

# COMMUNITY COACH CERTIFICATE



## Youth Manual



# Community Coach-Youth Soccer Manual

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# Community Coach-Youth Manual

## Course Timetable

### Day 1 - Working with 6-10 year olds (Children)

Session	Duration	Location	Theme
Introduction to the Game	1 unit.	Field/Gym	Basic Laws of Mini-Soccer Highlight the main themes
Role of the Coach	1unit	Classroom	
Stages of Development	1 unit	Classroom	
Practice Sessions for 6-8 year olds	3 units	Field/Gym	"Running with the ball"
Practice Sessions for 8-10 year olds	3 units	Field/Gym	"Individual ball possession"
Co-ordination & Fun Games	1 unit	Field/Gym	

### Day 2 - Working with 10-14 year olds (Youth)

Session	Duration	Location	Theme
Introduction to the game	1 unit	Field/Gym	Basic Laws of 11-a-side Soccer Highlight the main themes
First Aid & Liability	2 units	Classroom	
Practice Sessions for 10-12 year olds	3 units	Field/Gym	"Ball possession as a group" passing & receiving support & game awareness communication
Practice Sessions for 12-14 year olds	3 units	Field/Gym	"Ball possession as a group" as above striking the ball receiving the ball in the air heading team shape
Goalkeeping	1 unit	Field/Gym	Basic handling & footwork diving and distribution

*Note: One teaching unit is 45 minutes in duration.*

## **A Coach's Creed**

The Primary responsibility of a youth soccer coach is to help the young player to have fun, learn and improve.

This responsibility makes a youth coach different from any other official in the club, league or association. We (coaches) coach for the joy and success of the players - and no other reason.

## Objectives of the Course

The contents of the Community Coach Youth Soccer Course is aimed specifically at coaches working with players in the 6-14 age group.

The objective is to assist a coach, regardless of prior soccer background, gain the knowledge required to work with youth players in order to emphasize technical development.

## General Remarks on Coaching Youth Players

The development and maturation of a player is a long lasting process, which is determined by "age specific" aspects. Therefore the coach must realize that:

- youth training is not a reduced form of adult training and children's training is not a reduced form of youth training.
- At the children's and youth stage the decisive factors for attaining a high performance level are acquired.
- Children and youth training are related to different phases of physical and psychological development of the respective age groups.
- Deficiencies in this period of development cannot be fully compensated for in adulthood.

Given these factors coaches need to understand the stages of development of a soccer player and be aware of the various aspects of growth and maturation.

## Guiding Principles

- Youth soccer means playing and playing means fun.
- For the youth players, being together with their friends is most important.
- Everyone should be included as much as possible.
- Teach youth players both to win and to lose.
- More practice - less matches.
- Youth soccer should be varied and versatile.
- Let us try together to offer youth players **Pleasurable Soccer**.
- The games are for youth players: Not adults.
- Show respect for the opponent and the referee.
- Get the player the correct equipment for youth soccer.

# Stages of Development

## 6-8 Year Olds

### *Characteristics of Development:*

- Co-ordination difficulties (imbalance between length of body and muscle structure).
- Like to move.
- Short attention span.
- Sensitive to criticism.
- Egocentric-seeks individual attention.
- Enjoys being successful and being praised for it.
- Like gymnastic type activities.
- Work well in small groups.
- Parents, teacher, coach influential people.

### *Training Recommendations:*

- All sessions should have lots of activity and movement.
- General co-ordination activities (running, tumbling and fun games).
- Familiarity with the ball (running, turning, changing direction with the ball).
- Small-sided games.

*Note: Physical disharmony due to growth through various stages will lead to psychological disharmony. These critical stages are not ideal for learning new things.*

## 8-10 Year Olds

### *Characteristics of Development:*

- Improved co-ordination.
- Displays strength.
- Enjoys physical contact.
- Increased attention span.
- Capable of problem solving.
- Sensitive to criticism.
- Enjoys team sports.
- Like to be recognized for their sports ability.

### ***Training Recommendations:***

- Running with the ball.
- Dribbling (feinting).
- Ball control.
- Inter-passing.
- Shooting.

**Note:** *All of the above should be practiced in motivational exercises/games and small sided games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3).*

## **10-12 Year Olds (Golden Age of Learning)**

### ***Characteristics of Development:***

- Physical proportions.
- Musculature more developed.
- Well balanced and co-ordinated.
- Improved endurance (adaptation of the cardiovascular system).
- Self-confidence.
- Desire to learn.
- Able to learn difficult tasks.
- Critical - says what he/she thinks.
- Try to imitate (idols).

