1 vs 1 concepts**

**Comprehend 2 vs 1 concepts**

**Introduction to 2 vs 2 concepts**

**Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd defenders**

**Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd attackers**

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 end, 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 comfort ability

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*

## **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.

**8)** 4 vs. 4 End zone 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 end zone until after the ball

has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.

**9)** 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.

**10)** 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.

# Age Group Skill Priorities

## U-12

**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 3rd 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!!!*

## **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 1st attacker (ball) and

2nd attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1st defender (pressure), 2nd defender (cover), and 3rd 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.

**11.** Bull Dog – This game is played in a 20 x 25 yard grid by two teams of 5-7 players. Each team is color coded and there should be a supply of soccer balls spread around the outside of the grid. One team starts with the ball in their hands, ie handball, and the other team passes the ball using their feet. The team that has the ball in their hands attempts to hit the ball being passed on the ground by the other team. Each time they hit the ball, they get a point. The game is continuous so keep playing even if the ball gets hit. If the ball leaves the

grid grab one of the extras from outside the grid. Play for a preset amount of time and switch roles at the end. Keep score to challenge the teams.

**Objective** – Improve passing technique under pressure while creating a fun and challenging environment

# Age Group Skill Priorities

## U-14 TRAINING

**U-13 and U-14: DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUAL SKILLS, INDIVIDUAL AND SMALL GROUP TACTICS.**

**HIGH PRIORITY:** The importance of possession: DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!

Development of individual skill.

All practices must challenge the player in competition.

Understanding of combination play:

1. Support
2. Takeovers
3. Wall pass

Individual and small group defending.

One session in three devoted to 1v1's, 2v2's, 3v3's.

Develop an understanding of:

1. Delay
2. Tracking back
3. Depth
4. Balance

**LOWER EMPHASIS** Functional play, Team play, Set Plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

# Age Group Skill Priorities

## U-16 TRAINING

### U-15 and U-16: DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP SKILL / TACTICS.

**HIGH PRIORITY:** Development of individual skill should be covered in the warm-up.  
Understanding of combination play:

1. Support
2. Takeovers
3. Wall pass
4. Third man running
5. Overlap

### DO NOT GIVE THE BALL AWAY!!!

One session in three devoted to 3v3's, 4v4's, 5v5's.

Develop an understanding of:

1. Depth -- role of strong side defenders.
2. Balance -- role of weak side defenders
3. Compactness
4. Communication -- who, what, when.

**LOWER EMPHASIS:** Functional play, team play, set plays.

All activities should be challenging, motivating, and involve **TRANSITION!!!**

Match - related practice: offense vs. defense.

Crossing: Develop a complete understanding of:

1. Crossing angle.
2. Overlaps.
3. near and far post runs.
- 4.

Set Plays: Develop a complete understanding of:

1. Attacking and defending responsibilities at corner kicks and all other restarts.
2. The importance of possession from throw-ins in defensive and midfield third of field versus possession and creativity in the final third

# Practice Outline

The ideal practice length for this age level is an hour to an hour and a half (length of their game time).

## Objectives

1. Skills for practice session
2. Review of previous practices skills.

## Warm-Up (10minutes)

While kids at this age do not require a great amount of warm-up and stretching it is important that they get in the habit of warming up before a game or practice.

~ Have players moving with a ball and stretch in between activities.

## Technique (Skill of the practice) (25minutes)

1. Introduce the skill (why and how)
2. Demonstrate the skill
3. Have players practice the skill
4. Skill game to reinforce technique and to add fun to skill development. (10minutes)

## Skill #2 (15minutes)

## Play the Game (15-20min)

Allow the kids to play the game without interruption. You may want to remind them of the skills taught during that practice and let them know that's what you will be looking for during their game.

# Skills Games

These are just a few of the different games that can be used to reinforce the skills the players have been taught. These games are specifically designed for the younger players but sometimes can be a fun break even for the older players.

