

Kerrisdale Soccer Club

Age Appropriate Training : U6 through U11

The purpose of this program is to standardize the soccer training for players in our mini program. Pt. Grey, Dunbar, and Kerrisdale run joint mini leagues at all ages and run a joint player development academy (WSPD). To that end, the clubs' Technical Directors have sat down and worked through what they feel is an age-appropriate curriculum for U6 to U11 players.

This document used a similar piece by Burnaby Girls as a starting point and incorporates material from various BCSA and CSA coaching manuals. We're grateful for the hard work they put into those projects.

Coaches are encouraged to plan training sessions in accordance with the principles and priorities laid out here. These guidelines are, however, not meant to be taken as absolutes. There are very few absolutes in coaching. The guidelines are meant to be flexible, as all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. The ultimate goal of the coach is to prepare the players to play at the next level. Remember, however, that as a coach you are training children who may only desire to play recreational soccer, as well as those who wish to compete at the highest level.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR MINI TEAM COACHES:

- to have fun
- to keep the kids playing the game
- to develop players so they can play at the level they aspire to

TIPS FOR THE COACHES

- make practices enjoyable
- be prepared
- coach technical skills rather than team tactics
- ensure every player must have a ball at their feet during practice
- aim for a high level of activity and a minimum amount of time spent standing in lines

U6/U7: Characteristics of players

- focus is on themselves
- enjoy playing, not watching
- they look for coach's approval
- limited attention span (15 seconds for listening; 10-15 minutes when doing a task)
- effort equals performance – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well
- unable to think abstractly (teaching tactical and spatial patterns on the field is unrealistic)
- everything is about 'here and now' – they live in the moment

PRACTICES – General Points

- Practices should be fun and have an environment to foster creativity and learning.
- Team play is very difficult to understand for kids this age.
- Do not dwell on passing. Children at this age have limited spatial awareness and tend to focus on what is in their immediate vicinity.
- Development of motor skills and coordination is crucial. Hopping, jumping, skipping, kicking, throwing, stretching, balancing, etc.
- Most important skill to be taught is dribbling, or moving with the ball.
 - use all parts of the foot, ie: inside, outside, sole, instep
 - both right and left foot!!!
 - dribbling forward
 - changing speed and direction
 - shielding the ball from opponents
 - dribbling past an opponent and away from opponents (ie. Into space or shielding)
 - soft first touch (from balls on the ground)
 - use target games for passing and shooting
 - maximize the number of touches on the ball through activity repetition with many 'ball each' exercises
 - lots of dribbling games
 - no positional play
 - NO LINES UPS!!!(as in relays – have 5 lines of 2 instead of 2 lines of 5)
 - every practice should include a scrimmage at the end
 - practices should run 45-60 minutes with breaks

Specific Activities for U6/U7 players:

- 1) Tag: Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game.
- 2) Hospital Tag: Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged she must place her hand on the spot on her body at which she was tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.
- 3) Score on a parent. Scatter a series of gates, or goals, on the field and have parents stand in the gate. Players must either dribble past the parents (who offer token resistance) or shoot on them (parents act as goalkeepers). Players must go from gate to gate and not concentrate on one or two in the same area.
- 4) Freeze Tag: Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble her soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place her ball above her head and spread her legs. Another player on her team must kick her ball through the frozen player's legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. Version 2: Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion.
- 5) Dribble through gates: Use the same gates as in Score on a Parent but leave the gates empty. Encourage plays to dribble through gates quickly when coach shouts "Go!". Ask players to use both feet, different parts of foot, go through gate and then turn around the cone, etc.
- 6) Numbers Game: Break group into 2 teams. Give each player a number: 1,2,3,4,5 etc. Number the second team with the same numbers: 1,2,3,4,5 etc. Make a field 10 X 15 meters. Coach places a ball in the middle, and sends each team to opposite ends of grid. Coach calls out a number at random, say "3". The two players who have been designated "3" race to the ball, and play 1v1. The other players must stay on their end line, holding hands. They may play the ball out to their teammate if it comes to them, but they may not cross the line and enter grid. The players in the middle try to get a shot on the other team's end line. Coach controls game by ending 1v1 by calling out "number change!" The players in the middle race back to their team, the coach resets a ball in the middle, and calls out another number. The 1v1 should not last more than 30-45 seconds for this age group.

7) Shark: Make a 15x15 meter grid. All players except one are dribbling a ball inside grid. Player without a ball is the Shark. Players with a ball try to shield their ball from the shark while the shark tries to kick the other player's ball outside the grid. When a player loses her ball, she must wait outside the grid until the shark has kicked all the balls out. Have the players outside the grid shag their ball, and 'play' with it while they are waiting for a new game to start. Version 2: coach can be the shark. Version 3: coach may send another player in to be a second shark.

8) King's Court (boys)/ Queen's Court (girls)

Make one 6yd x 10 yd rectangle for every pair of players. Line the rectangle up next to each other with a player at each end of their rectangle. Players take turns receiving a pass from their partner and then trying to beat them 1v1 and switch after each turn so they get an equal number of tries in a two minute period. After two minutes, shift the players so they are playing someone new. Do not give points or have a scoring system at this age.