### ***Training Recommendations:***

- Technique/Skill
  - dribbling (feinting)
  - ball control
  - inter-passing
  - shooting
  - heading

**Note:** *All of the above should be practiced in motivational exercises/games and small sided games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3).*



- Basic tactical behaviour
  - passing combinations
  - creating passing opportunities
  - creating and using space
  - running into space
  - positioning
  - basic support
  - 1v1 competitive games

## 12-14 Year Olds      Puberty

### *Characteristics of Development:*

This can be described as a growing stage, where co-ordination and balance is very much affected. During this period of development the extreme differences between age and biological maturity become noticeable. Young players are of vastly different size and have similar extremes in behavioural traits. Therefore, it is important to understand that physical size, in itself, is not the sole criteria for accelerated development.

- Accelerated growth due to increase in the length of bones.
- Disharmony between the body and the extremities.
- Motor disturbances.
- Difficulty with co-ordination.
- Sexual development (genitalia).
- Loss of self-confidence.
- Moody.
- Sensitivity.
- Egocentric.
- Strive for recognition and acknowledgment.
- Problems with adults.
- Insecurity with own position on the team.

### ***Training Recommendations:***

- Repetition of general tactical behaviour (as above).
- Extension of game experience - forms of combination play
  - interchanging of positions
  - an understanding of basic game situations
  - can be achieved without co-ordination concerns
- Physical fitness
  - endurance/cardiovascular dev. (in game-like tasks)
  - strength (using body weight only)
  - agility
  - players need to experience success

*Note: All of the above should be practiced in motivational exercises/games and small sided games (1v1, 2v2, 3v3, 4v4, 5v5, 6v6).*

## **14-16 Year Old (B Juniors)**

### ***Characteristics of Development:***

- Accelerated growth of muscles and organs within the body.
- Body regains a physical balance.
- Improved co-ordination.
- Body gains strength and power.
- Psychological stability.
- Growing self-confidence.
- Logical thinking and understanding.
- An understanding of the environment.
- Critical thinking (peruse, examine, overhaul).

### ***Training Recommendations:***

- Tactical means.
- Tactical behaviour.
- 1v1 behaviour.
- Techniques and tactics
  - positions
  - change of rhythm
  - speed
  - keeping possession
  - switching play
  - creating and using space

- Conditioning training
  - endurance
  - speed
  - power/strength endurance
  - agility
- Game related practice form.
- Functional training.
- Specific conditioning exercises.
- Motivation.

**Note:** At this stage players are already training like adults but at a different intensity and longer breaks (intervals).

## **16-18 Year Old      (A Juniors)      *Adolescence***

### ***Characteristics of Development:***

- Physically maturing (skeleton and muscles grow equally).
- "Gristling" /ossification of the skeleton.
- Final stage in the development of co-ordination and psychological abilities.
- General maturing (becoming an adult).

### ***Training Recommendations:***

- Intensification of all tactical aspects.
- Improve decision making within the game.
- Automation and variation of all skills in complex forms.
- Functional practice.
- Positional training.
- Conditioning training.

# Practical Training

## 6-10 Year Olds:

### *Agility (Coordination)*

- Relays - with and without the ball.
- Chasing games.
- General games (handball, basketball, etc.).

### *Skill*

- Individual exercises with the ball - running, turning, changing direction, ball control.
- In small groups - dribbling, ball control, passing.
- Motivational games - dribbling, ball control, passing, shooting (can be reduced to simplest form = 1v1).

### *Small Sided Games*

- Small teams on goals/targets (2v2, 3v3, 4v4).
- Players get experience (learning by playing).
- Have fun and enjoyment - builds a lasting motivation to stay in the game.
- Benefits include:
  - a) Frequent touches of the ball
  - b) Clear and understandable game situations
  - c) Basic tactical behaviour
  - d) Playing as a group within a team (playing with partners is important)
  - e) Playing together passing and giving support
  - f) Skill learning under pressure of space and pressure from opponents
  - g) Adapting to continually changing game situations

## **10-14 Year Olds (10-12 and 12-14):**

### ***Skill***

- Individual technique - mastery of the ball:
  - a) dribbling
  - b) ball control
  - c) passing
  - d) shooting
  - e) heading
- Goalkeeping (from 12 years old)
- Alternate between exercises and games (challenging exercises and game tasks).
- Demonstrations.
- Corrections.