## **Moving Marbles**

All the player's have a ball and are inside the playing area. Each player tries to pass and hit another player's ball while they are moving. If they hit someone else's ball, they get a point.(can play this as a team game and count how many points each team gets)

## **Don't lose your hat**

Each player will place a disc on their head and dribble out around a cone and back. Players will be grouped together as a team and it will be run like a relay race. The purpose of the disc on the head is to force the players to look up as they are dribbling. If the disc falls off they must put it back on their head and continue dribbling.

## **Panther Camp Race**

Line up one team of players (with balls) on one end of the field. On the whistle, they all dribble to the opposite end, shoot their ball into the goal and run back across the line. Play as a team game. Keep time on how long it takes for a team to complete this exercise.

## **~ Passing through legs**

Half of the players will have a ball while the other half will spread out in a small area with their legs spread. The players with the ball will try to pass through the open legs. Players should keep count of how many successful passes they make in a minute.

## **~ Dribble Tag**

Each player will tuck a scrimmage vest inside the back of his or her shorts. While remaining inside the designated area each player must dribble their ball around without allowing the other players to pull the scrimmage vest out.

## **Musical Squares**

Players will jog around the square and when the music stops the players must rush in and get a soccer ball and dribble it to the other designated square. There will be one or two players without a ball and they are allowed to steal someone else's ball before they get to safety in the square. The players without a ball will sit out one round and then they can rejoin the game.

**Objective:** Dribbling and tackling

## **Obstacle Course**

An obstacle course will be designed to provide the players with a chance to practice the skills they have learned as well as have fun while doing it.

**Objective:** Reinforce skills that have been taught

## **Team Knockout**

Each player within the square has a ball and they are trying to kick the other players ball out of the square without getting their ball kicked out. The team with a player remaining at the end is the winner. By playing the game this way you are taking the focus off the individual and putting it on the team. A player who has been knocked out will not automatically feel like a loser if he/she still has a teammate that has not been knocked out

**Objective:** Shielding, dribbling into space, teamwork and keeping your head up

## **Three in a Corner**

Set up a square with an equal amount of players at each corner. You should put approximately eight balls in the middle of the square. The object of this game is to get three soccer balls in your corner. You may get balls from the middle as well as from the other team's corner. Only one person at a time from your team is allowed to get a ball. Once one team gets three balls in a corner the game is over. Other players may not prevent you from taking a ball from their corner.

**Objective:** Dribbling and Communication/Teamwork

## **Pairs Passing through legs**

Players on two teams should pair themselves up and have one ball. The other teams should be spread out with their legs spread open. The pairs with a ball should try to make as many passes through the legs as possible in one minute's time. The coach will add up the total number and then the next team will go.

**Objective:** Teamwork and accurate passing

## **Traffic Cop**

All players dribble around the grid using all parts of their feet. Two coaches walk around the grid holding a soccer ball, which he/she will gently toss at the dribbling player. The player must catch the ball and pass it back to the coach. The coach will count how many times the ball hits the ground, which shall count as a crash

**Objective:** Dribbling with all parts of the feet and keeping your head up

## **Star Wars**

Divide the players into two or three groups. Line them up on each side of the grid. (One side having a ball) Coaches should be the invaders invading the territory (dribbling across the grid). Luke (players) should try to hit the invader's ball to kill them and save their planet.

**Objective:** Passing/Shooting accuracy and pace

### **Pac-Man Tag**

Players should dribble around the grid using all surfaces of their feet. A player (Pac-Man) who has no ball tags all the players in the grid. The only one being evaluated should be the pac-man. (How long did it take?) Once a player is tagged they must sit down in the grid

**Objective:** Develop a touch for the ball

### **Big Bad Wolf**

The game should have 6-8 piggies and 2-3 Big Bad Wolves. Players should dribble around the grid using all surfaces of their feet. The Wolves must attempt to kick the piggies ball out of the square. If the ball goes out of the square the piggy gets the ball and comes back into the square holding the ball above their head. If they are tagged by another piggy they can resume playing (you can make them perform a skill before they can re-enter.ie: headball,etc). The game ends when all piggies have been knocked out or time has elapsed.

