



A Guide to Coaching Recreational Soccer



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About the Guide

The Coaching Department of the Lafayette Youth Soccer Association/Cajun Soccer Club (LYSA/CSC) along with contributions from other youth soccer clubs in Louisiana have created this "Guide to Coaching Recreational Soccer" to help all of the hard-working volunteer parents and coaches who work in the trenches with the next generation of young soccer stars in Louisiana. The Guide is based on the curriculum of the U.S. Youth Soccer National Youth Coaching Course as well as U.S. Soccer's Coaching Education Pathway and has had input from my colleagues in Technical Director and Director of Coaching positions in the United States as well as around the World. We have paid particular attention to the recent changes and mandates to the Youth Game here in the United States.

We truly appreciate all of the time, effort and dedication you give to the children of the Calcasieu Soccer Club, but also to the wonderful sport of soccer. The Calcasieu Soccer Club Executive Board appreciates all that you do for our youth. We are thankful to all who have contributed to the creation of this guidebook and hope that it will help with your coaching endeavors and that you continuously refer to it often throughout your coaching career.

Thanks for all you do!

Paul Burgess

Executive Director

Calcasieu Soccer Club

Calcasieu Soccer Club Mission Statement

The purpose of CSC is to provide and promote outstanding soccer programs to people of all ages and abilities. Through recreational and competitive soccer programming, CSC shall aim to provide excellent instruction to youth players to maximize their enjoyment of the game and encourage all members to create ideals of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty courage, respect, and a lifetime of involvement in sports and physical activity.

A Philosophy to Believe in

The game of soccer is just that, “a game”. The number one reason (well documented in a number of studies) children participate in soccer is to have **FUN!!!** If they don’t have fun, they will soon quit. It is detrimental to the player if there is too much pressure placed on them too early to achieve a result rather than simply experiencing the sheer joy of a youth game. At their heart, youth sports are not about how many wins and losses are accumulated or how many trophies are collected. Yet, too often adults think just the opposite and that joy is taken away. Most people would agree children do not *think* like adults. Then why do we expect them to *play* like adults?

Proper soccer development means children playing **age appropriate** activities, so they can experience, comprehend, and execute the game as it relates to where they are in their cognitive development. It is about **playing all the different positions** on the team, so the player learns all the skills necessary to develop in the game. It’s about receiving **equal playing time**, so the players are all given **equal opportunity to learn**. It’s about **learning the techniques** of the game through a variety of fun games where players have **as much contact with a ball as possible and learn at their own rates**.

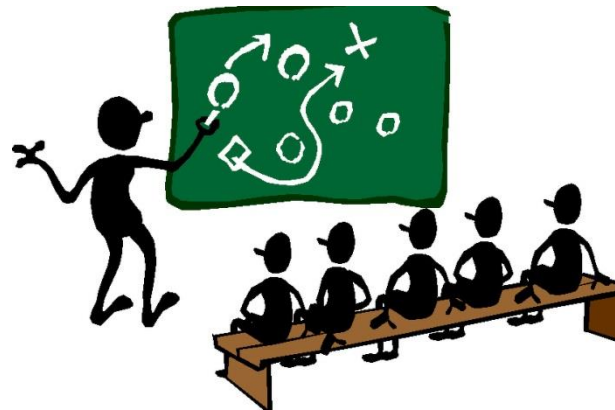
Calcasieu SC wants you to respect the game of soccer, respect the players, the opponents, the referee, and the parents. Please go about your teachings in a thorough, positive, yet humble manner. Players should come out of their experience with the coach as **better people and better citizens**, not just better soccer players. Please take the responsibility of instructing the Calcasieu area’s impressionable youth with a great deal of care and joy. We hope you find the guidebook helpful.

I Volunteered to Coach – Now What?



So, did you volunteer or did you get volunteered? The latter of the two happens quite often. It usually starts with a call from the club saying that they do not have a coach for your child's team and if they do not get one then they can't play soccer this season. Whatever way it happened we are delighted you did. Our goal is to make sure that you have enough material to make soccer coaching simple and at the same time give the players under your direction a positive experience in the great game of soccer.

Don't hit the panic button just yet!!! Our Club will have some coaching material and support to help you get under way. It's not all about x's and o's in soccer but more importantly about giving our players a great technical foundation on which to build from. As long as you are prepared then you will have a great season and this is why we have created this Guidebook.



So, to help here are the five characteristics of an effective coach?