### ***Tactics***

- Defensive play (1v1's and small games) - positioning.
- Attacking play
  - passing and support
  - use of space
  - crossing and finishing

### ***Physical Fitness***

- warm-up
- running - chasing
- jumping
- agility
- gymnastics
- small games contain all the demands of fitness training

### ***Games***

- 4-a-side (still useful)
- 7-a-side
- 11-a-side
- tasks are extended
- more like the real game (from 12 years old and up)

## 14-18 Years Old

### *Skill*

- individual - in pressure situations

### *Tactics*

- 1v1 behaviour
- tactics relating to positions
- possession
- changing the speed of the game
- switching play
- set plays (free kicks, corners)
- creating and utilizing space
- tactics of goalkeeping

### *Games*

- games on goals
- games in restricted areas
- reduced game situations
- regular game situations

### *Physical Fitness*

- speed
- stamina
- strength endurance
- co-ordination

*Note: The 16-18 age group should use all measures of adult training and specific conditioning exercises and games for motivation.*

# Your Role as a Coach

Coaching is for anyone who enjoys sport and cares about kids. It's for high-school athletes, women and men, parents and grandparents. What does it take to coach? It takes people who are sensitive and caring. People who are organized, who want to work with others, and who will teach from the heart. When working with your players, you should remember that you are a teacher, a leader, and a counselor.

## **As a teacher, you:**

- provide simple teaching points to help your players learn.
- encourage skill development through games and other activities.
- provide lots of activity to help contribute to an active lifestyle.

## **As a leader, you:**

- set goals that are challenging but realistic.
- offer encouragement and support to help your players be the best they can be.
- instill the importance of being a good sport and playing fair.

## **As a counselor, you:**

- listen to your players' concerns and deal with them as best you can by being supportive..
- make sport a positive, fun place to be!

When you coach youngsters, the results are real and immediate. You share in the small victories as they develop skills. You feel it in their energy and enthusiasm. You see it in their smiles. But the results of coaching are also subtle and long term. Through soccer, you will help your players to grow and develop as individuals. The athletic skills they learn from you may only be used for a few years. but the attitudes they develop toward themselves and others will last a lifetime. These wonderful benefits do not come easily. There is a clear time commitment involved in being a coach - for planning, practices, and games. And there is a real responsibility as you enter the lives of young people. But the effort is worth it. Ask long-time coaches about their involvement in soccer, and they will tell you they have gained more from it all than they ever gave up because of it.

## **The Coach in Training: (*Experience + Pedagogue*)**

**Short Term:** Training and preparation for competition.

**Long Term:** Planned and target oriented measures aimed-at improving and stabilizing a player's performance level (background and stages of development).

- a) Good preparation
- b) Objectives
- c) Explanation of tasks and execution
- d) Correction and improvement

### a) Good Preparation:

This includes the planning of the training session.

- Where? location
- When? day and time
- How many players? number of groups, etc.
- Equipment? balls, bibs, markers, etc.
- Climate? weather conditions, field conditions, etc.
- Length of practice? according to age of players
- General set-up? content, games and exercises
- Organization? 3 steps - warm-up, main part and conclusion

### b) Objectives:

- Skill and tactical (game) behaviour: giving consideration to age and performance level  
Load - Recovery (gradual increase)

(Conditioning will also be a consideration, particularly for players' aged 14 and older, but young players will improve this aspect in a dynamic, game related training program.)

- General Principles:
  - i. *From easy to difficult* (simple to complex): Players must be able to master a task before moving onto a more difficult one. This is important in order to build self-confidence and motivation. Difficult tasks given too early will lead to frustration and uncertainty.
  - ii. *From known to unknown*: Players must have enough time to become accustomed to certain tasks in order to master them. Frequently implementing new and unknown exercises can lead to uncertainty and loss of confidence and interrupts the learning process.
  - iii. *Be flexible* and able to differentiate between the performance levels of the players within the group.
  - iv. Players (children) must be given enough *time and "space"* to experience the task.
  - v. *Experiencing success motivates* players and encourages them to learn more.

### c) Explanation of tasks and execution:

A player can only fulfill a certain task successfully when he/she is totally aware of what he/she has to do!

- i. When the coach calls the group together each player must be able to listen without distraction and be able to see the coach's gestures.
- ii. Generally the coach should be positioned so that the group is in front of him/her (not too close



or in the middle of the group).

- iii. The explanation of the task occurs when everyone is quiet and is paying attention (no distractions).
- iv. All explanations should be brief and precise.
- v. A short demonstration of the task will make for a better understanding (players can be used for this purpose).
- vi. Use variety when selecting small groups. Not just separating the weak and strong players but also mixing them up (a variation of this could be better players against the majority).

Generally the coach should be positioned so that the group is in front of him/her (not too close or in the middle of the group).