U8/U9

Characteristics of U8/U9 players

- play well in pairs
- limited attention span (15-20 seconds listening; up to 20 minutes for tasks)
- extremely aware of adult approval
- wide range of abilities at this age
- still unable to think abstractly (do not make drills too complex)

PRACTICES - General Points

- Always enjoyable, and have an environment to foster creativity and learning
- Coaches need a high tolerance for mistakes and trial and error
- Continue technical skill development and development of coordination
- Passing and shooting is not as important as individual control of the ball (ie. Dribbling and starting/stopping with the ball under control, using all parts of their foot)
- Passing and receiving, however, should begin to be introduced. Focus on controlling and stopping a moving ball (ie. Stress importance of a good first touch)
- Running with ball at speed, changes of direction and pace, shielding ball from opponents
- Depending on skill level, may introduce basic control of balls in the air (trapping using feet, thigh, chest)
- Introduce 3 main scenarios in soccer:
 - our team has the ball
 - our team does not have the ball
 - transition between possession and loss of possession
- -NO LINES UPS!!!(as in relays-have 6 lines of 2 instead of 2 lines of 6)
- No positional play but by U9 introduce ideas relating to shape on the field (width, depth, movement)
- Every practice should end in a scrimmage

- Practices should be 60-90 minutes with breaks

Recommended games for U8/U9 players:

1) Knock Out: In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside 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).

2) Lose Your Shadow: Put two cones 10 yards apart. Tell players to imagine there's a line connecting the cones and they can't cross that line. One player has a ball and tried to dribble to either one of the cones before the other player, the defender, can get to the same cone. Players use feints and changes in pace and direction to beat their partner to the cone. Switch after a minute or so.

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 of 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.

4) Dutch Box: Form a 20 x 30 yard box with cones. Half the players are spread around the outside of the box with a ball in their hands. The other half are inside the box. They run to players on the outside and receive balls, either on the ground or in the air, and must control them and pass them back. Players alternate and service from the outside can be varied. Passive defenders can be introduced to pressure players on the inside. Half the balls can be removed so players must receive pass from one player and then distribute to someone on the outside who doesn't have a ball.

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.

6) Numbers Game: See Game 6 in previous section. Version 2: Send two or three numbers in at a time, making the game 2v2 or 3v3, as your numbers permit.

7) Clean Your Backyard: Break group into 2 teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 meter buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place 3 small (2-3 meter) 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.

U10/U11

Characteristics of U10/U11 players

- attention span and ability to stay on task lengthens
- begin to think ahead (cause and effect)
- Start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts like pressuring opponent with ball, moving ball to open space or players, recognizing options and making correct choices.
- Spatial awareness evident (width, depth, support)
- Wide range of maturity at these ages – continue to be aware of wide range of capabilities both physically and mentally
- Crucial age for technical skill development – they are on the doorstep of the Golden Age of Learning, ages 11 and 12
- Motor skills becoming more refined. It is realistic to expect ongoing improvement in shooting, passing, dribbling techniques.

PRACTICES – General Points

- need to continue to focus on technique during practices
- maximum repetition of technical skills is key (no lineups)
- begin to introduce more game like situations through the introduction of small group drills 2v2, 3v3, conditioned games, possession/keep away activities
- individual attacking and defending games 1v1, 2v2 (like King's/Queen's Court)
- learn to control ball with all parts of the body from the ground and air
- dribbling continues to be a huge part of practices – develop more advanced fakes and feints
- all technical skills learned at earlier ages should be refined by increasing both speed and pressure
- stronger and accurate passes (10-15 yards) using all parts of the foot, inside, outside and instep of BOTH feet

- juggling – start simple- 1 touch, then catch, 2 touches, then catch etc.
- Introducing Basic Tactical Ideas
 - goal side of attacker while defending and cutting off the path to the goal
 - idea of supporting player with ball (width, depth, support)
 - play the ball away from pressure
 - wall passes, 1-2, give and go
- -practices should run 60-90 minutes with breaks

Specific Activities for U10/U11 players:

- 1) Possession (4 v4 with two neutrals who play with whichever team has the ball)
- 2) Soccer Tennis or Tottenham. Divide group into three teams. Divide a 30yd x 20yd rectangle into thirds with the middle third slightly narrower (ie. 12 – 6 – 12). Put a team of three or four in each third. The group in the middle are the defenders. Once a ball is played to one of the teams on the end, a defender can come from the middle third and try to win the ball. The attacking team must complete a certain number of passes (usually three) and then play a long ball out of their end, past the remaining defenders in the middle third to the other attacking team at the other end. The second attacking must then do the same thing, avoiding the defender(s) that come into their area to win the ball.
- 4) 2v2 to Four Small Goals: In a 15x15 meter 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 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: 3v3 in a 20x25 meter grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.
- 5) 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 she just throws it out so the game continues. Version 2: Use two balls at the same time.