- C - Comprehension
- O - Outlook (Philosophy)
- A - Affection (Concern)
- C - Character
- H - Humor

Our goal over the next few pages is to show you how to develop your soccer coaching.

What Makes a Good Coach?

A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports. Teaching, Learning and Development is what we are after!

PATIENCE – This is probably the most important characteristic. Let’s face it—12 active boys or girls together require a lot of attention. A good coach is one who doesn’t expect angels on the soccer field.

TOLERANCE – This quality goes hand-in-hand with patience. Kids are going to be rowdy, or moody or lazy. Tolerance takes the different mind-sets and turns the focus to the tasks “at hand”.

ACCEPTANCE – 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. Perfection is not required!

MOTIVATION – Soccer can be viewed as kids kicking a ball across the field, or it can be viewed as an opportunity for growth. The true test lies in sparking a child’s interest to learn and grow and keeping that spark alive each season.

RESPECT – At so many games, coaches, and sometimes parents, of the other teams berate and belittle their players for making “mistakes”. Sometimes they even go as far as criticizing opposing team members. Good grief! We’re playing U-10 soccer! This isn’t the World Cup. 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.

SPORTSMANSHIP – perhaps this should have been on top of the list, but being toward the end does not lessen the importance. 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 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 team mates. Only a good coach who loves the game can provide the correct aspects involved in the winning and losing of competition.

Planning the Season

You've been assigned your team, a group of players in which you probably know one of them – your child! Our club will have given you a roster with all the contact information that you may need to get up and running. So where do you start? The first thing is to call a parent's meeting.

Parents Meeting

All Coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with the team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, or it could be combined with a team outing or picnic. Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay dividends for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, then the following information could be put in a letter to parents/players. But, a face-to-face meeting is preferred.



Purpose of a Parent Meeting

- Enables parents to understand the objectives of the team.
- Allows parents to become acquainted with you, the coach.
- Inform parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport.
- Articulate your expectations of them and of their children.
- Enables you to address any parents' concerns.
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players.
- Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.)

Things to Consider When Organizing the Meeting

- Hold it early in the season, preferably before the first team practice.
- Having the players present is optional. However, if they are not present then it is advisable to hold a meeting with your players and clearly explain to them what you explained to the parents.
- Be prepared and be organized to conduct the meeting efficiently.
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
 - Team roster
 - Schedule of practice and games
 - Club rules
 - Team goals/rules
 - Summary or outline of the meeting

Important Points to Cover

Coach Introduction

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time).
- Give background information about yourself (why you are coaching and any experience).

Coaching Philosophy

- Discuss the value of the sport and the health benefits to the children.
- Discuss the philosophy of age appropriate activities.
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing technique.
- State how you evaluate player development through skills and not winning.
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines (e.g., must be there 15 min. before kickoff).
- Let them know that all players will receive equal playing time.

Team Guidelines

- Specifics of the program (e.g. players must appear with proper shoes/boots and properly inflated ball).
- Practice schedule (How many per week? How long?) Note: The length of your practice should be as long as your game.
- Game schedule (How many? When do they begin?).
- Discuss how players must respect opponents, coaches, officials, and the game itself.
- Required equipment (shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards, water bottle).
- Recommended size of ball and soccer shoes/boots.
- Inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, albeit a relatively safe one).
- Medical insurance (soccer insurance provides secondary coverage).
- Briefly discuss rules of the game.



Team Management

- Select volunteers as assistant coaches.
- Identify a team parent to help communicate with the team concerning practices and games. Set up an email distribution list, telephone tree or group text messaging system and/or car-pooling schedule.
- Ask the team parent to organize a simple SNACK schedule for game days. Discourage turning snacks into a financial hardship for some parents. Orange or apple slices, or seedless grapes are good choices. Make sure that all orange peels, apple cores, and grape stems are picked up and placed in an appropriate receptacle.

Coaches' Responsibilities

- Demonstrate leadership, good sportsmanship, respect, and coach with humility.
- Treat each player fairly.
- Organize practices and teach the game through age appropriate activities/games.
- Provide a safe environment i.e. Inspect playing surface.
- Arrive at practice on time and remain until a parent picks up every child.
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem.

- Give regular feedback to players.
- Be careful how you use various social media outlets.
- Distribute a schedule of practices and games in a timely manner.
- Allow each player to play half of every game.
- Respect referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself respectfully on the field.
- Continue to seek coaching education.
- Define player Responsibilities:
 - Attend practices/games regularly, and arrive on time.
 - Bring proper equipment to each practice and game.
 - Clean your soccer shoes/boots & maintain your equipment.
 - Have your own ball and make sure that it is properly inflated.
 - Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice or game.
 - Try your best at each practice.
 - Work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork.
 - Respect the referees.
 - Be supportive of teammates all the time.
- Answer questions from the parents.