#### **d) Correction and Improvement:**

An important factor for success in the practical work carried out during training is observation! Coaches should remember:

- i. Take up a position outside the playing area. This gives the coach a good vantage point and does not disturb the players.
- ii. When beginning an exercise give the players enough time to find their own solutions to a specific task before offering your own (self reliance).
- iii. Offering a good demonstration and explanation will erase mistakes or difficulties.
- iv. The coach should acknowledge good performances and courageous efforts with praise and encouragement.
- v. When correcting players: Allow play to flow and only make corrections if mistakes are repeated.
- vi. Individual correction unless it is a common problem.
- vii. Correct only one mistake at a time; usually the most obvious one.
- viii. Correction requires:
  - a) Explanation
  - b) Good demonstrations
  - c) Execution by players
- ix. Corrections in games or game-like situations only when the action is interrupted.
- x. Be constructive - show solutions and don't dwell on the mistakes.
- xi. Try to get a response from the players (ask them!).

When beginning an exercise give the players enough time to find their own solutions to a specific task before offering your own (self reliance).

## **The Coach as a Leader:**

The coach needs to show enthusiasm, sportsmanship, fairness and justice as these things will have an impact on the players.

### ***Coach - Children:***

- Be a positive example! What you expect from players, you must be prepared to live up to yourself. (personal conduct, children imitate their idols, etc.)
- Communications is important. Give children the impression that you care and take them seriously.
- Social integration. Work to develop team spirit.
- Take care of "outsiders" and weaker group members.
- Be patient and show understanding.

### ***Coach - Players in Puberty Stage:***

- Help players that are longing for acknowledgment.
- Understand when they become obstinate. In one on one talks, show interest in their problems.
- Be positive.
- Give players responsibility within the group.
- Be objective and explain decisions/opinions.
- Plan social activities that provide a positive influence on the group as a whole (young people are looking for the support that a group has to offer).

### ***Coach - Juniors:***

- Treat them as personalities (young adults).
- Listen to them and be ready to discuss things.
- Have them take responsibility.
- Create a team spirit.

### ***Coach - Dealing with parents:***

- Pre-season meeting.
- Explain your philosophy, ideas, objectives and plans for the team.
- Don't be over ambitious. Promise only what you feel you can deliver.
- Parents are only concerned with the impact your program will have on their own son or daughter.
- No parental influence from the sideline - shouting and yelling (apart from general encouragement) leads to confusion and children scared, anxious and may lose interest in playing.

- Fair play! Encourage respect for opponents and game officials.
- Ask for volunteers to support you (assistant coach, transportation, social activities, etc.).
- General organization (game/tournament schedules, training schedule).

### **The Coach before, during and after the game:**

#### ***Before the game:***

- Organization - schedule, transport, equipment, etc.
- Direct game preparation - team set-up - starting players and substitutes
  - pep-talk - strategy, specific tasks for individual
  - specific tasks for the team (based on the opposition)

#### ***During the game:***

- Coaching - Observation - Support
- Corrections (how?), substitutions
- Half time talks - be positive, encouraging

#### ***After the game:***

- Win or lose, be fair - shake hands with opponents and the officials (fair play).
- Have a positive conclusion.

**A coach should be prepared to enhance his/her knowledge.  
Should seek out new ideas for games and exercises and pursue self development opportunities through coaching courses aimed at game observation, etc.**

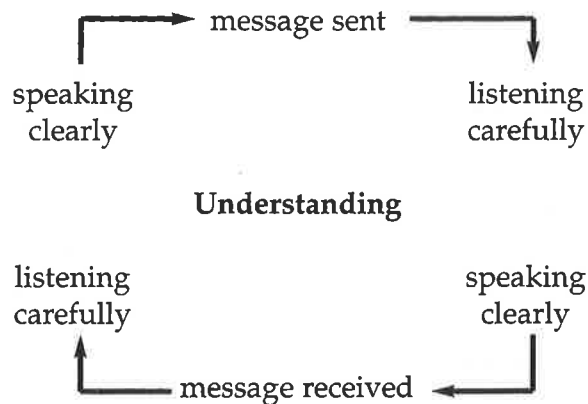
***Continue your studies - don't stagnate***

# Coaching with Care

Coaching with care means communicating effectively and keeping everyone involved. It requires knowing your players and having them play fair. And it means attending to fitness and safety. This section covers these important issues.

## Communication

Communication is a two-way process. good communication leads to understanding.



## Meetings with Parents and Players

Meetings with players and parents will encourage communication and help build a positive relationship. Many coaches like to hold three meetings each season: one at the beginning, one at midseason, and one at the end. Some coaches have meetings with players and parents together; others like to hold a separate meeting for each group.