**Objective:** Develop a touch for the ball and dribbling into open space (away from defenders)

### **Donkey Derby**

Set out a 20 x 20 yard area. Set up an obstacle course using approx. 8 discs. Organize it in such a way that at the midway point there are two discs side by side (making a gate like in skiing). At the gate the players must stand up and sit down on the ball five times before they can continue dribbling. Once the players return to the starting point they must head the ball three times before the next player can go. Set up two obstacle courses and have a relay race.

**Objective :** Dribbling technique (confidence and control)

### **Don't lose your hat**

Each player will place a disc on their head and dribble out around a cone and back. Players will be grouped together as a team and it will be run like a relay race. The purpose of the disc on the head is to force the players to look up as they are dribbling. If the disc falls off they must put it back on their head and continue dribbling.

**Objective:** Dribbling with your head up while keeping the ball under control.

### **Rats and Rabbits**

Set out a 20 x 20 yard grid. Set out two lines of 6-7 discs approximately five yards apart. Station one player next to each disc. Each player should have a ball. One group of players will be the rats while the other group will be the rabbits. When the coach calls "Rabbits" the rabbits try to dribble their ball to the sideline while the rats chase them and attempt to tag the "rabbits" before they reach the safety of their "holes". Repeat with rats dribbling and rabbits chasing. Keep track of how many rabbits or rats make it to safety. Depending on the ability of your players you could have them all touching the ball with the sole of their foot as they await the coaches call.

**Objective :** Cover as much ground as possible while keeping the ball under control. Players should try to stop their ball on the sideline when they get there.

### **The Color of Money**

Set out a 20 x 20 yard grid with six to eight players stationed on each side. Only one side of players should have a ball. Inside the grid make small circles with discs designating the target areas they will be aiming for. If the player with the ball passes it and it comes to rest inside the circle closest to them they get one point. If they pass it and it comes to rest in the circle furthest from them then they get four points.

**Objective :** Passing accuracy and weight.

### **Cherry on top**

Set out a 30 x 40 yard area with six discs lined up on each sideline with soccer balls on top of them. Players should play 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 inside the grid and they should attempt to knock the balls off the discs along their opponent's sideline. Balls that go out of bounds should be played in with a pass. "Hit the cherries on top of the disc score a point.

**Objective :** Encourage players to shoot whenever possible. Accuracy of shooting and teamwork.

### **101 Dalmations**

Set up a 20 x 20 yard grid with all the players inside having a ball except one. The player without the ball is the evil "Cruella de Ville". Cruella will attempt to knock the Dalmations out by kicking their ball outside the grid. If that happens the dalmation will turn into one of Cruella's helpers.(they must put on the same colored scrimmage vest).

**Objective :** Keep your head up when dribbling, look for open space, shield from your opponent.

### **Crusty Crab's Lunch**

Set up a 20 x 30 yard grid with the players stationed at one end with their soccer balls and at the other end is the coach with six to seven discs aligned in a straight line. When the coach turns his back to the players they should begin to dribble toward the discs. When the coach turns around and shouts " Look out Crusty" the players must stop the ball with the sole of their foot. Any player still dribbling or losing control of their ball will be sent back to the starting line. The first six or seven players to pick up a disc are the winners.

**Objective :** Controlled dribbling and trapping. Encourage players to find a balance between speed and control.

### **Numbers**

Have players play 1v1 within their own team. Mark out a grid approximately 15 X 15. Make two groups of players and number them consecutively (ex 1-8). Have one group spread out on one end line and the other group spread out on the other end line. Have a goal at each end of the grid. When the coach calls out a number, "number 3", the number 3 from each end line sprint into the grid while the coach plays a ball into the middle of the grid. They play 1 v 1 until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. You can make this a team competition by keeping track of the number of goals each side scores.