Parent Responsibilities

- Do not coach your child during games.
- Transport your child to and from practices and games on time.
- Be supportive of all the players (Criticism does not improve performance).
- Help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort.
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not winning.
- Avoid material rewards for your child (The reward is the fun of playing!).
- Attend games and cheer the team.
- Refrain from criticizing the opponents; be positive with all players.
- Refrain from criticizing others on various social media sites.
- Respect the referees (There will be mistakes, but they are doing their best).

Codes of Conduct



It is very important that we all understand how to behave during all youth sports in this country. Over the last few years sports have become “big news” with some of the actions of players, coaches, referees, parents, spectators and fans of the game. Part of our responsibility as coaches is to insure the safest possible environment for our players to develop. We must “Respect the Game” and educate all involved to do the same!!!

The game of soccer is played in more countries around the world today than any other sport. In fact, at last count, FIFA (The Governing Body for Soccer) had 207 affiliated countries participating in World Cup qualifying. It truly is a global sport. Soccer participation in the United States is growing quickly and especially here in Louisiana with over 36,000 youth participants and along with growth comes growing pains. We as coaches must maintain a high standard of ethics and teach everyone around us the same.

It is a privilege to be a part of the U.S. Soccer, U.S. Youth Soccer, and the Calcasieu Soccer Club. Your actions as a coach shall always reflect upon our organization and its affiliates. Here are some general guidelines for everyone to follow whether you are coach, player, parent/spectator and referee.

Coaches

Coaches and assistant coaches are expected to maintain a higher level of sportsmanship, professionalism, and integrity both off and on the field. A coach’s primary responsibility is for his/her players to have fun, to develop soccer players, and to instill a passion for the game. The performance of coaches is not measured in wins and losses, but rather in what is taught to players in terms of technique, sportsmanship, and fair play. Coaches must maintain respect for the game as well as the referees. Coaches are charged with the responsibility of controlling their players and



parents at all times during a match. Coaches lead and teach by example; players will be a reflection upon each individual coach.

Coaches and assistant coaches are expected to:

- Have a basic knowledge of the game and to pursue coaching education allowing you to better develop your players.
- Use positive reinforcement when dealing with players, never use foul or abusive language, and never abuse a player mentally, verbally, or physically.
- Have respect for the authority of the referee and his/her assistants. You should not harass, abuse, or berate the referee during or after the match. You should not enter the field of play without the referee's permission.

Exhibit good sportsmanship both off and on the field. You should teach your players the rules of the game, fair play, and proper game behavior.

Your actions as a coach will teach your players as well as the parents and spectators how to become a true fan of the game.

Players



Children play soccer to have fun, to learn and develop a passion for the game as well as to improve their skills. Players have a responsibility to their team, coach, and soccer organization. They are representatives of the club as well as the team, coach, parents, and the community.

Players must maintain a high level of sportsmanship and fair play. As a coach, it is your responsibility that your players understand how to play within the "Laws of the Game" and to respect the game and all involved with the game.

Players should:

- Play within the laws of the game and spirit of the game.
- Be on time and prepared for matches and training sessions.
- Display self-control in all situations and should not use foul or abusive language at any time-- before, during, or after a game, or training session.

- Train and play to the best of their ability, have a positive attitude, and encourage others to do the same.
- Show respect towards the referee and his/her assistants as well as toward the opponents. Do not harass, abuse, or berate a referee for any reason.

Soccer Players' Bill of Rights

This was written by medical, physical education and recreation experts. Paraphrased for soccer. It was written in an attempt to protect young players from adult exploitation. The BILL OF RIGHTS is directed at coaches, leaders of soccer programs, officials and parents in the hope that their implementation will provide the beneficial effects of soccer to all players.

- Right of the opportunity to participate in soccer regardless of ability level.
- Right to participate at a level that is commensurate with each player's developmental level.
- Right to have qualified coaches.
- Right to participate in safe and healthy environments.
- Right of each child to share in the leadership and decision-making of their soccer participation.
- Right to play as a child and not as an adult.
- Right to proper preparation for participation in soccer.
- Right to an equal opportunity to strive for success.
- Right to be treated with dignity by all involved.
- Right to have FUN through soccer!

Adapted from the "YOUTH SPORTS GUIDE for Coaches and Parents". Published by the Manufacturers Life Insurance Company and the National Association for Sport & Physical Education.