The age range of your players and the approach you like to take will determine how you handle meetings and how many you hold. Remember, much can be accomplished in brief sessions before and after practices or games. And sometimes it may be preferable to speak to players or parents individually.

Here are some things you might want to cover if you hold a **players meeting** at the beginning of the season:

- welcome and introductions
- goals and roles
- your coaching philosophy
- players' hopes and expectations
- schedule for league and tournaments
- schedule for practices
- plans for social activities

- plans for other activities such as fundraising
- questions and answers.

A **parents meeting** at the beginning of the season can be helpful in a number of ways. It provides an opportunity to get to know parents and to discuss plans for the season. It is also a good time to recruit volunteers!

Here are some items you could cover at the meeting:

- welcome and introductions
- teams objectives
- your coaching philosophy
- parents' expectations
- ways parents can assist and be involved
- schedule for practices, games, and tournaments
- arrangements for car pooling
- equipment costs, other expenses, fundraising activities
- questions and answers.

You can use this meeting to hand out schedules and circulate a team directory. Don't forget to have parents complete a Player Medical Information card for their child.

## **Communication with Players**

Ongoing communication with your players will be easier if you have take the time at the beginning of the season to talk about goals, outline your approach and help answer questions.

Here are a few simple tips to help you communicate effectively with your players during practice and games:

- Give them an opportunity to speak.
- Listen to what they say and how they say it.
- Speak to them using words they understand.  
Always keep it simple.
- Bend down (or crouch or kneel) so you can talk to them at their level.
- Speak to every player at every session.

## **Helping your players to feel good about themselves.**

As a coach, you can help your players to develop confidence and self-esteem. Here are some ways you can do it:

- Greet them individually when they arrive for each session. Make them feel good about being there.

- Show confidence in their ability to learn.
- Encourage effort without always focusing on results.
- Avoid elimination games and other activities that may add undue pressure. Create situations where there are lots of “success”.
- Be specific when telling them what you like about their effort or performance.
- Use a smile, a nod, or a wink to acknowledge them.
- Praise them for special things they have done. A “pat on the back” means a lot.
- Give them responsibilities. Involve them in making decisions and give them a chance to be a “leader.”
- Ask for their input and invite their questions.

In spite of all your efforts, some players may still not respond. If any of them are uninterested, difficult, or unhappy, talk to them about it.

## **Communicating with Parents**

A pre-season meeting (or individual discussion) with parents will set the stage for open and effective communication throughout the year. It will give you a chance to explain your coaching philosophy and approach, and provide an opportunity to deal with any questions or concerns they may have.

It is important to listen to parents whenever they want to talk to you about their child. But as a coach you should do more. It is also your role to guide parents in their involvement in the sport. You can do this in a number of ways:

- Encourage them to acquire an understanding and appreciation of the game through knowledge of basic rules, skills, and strategies.
- Demand the same respect for fair play from them as you do from your players.
- Discourage those who want to “coach” from the sidelines. Getting messages from others will only confuse your players.

Parents should guide their children’s involvement in sports, but they should be encouraged to let them make their own final decisions. A child who really doesn’t want to play soccer just now should not be forced into doing so. This will only lessen the chance of the child taking it up later and can even lead to negative feelings about sport in general.

From time to time, some parents may have to be reminded that it’s just a game... for the kids!

## **Knowing Your Players**

Maintaining some simple records will help you manage your team. Having a Player Medical Information card on file for each player is important for safety. A Team Directory is useful for administration, and it can help with team spirit!

## Medical Information Card

Develop Player Medical Information cards for all players in the team. Photocopy the number you require, then ask parents to complete one for their child at the beginning of the season.

Review all the cards when parents return them to you, and ask for any additional information you may need. Knowing these details will help you prevent problems and deal more effectively with injuries or accidents if they do occur.

## Team Directory

Ask your players and parents to provide the necessary information. (Get postal codes, too, so it will be easy for you when it's time for Christmas cards!) When the directory is complete, make enough photocopies so you can give one to each family involved with your team.

Team staff can use the list when they need to telephone players or parents. Parents will appreciate having a copy - when arranging rides, for example. And if the team brings some of your players together for the first time, they can use the list to call new friends to get together and play!

## Ethics and Fair Play

Soccer challenges everyone involved - players, coaches, officials, and parents - to do their best honestly and fairly. Your conduct as a coach will serve as an example to others. You will find more useful information on this subject in the section on "fair play" later in this manual.

## Fair Play in Action

Here are some examples to demonstrate the fair-play approach to soccer:

*Try saying this:*

*Not this:*

### Respect

"Would you please explain that rule to me?"

"Don't you know the rules?"

