

8/9U

The purpose of this simple coaching manual is to help you understand your players and your role as a recreational youth soccer coach. This guide will provide some information about your players' physical and mental ability, your role as a coach, and how your practices and games should be structured.

Remember: Practice makes PERMANENT, if the players practice a skill the wrong way then they will be really good at doing that skill incorrectly. It is easier to make corrections at the younger ages than at older ages.

Your players:

- You players have an attention span that is still developing.
- Your players will have a better sense of the word "team". They will be more likely to enjoy playing with others and may be less egocentric.
- Your players will begin to differ in their development depending on their gender.
- Your players have a better sense of motor function and will require more time developing their soccer skills.
- Your players can begin to understand more complex instruction, but you still need to keep things as simple as possible at first.

Your role:

As a coach for the 8/9U age group, you will need to continue your players' development of soccer skills.

Your role is to continue developing player touch on the ball and emphasize team play and shape.

You should ALWAYS be positive and keep things fun and engaging. If the players do not have fun, they will not want to come back. Do not get bogged down in trying to teach professional tactics or several skills a day. KEEP IT SIMPLE.

The main topics you may cover: passing (in motion), trapping, positioning and shape, and individual attacking and defending.

Emphasize and encourage creativity with the ball.

Introduce the goalkeeper position (the basics).

Keep up communication with the parents/guardians of players on your team.

Your practice:

Your practice should be an hour long, with roughly 30-40 minutes dedicated to soccer drills/activities and 20-30 minutes for the players to play a small-sided game. Small-sided games should not be more than 6v6. You may need a second game going to incorporate all players. There should be no subs for the "play" portion of practice, EVERYONE is playing. You do not need goalies for small-sided games.

During practice(s) you should focus on developing players' touch on the ball through passing and trapping activities.

*Drills vs Activities

- Activities are fluid and all players are moving. They are typically more fun than drills.
- Drills are repetitive and commonly use lines. Make sure to keep lines short – 2 or 3 players tops.

You may begin to incorporate goalkeepers into a few drills and activities in this age group. However, more important aspects of the game should be focused on first such as creativity with the ball and passing.

*Any player still kicking with their big toe, needs to learn how to kick properly – with the insides or laces of their feet.

Your games:

You should focus on one objective per game (e.g. Can we pass the ball three times before the other team takes it? OR Can we keep our team shape the whole half?) If players excel on one objective, you should alter it (such as increasing the amount of passes they must complete) or add a secondary task (such as playing out of the back OR doing a skill move around a defender before passing).

You should make sure to focus and praise objectives and topics that you are working on rather than only praising for scoring goals.

Players should play more than one position – ideally each position at least once. They are still learning the game and may flourish in a position you had not thought about. Even if a player is not strong in a certain position, perhaps they just need more practice at it.

7v7 formations can range from 4-1-1, 3-2-1, 2-3-1, and on and on. However, formations do not win or lose games, players do. Your formation should highlight the strength of your players and your coaching ideals. It is always good to teach them two different formations in case you need to change things up during a game.

****All players should play roughly 50% of the game.****