Coaches' and Players' Equipment

Equipment Bag: Coaches should prepare a large BAG for all of the items listed below!

EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION: Make sure you have a list of emergency contact information for all your players

MEDICAL KITS - A simple kit for games and practices is a good idea for every coach. A kit should include, but not limited to:

- Ice (and `zip-lock' bags) – Band aids – Vaseline
- Sterile pads – Adhesive tape – Elastic wraps
- Antibiotic ointment & Bee sting relief ointment

PUMP and inflating needle: Sometimes the game ball is over inflated or too soft and may need adjusting. The same goes for the balls players bring to practice.

SHIN GUARDS: A spare pair of old ones will cover for a forgetful player!

SPARE SHIRTS: Two (2) for your goalkeepers - Having two extra shirts of different colors (each contrasting with your team shirts) insures that you will always have a goalkeeper's shirt that contrasts with the opposition colors.

GOALKEEPER'S GLOVES: An inexpensive pair is a useful addition to your game bag.

BALLS: If possible, have a good quality ball available for the games. This can be used as a game ball if none is provided. The leather or synthetic leather stitched soccer balls are best; avoid the hard plastic-skinned balls, which are unpleasant to kick or head. Each player should have his/her own ball and bring it to practice. However, bring any spares you may have to practice because someone is likely to forget one.

CONES or PYLONS (about a dozen): Use these to set up small areas for practice activities, or to mark boundaries for a game field. Cones of a different color or size will make a distinctive goal. **BIBS/ PENNIES/VESTS:** These are used to divide up teams for activities and games.

CLIPBOARD or NOTEPAD: Some coaches prefer these for practice plans, medical release forms, substitution schedules, etc.

WATER: A coach should have water available during practice and at the game. Have the players bring their own water bottles (but keep an extra bottle in your bag or cooler for the occasional forgetful player). Alternatively, have your team parent organize a schedule among the parents to provide water and cups.

PLAYER'S EQUIPMENT



BALL: Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will not derive maximum benefit from practice unless they each have their own ball for warm-ups and individual exercises. The ball should be properly inflated. Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number:

- Size #3 - smallest standard size, for the youngest players (e.g. age 3 to U-8).
- Size #4 - intermediate size, appropriate for U-9 through U-12.
- Size #5 - largest standard size, for U-13 to adult.

SHIN GUARDS: Shin guards are an absolute requirement for games and practices (the pull-on "legging" type with foam padding that protects the front of the leg from ankle to shin is an excellent shin guard). Shin guards with plastic inserts offer additional protection, especially for the older player.

SOCCER SHOES/BOOTS: Soccer shoes/boots are recommended, but not required by most clubs. Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not allowed for soccer. Soccer cleats for most recreational play must be rubber or molded plastic (no metal cleats), and no less than 3/8 inch in diameter.

WATER BOTTLE (with player's name on it): Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game. It is easier for the coach if each player provides his or her own water bottle.

SHIRTS, SOCKS, SHORTS: One or more of these items may be provided for each player by your local club. Be sure that you are aware of your club's policies with respect to uniforms and inform your players and parents of any requirements.

Children and Sports

Fun is pivotal; if it's not "fun," young people won't play a sport.

Skill development is a crucial aspect of fun; it is more important than winning even among the best athletes.

When a coach forces kids to play a certain position, there is a certain type of grounding that is established in that player that might take a year to get out of. We are restricting players at a very young age by putting them into positions. We need to let them have free play. The worst thing that could happen is they could get scored on.

The most rewarding challenges of sports are those that lead to self-knowledge.

Coaches need to incorporate as much **DECISION MAKING** into their practice as possible.

Intrinsic rewards (self-knowledge that grows out of self-competition) are more important in creating lifetime athletes than are extrinsic rewards (victory or attention from others).

Kids can learn about themselves through the game. This is why we as coaches need to do activities that enhance the imagination.

Our present game/sport structure is based on games of elimination. We must remove games of elimination at the youth level.



The Theory of Coaching

What is Player Development?

The concept of player development is essential to the long-term growth and improvement of the player. Player development demands that “the player is central” to all decisions made regarding practices and games. 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.

Role of the Coach

Facilitator: Reason for facilitator is that most parent/coaches have not been exposed to a soccer environment.

Objectives:

- Set up the condition and environment for learning.
- Facilitate the learning.
- Players must have fun.
- Players need to receive positive feedback from the coach.
- Coach must be enthusiastic about what they are doing.
- It should all be done in the "Spirit" of Play.
- Activities need to be geared towards the players achieving success, with success measured by FUN.