**Objective:** Quickness to ball and 1 v 1 attacking and defending.

## **Egg Hunt**

Have more balls than players. Have the players line up at one end of the field. Take their balls and spread them out around the field, these are the eggs. At the other end of the field is a goal called the "basket". Blow the whistle and turn them loose. Object of the game is to get all the eggs in the basket as quickly as possible and return to the starting line. Time them to see how fast they can accomplish the task. *You can make it a competition by having half the players go while the others watch and then rotate. The team with the fastest time is the winner.*

## **Monsters on the Loose**

This is another version of knockout. Best played with 12-15 players. Mark out a grid (size depends on number of players and ability) and have all the players with a ball inside the grid. The 2-3 monsters you have selected should be outside the grid. On the coaches command, the monsters begin to jog around the outside of the grid. When the coach calls monsters on the loose, the monsters enter the grid and try to knock as many balls out in a set amount of time. When time is called, count the number of players still alive inside the grid and that is the number of points the monsters get. The monster group with the lowest number of points wins. You can make it more difficult for the monsters if you place a goal on each end of the grid and instead of kicking the ball out of the grid they must win the ball and get it in the goal for the player to be out. The player whose ball was taken can try to win it back before the monster puts it in the goal. If the monster misses the goal, the player may retrieve his/her ball and reenter the grid.

**Objective:** Dribbling, shielding and tackling

## **Dribble Square –**

Mark out a square, with a player in each corner with a ball. In the middle of the square, place a ball on top of a disc. On the coaches command the players should dribble clockwise, as fast as they can, around the square. Once they get back to their starting position they dribble their ball into the middle and attempt to shoot their ball and knock the ball off the disc. The first player to hit the ball and knock it off wins. Break the group up into teams, so while one player is going from each team, the others are cheering them on.

## **Follow the Leader**

Pick a leader and have him dribble anywhere on the field, encouraging him to make lots of turns, changing speed, etc. All other players have to follow the leader and do whatever that player does. Switch leaders often.

## **Sharks and Minnows**

Start with a defined area marked, adjusted for size depending on the age of the players. Half the players have balls and are Minnows. The rest do not have balls and are the Sharks. The Minnows start at one end of the area and must dribble across the area and across the opposite goal line without losing possession of their ball. The Sharks defend the area, trying to kick the Minnows' balls out of the defined area. Minnows who retain possession turn around and go back for round two. A Minnow who loses their ball join the Sharks for round two. The last successful Minnow is the Grand Champion.

## Treasure Chest and Trolls

This is a three-team, three-goal game. Play with 1-3 balls to keep everyone moving and looking up. Three players on each team play, while a sub is kept locked in "troll prison." Each team has three pieces of gold behind the goal they have to defend. Small disc cones, water jugs, etc. can be used. Whenever a team scores in the opponent's goal, they get to claim a piece of treasure for their treasure chest. The trolls, older kids or parents, had their own treasure chest and would occasionally run randomly within the field of play. If you hit the troll with the ball, you could claim a piece of troll treasure OR free a teammate from troll prison. (decision-making!) The grand finale is the "breakout" from troll prison. Let each of the prisoners escape with a ball and head for the goal while the trolls run wild on the field for a final, furious minute of play.

## The Name Game

4 or more players needed. Players stand in a circle and pass the ball to one another, but they must call out the name of the person they are passing to. This is great at the beginning of the season, so they learn everyone's names. If the players are doing well and you have enough players, add additional balls.

### Hit the coach

**Skills taught:** In this game the players will practice stop and go dribbling in a crowd. They will have to keep their head up in order not to run into other players and to find their target. They will also learn how to shoot or pass of the dribble when the opportunity is right.

**How the game works:** Each player has a ball. Pick an inbounds area and use cones to establish it. The younger the children, the smaller the playing area should be. On the coach's call, the game starts. The players dribble the ball around and try to hit the coach, who is running all around in the inbounds area. After they hit the coach 5 times, the coach has to make an animal noise selected by the last player to hit the coach.

**Tip:** This game works well as a practice starter since the kids love it and you can begin with as few as 3 players with more can joining as they arrive. Make sure they see you having fun and really put some effort into those animal noises.

## Dribble Around cone and Passing Relay Race

Divide into teams with 2 players per team. (It's okay if one of the teams has an extra player, or a parent can play). Players race around a "Turning Cone" that is about 6 to 15 steps from the "Starting Cone" and the dribbler can pass to the waiting teammate as soon as the he goes around the "Turning Cone". One point for each completed pass. This is a good game to play right after "Dribble Across A Square", because you can use the cones that are already on the ground.