

Crash Course for coaching U7 and U8 Soccer

There are many different things that go into coaching this age group, but sometimes books and pamphlets can be overwhelming and somewhat difficult to understand. For the sake of simplicity, this sheet will tell you what you need to coach a team in our U7 and U8 program. When you contact your team, tell the parents that their child needs to bring his/her own ball to each practice.

5 Rules to Live By

1. Players at this age can accept instruction and be held accountable for it in a positive manner. Correct their mistakes, by reminding them of what you have worked on in practice. Show (or describe to) them the correct way and give them a chance to demonstrate immediately.
2. ALWAYS emphasize proper technique. The longer a child performs something incorrectly the slower they will develop and the less fun they will have. This is the age group where bad habits will form, so try to help the kids avoid these. (Can you imagine an 8 yr old in baseball, batting right-handed with his left hand on top)? By the end of the season your kids should know how to pass, shoot, and receive the ball correctly.
3. Your practices (and games when possible) should be organized into a warm-up, then instruction on whatever your topic is for the day, and then a game emphasizing whatever your instruction topic is.
4. Try to emphasize positions and passing. This will take a great deal of patience on your part, but if you stick with it you'll be amazed in the spring. Stress teamwork and how it is just as good to assist a goal as it is to score one. Repeat the name of each position constantly, as well as the areas of the field. Repetition!
5. Have Fun. These are still 6, 7, and 8 year old kids who want to have a good time. Learn to balance instruction and fun, depending on the skill level and personality of your team. For U7, play U5 and U6 games (freeze tag, red rover, kick the coach, etc.) if necessary. Teams are very different at this age, so try to find what works. Try to avoid lines, and each child should have a ball at their feet as much as possible.

Instruction Topics

Introduce the topic, demonstrate (or have one of your players demonstrate) the proper way to perform, then let the kids demonstrate individually for you to watch and correct, then proceed to an activity).

Passing- Put children in groups of two and emphasize using the inside of the foot. You can set up cones and put each child in between them, this way you can work on accurate passes. Have them switch feet so they use both left and right. You can lengthen the area they are passing across as they get better.

Receiving (or Trapping) the ball- you can use largely the same set up as passing, but emphasize the child's technique who is receiving the ball. Should be inside of the foot and child should attempt to "absorb" the ball as it hits their foot. Switch feet.

Shooting – The easiest way to remember this technique is "toe down" or "hit it with the laces". The opposite foot (than the one you are kicking with) is the plant foot and it determines where the ball will go. Use both feet. Tell the kids no to worry about how hard they kick it, but where (and how) they kick it. The power will come as they get older and stronger. **NO TOEPOKES!**

Dribbling- Dribbling is less about technique and more about just playing. Use practice games and your warm-up as an opportunity to work on dribbling. Play knock-out, kick the player (like "kick the coach" but with a player), an obstacle course, gates, and use relay races to work on dribbling. The main thing is every kid has a ball at their feet at all times when working on dribbling.

Tactics, Positions, Etc

Tactics make up an important part of U7 and U8 soccer. However, the kids can easily get bogged down with a lot of concepts, so keep it extremely simple. Try to stress the following three things: **1.** Kick the ball wide (or towards the sideline) when on defense. **2.** Kick the ball across the front of the goal when attacking. **3.** Most importantly, if your teammate has the ball, don't run at him, instead go to an area where he can kick the ball to you. There are a thousand other little points, but if they learn these three you can avoid 'amoeba' ball.

This age group is a fun combination of the light-heartedness of the U5 and U6 kids and the coachability of the older kids. Don't ever be afraid to contact me if you have questions or need ideas. I'll be happy to come watch a few minutes of your game and/or practice and offer suggestions. Thanks for coaching!

RULES and INFO

Field: 50x30 with 5 yd center circle and a goal box for each goal.

Ball: Size 3

Players: 9 or 10 per team, with five at a time on the field. Four field players and a goalkeeper. Each child on a team will receive an equal amount of playing time during the game/season. A player should not play the entire game unless there are only five players present. Each child should play goalkeeper at least once during the season and each child should play every position (forward, defense, midfield) on the field at least once.

Fouls: Coaches will officiate all games. Coaches are strongly encouraged to call all fouls committed by their own team. All fouls result in an indirect free kick with the opponent at least five yards away. All kicks must be touched by another player before they go into the goal. If a player is repeatedly committing fouls, his coach should remove him from the game and explain to the child (and his or her parents) why their behavior is not acceptable in the game. Just because a player (or team) is bigger and/or stronger this does not validate overly physical play against smaller opponents.

Duration of games: Games consist of four 10 minute quarters with a two minute break between quarters and a five minute half time break. Clock runs continuously, and the team listed first on the schedule is responsible for providing a time keeper.

Substitutions: Can be made on any dead ball, but it is highly recommended that substitutions be made at the five minute mark of each quarter. If ten team members are in attendance simply "switch" squads.

Goalkeepers: Can only use their hands within the goalbox, and may distribute the ball by punting or throwing to a teammate.

Throw-ins: The ball is placed on the sideline nearest the point where it went out of bounds. The opposing team should be at least five yards away from the thrower. Encourage throwers to keep both feet on the ground and use two hands to bring the ball directly over their head. There is no penalty for an incorrect throw, simply offer positive reinforcement for a correct one.

Goal kicks: A goal kick is awarded when the ball is last touched over the end line by an offensive player. The kick is taken from the goal box and the opposing team should be on the other side of the center line.

Corner Kicks: A corner kick is awarded when the defending team last touches the ball before it goes out of bounds over the goal line. Opposing players should be at least five yards away on a corner kick.

Kick offs: Will be taken from the center circle at the start of each quarter and after a goal is scored. The opposing team should be at least ten yards away from the center line.