### Fairness

"It's your turn to go on."

"You stay here. We want our strong players on."

### Honesty

"Play a game of Mini-Soccer and call your own fouls and goals."

"Someone has to be the Ref before we can play."

Make sure that you talk to your players about what fair play means to them.

## Fun and Fitness

Improving the fitness level of your players is an important part of your program. But you don't have to set aside time to do it. And it doesn't have to be boring! Fitness activities should be a natural, normal, and fun part of every session:

- Include all kinds of bending and stretching activities (serious and silly!) in your warm-up routine and as a part of your drills. These will improve **flexibility**.
- Use various stunts, games and races to develop **agility, coordination, balance, and quickness**.
- Devote part of each practice to short bursts of activity (alternating with rest). This will enhance **speed**.
- Keep your players moving - for **aerobic endurance**. Keep your instructions (and their standing around) to a minimum. Strive for continuous activity throughout each session.
- Use partner activities (pulling, pushing, and lifting movements, for example) to develop **muscular strength and endurance**.

## Summary: The Role of the Coach

The coach should:

- Realize that he/she is an integral part of the "athletic triangle" (parent-child-coach).
- Take a keen interest in the personal development of the children.
- Treat all members of the team in a fair manner.
- Listen for feedback from parents and children.
- Offer a "healthy philosophy of winning"
- Teach the rules of Mini-Soccer.
- Encourage an understanding of the game.
- Be an impartial and understanding official.
- Ensure that practices are interesting, enjoyable and appropriate.
- Involve parents in the practices.
- Involve the players in the decision making.
- Emphasize an appreciation of the skills and techniques of the game.
- Emphasize effort, co-operation and sportsmanship.
- Devise strategies to ensure equal playing-time and positional rotation.
- Care!



# How to Plan and Conduct a Practice

## Preparing for Practice

- Write out your practice plan and follow it. This should make your session more productive and enjoyable. A blank practice plan form is included in this booklet for your convenience. Photocopy a supply, and use on each time you prepare for a practice.
- Plan to keep everyone active. Use small groups when doing drills, for example, so players don't have to wait long for their turn.
- Plan practices so they are fun! Try to include a variety of drills, games, relays and competitions.
- Concentrate on practicing a few skills well, rather than attempting to cover too much at one time.
- Make sure you have enough equipment and sufficient space for all the drills and activities you want to do.
- Take a step-by-step approach. Younger and inexperienced players should master basic skills before moving on to more complex skills.
- Keep your practice plans.
- They will remind you of what you have covered and any problems you encountered.

### Tips for teaching no. 1.

- Arrange players in a semi-circle in front of you
- Position players so there are no distractions behind you - the sun shining in their eyes, for example
- Scan the group as you talk. Make eye contact with all players.
- Speak in a concise, clear manner. Too much information may confuse your players.
- Ask questions to make sure players have understood you and know what is expected of them.
- When setting up a drill, tell your players how, where, in what direction, and how many, or for how long. Do a walk through of the activity so that your players can visualize the requirements.
- Quickly get the players active.

## Running the practice

- "Never be on time!" **Get to practice early** and insist that your players arrive on time.
- Inspect the practice and playing field for safety hazards - glass rock, etc before each session
- Share responsibilities with another coach (and other helpers if necessary). This will give players more individual attention and help keep them active and involved..
- Young children have a short attention span, so keep drills and other activities brief (5-10 minutes each, for example).
- Provide as many contacts with the ball as possible. In a game, players may only get four or five chances to dribble or kick the ball.

### Tips for teaching no. 2 -

- Each player should have their own soccer ball
- Have a lot of variety planned for each practice
- Ensure players work and rest
- Be happy with small improvements from the players
- Be enthusiastic
- Simplify exercises
- Reinforce positively every effort. **Praise!**

- They must get many more contacts of the ball in practice to improve.
- Continually challenge players by increasing the difficulty of drills once they have mastered easier ones.
- Treat all players equally and emphasize positive feedback. Try to talk to each player individually at every practice.
- Use relays, drills and partner and movement exercises that focus on soccer skill development, fitness and fun.

# Teaching Skills

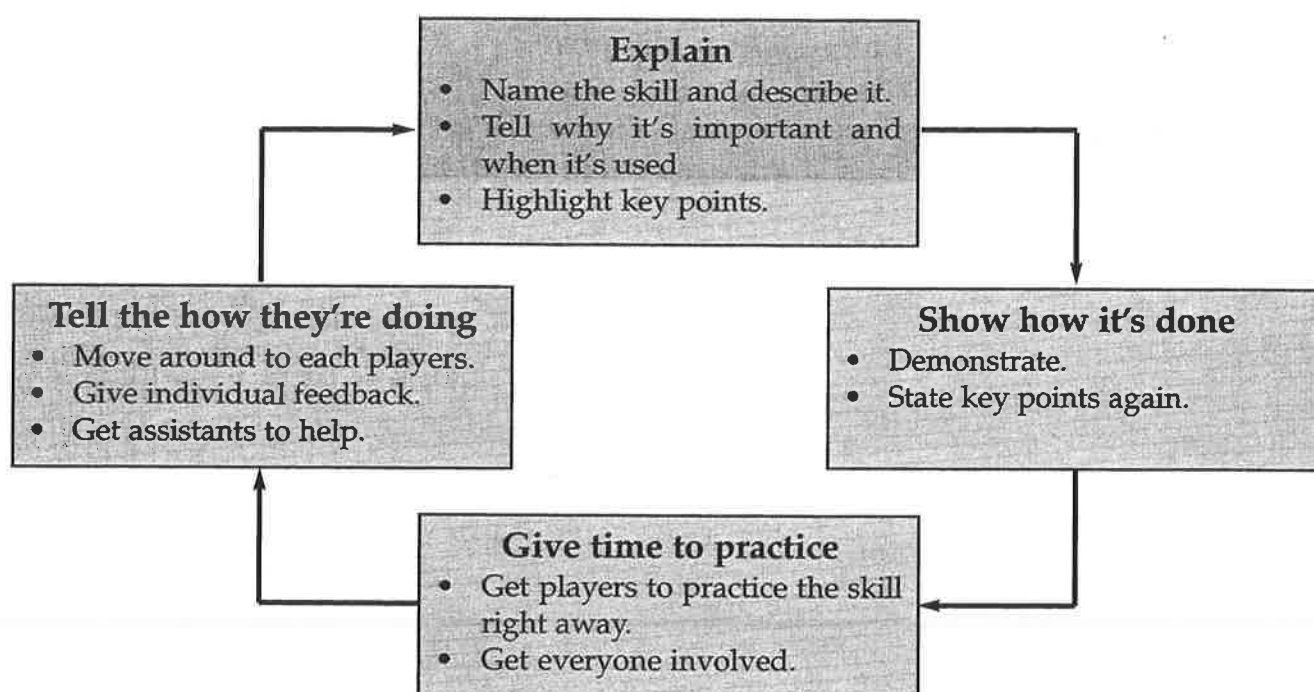
Coaching involves guiding the discovery of how to perform various skills. These skills can be **physical** (how to dribble), **social** (how to share equipment), or **mental** (how to think ahead).

## Skill Learning

When introducing new skills,

- teach one thing at a time
- keep teaching time short and to the point.
- progress from simple to more difficult skills or situations.
- use fun activities and games as much as possible.

Here is a good teaching sequence to follow:



Young children (all athletes for that matter!) learn new skills best by experimenting and “feeling” the right way do do it, having the right “feeling” reinforced by the coach, then practicing it over and over.

In the teaching sequence, practice is all important! Make each skill session “an ounce of information and a ton of practice”.

**Giving Feedback to your Players**

- **Give the “good” picture.**  
Demonstrate what you want, not what players is doing incorrectly.
- **Be positive.**  
Acknowledge what is being done well, then point out what should be worked on.
- **Be specific.**  
Demonstrate exactly what you want done.

## Developing Soccer Skills

Soccer involves basic skills in dribbling, passing, control, shooting, and goalkeeping. Youngsters learn these skills best by playing with the ball. Their short attention span and lack of coordination make it difficult for them to do many repetitions. And encouraging them to practice just one skill in a particular way limits their involvement, activity, development, and most of all, their fun. You will find that your players get the most enjoyment and learn the most from simply touching the ball - let the game be the teacher.

### Tips for Teaching No. 3

- It's got to be fun!
- Keep everyone active - use lots of balls and lots of games, both soccer-specific and general.
- Keep things simple so everyone can be involved.
- Let your players experiment.
- Involve parents in drills with their children. Encourage them to practice and play soccer together at home.

## The Practice

The start of a practice should serve as an opportunity for the young player to get rid of their energy. Therefore, coaches should take advantage of this time by introducing play exercises with and without the ball — emphasizing activity for every player.

This type of activity includes running after or away from being tagged, falling, jumping, pushing etc. All of which help provide an important base for the game of soccer.

### Points to remember:

- The age of the players determines the content of the training.
- Each practice session should have a theme. ie: passing.
- Keep the activity level high
- Children want to compete, but at their level. Encourage and positive feedback are essential.
- Children want to learn, but with fun and little pressure.

### Training:

**How often?** For players under 10 years of age - one time per week is sufficient and well placed between games.

**How long?** The practice session should not exceed the actual game time for each respective age group. Length of practice 30-45 minutes for 6-8 years of age, 45-60 minutes for 8-10 years of age.

**Remember!... train often, easier and shorter is an important training concept.**

**What to train?** For this age group training should be based on small sided games with emphasis on technique.

## How to Plan and Conduct a Practice.

### Preparing for practice

- Write out your practice plan and follow it. This should make your session more productive and enjoyable. Photocopy a supply of blank practice plans and use one each time you prepare for a practice.
- Plan to keep everyone active. Use small groups when doing drills, for example, so players don't have to wait long for their turn.
- Plan practices so they are fun! Try to include a variety of drills, games, relays and competitions.
- Concentrate on practicing a few skills well, rather than attempting to cover too much at one time.
- Make sure you have enough equipment and sufficient space for all the drills and activities you want to do.
- Take a step-by-step approach. Younger and inexperienced players should master basic skills before moving on to more complex skills.
- Keep your practice plans. They will remind you of what you have covered and any problems you encountered.

# The Grid System

## The Coaching Grid

A grid is made up of a series of 10m x 10m squares. Ideal teaching size would be a 40m x 30m grid providing 12 individual mini-pitches for practice purposes.

Individual grids (squares) can be used for unopposed practice or for 3 v 1 ('monkey in the middle') games.

Grids can be used in combination so that a 30m x 10m pitch (3 squares) is created for practices involving shooting or long-passing or for mini-games of 3 v 3. Although grids are most effective if "lined out", they can be designated by cones and whatever regular field-markings lend themselves (e.g. sidelines, halfway-lines, or goal-lines).

Whatever field arrangement is used, it is important that **space and numbers** provide soccer action that is as **close to emulating the full game as possible**. Too much space or too little space will deny children the chance to play the game as it should be played.

## Using the grid to coach

1. Keep all players active for as much of the practice as possible.
2. Make the practice enjoyable, but stress performance standards.
3. Encourage maximum movement and ball contact.
4. Include warm-up and warm-down in every session.
5. Each session should include one or two key points. These should be reviewed in subsequent sessions so that understanding is developed.

## Remember:

### The essential qualities of a good teacher:

- Understanding - in this case, the game.
- Enthusiasm - it's infectious.
- Patience - learning takes a long time.
- Praise - a little goes a long way.

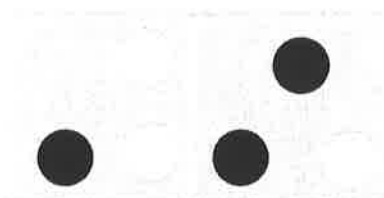
### The essential skills of a good teacher:

- Organization - be prepared.
- Observation - see what is happening.
- Communication - help players to understand the game.

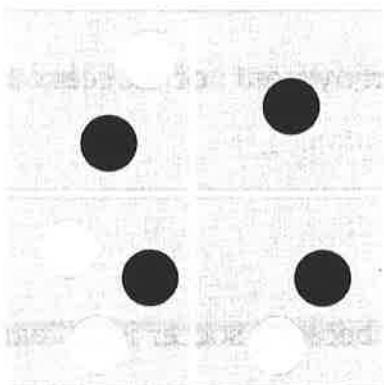
## Suggested method of using the grid system



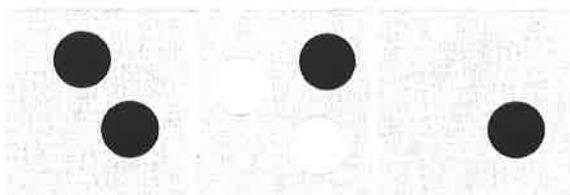
- 1 v 1
- 10m x 10m grid (1 square)
- keep ball away from partner for 30 seconds
- switch roles



- 3 v 3
- 10 m x 20 m grid (2 squares)
- keep ball away from other team by passing



- 4 v 4
- 20m x 20m grid (4 squares)
- small-sided game with small goals



- 2 v 4
- 10m x 30m grid (3 squares)
- pass and switch with two defenders

## To Summarize

### Fun:

Fun has to be essential requirement of every exercise at every practice.

### Everyone:

Everyone must receive an equal opportunity of involvement. In other words, equal time.

### Activity:

Activity must be at the core of the soccer sessions.

### Skills:

Skills must be developed for greater enjoyment of soccer, through greater accomplishments.

### Team play:

Team play must be included in every activity, because soccer is a “team” game.