As a Positive Role Model:

Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators, and opposing coaches.

You have a responsibility to the game itself.

As one who understands whom they are coaching:

- Children are not defined by chronological age only.
- Each child matures and develops at his/her own pace.
- Treat each child as an individual. Not all children participate for the same reasons.



Components of Coaching Soccer

Technique (receiving, dribbling, passing, shooting, heading,)

- Technique is the most important component, because it is the introduction of the player to the ball. And, the game will always boil down to individual ball mastery.
- Activities should be with the ball, should be FUN and game-like. Learning takes place through self-discovery.

Psychology

The development of a positive attitude about all aspects of the game.

Tactics (decision making)

Activities should promote decision-making.

Fitness

Appropriately organized activities and small-sided games will provide players with the necessary physical requirements to meet the demands of their game. There is no need to have players do any unnecessary running without a ball in recreational practices.

Principles of Youth Coaching

1) All activities should be age appropriate.

- **DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE.** The demands of the activity should be within the range of the players abilities.
- **CLEAR, CONCISE, CORRECT.** Give clear, concise brief instructions and correct information.
- **SIMPLE TO COMPLEX.** There should be a flow of simple to complex activities that is appropriate for the ability of the players and the topic of the practice.
- **SAFE & APPROPRIATE.** Maintain a safe and appropriate practice area.
- **DECISION MAKING.** All activities should promote decision-making by the players.
- **GAME IMPLICATIONS.** All practices should reflect the game in some way and finish with a small-sided scrimmage.



Age Group Characteristics

Before we can effectively coach the children that have been entrusted to our care, we need to understand the characteristics of whom we are developing. It is imperative that you understand that when you are dealing with children, that you take the time to comprehend where they are currently in their own development. To understand the following information better, it is recommended that you attend a National Youth Coaching Course or Youth Module Course at your Club as well as any other coaching clinics that are on offer.

The 6 & Under Player:

From a physical perspective (psychomotor), children in this age group perform activities at full speed. Then they need frequent rests and then they go again. Movements such as running, hopping, skipping and maintaining balance are not fully developed at this age.

From a mental perspective (cognitive), they have a short attention span, can only perform one task at a time and only if it's given with basic instructions. They don't have a clear understanding of the team concept and tactics are useless. Everything revolves around themselves and the ball.

From a social (psychosocial) standpoint the children need to feel secure in practice and in games. The coach needs to be sensitive in selecting activities that allow social interaction with the other players in their group. They are easily bruised psychologically. Elimination games are highly discouraged. They will also tend to exaggerate their accomplishments-let them.

The 8 & Under Player:

This is the stage where players begin to understand the concept of passing to a teammate.

From a physical standpoint, they still lack a sense of pace and tend to exert themselves hard and then drop. They are now starting to develop some physical confidence in themselves and they are still into running, climbing, rolling and jumping.

From a mental perspective, they feel if they tried hard then they performed well (regardless of the activity's outcome). They are beginning to show a limited ability to tend to more than one task at a time.

From a social perspective, they have a great need for approval from adults and like to show off individual skills. Negative comments carry great weight. Their playmates start to emerge, and they will start to move towards small groups. They want everyone to like them at this age. You should be positive with everything that you do.

The 10 & Under Player:

Children at this age are typically in grades 4 and 5 and may have been playing soccer for half of their life.

From a physical standpoint, they gain a lot of strength, endurance and power during this period. Some children will grow faster than others and can approach 5 feet and weigh upwards of 80 lbs. or more. Be aware of the differences and how you match them up with each other during activities.

From a mental perspective, they can remember and follow complex instructions, which enables them to solve higher-level problems. They will begin to think in advance and anticipate actions or ball movements.

From a social perspective, players will begin to initiate play on their own and are becoming more serious about their soccer. Peer group belonging and pressure generated by peers becomes more significant. The need to belong becomes important.

The 12 & Under Player:

Children at this age are on the edge of childhood and adolescence. It can present a multitude of problems, but also an abundance of potential.

From a physical standpoint strength and power become a major factor in their performance. Their muscles mature, and they realize how much more they can do on the field. Their coordination significantly improves, and it shows up in the execution of child's technical ability. From a mental perspective, the educators refer to the U12 as the fertile period for learning. They can sequence thoughts and perform complex tasks. A coach can expect his players to understand the game and use teammates to solve problems. They are usually eager to learn.

From a social perspective whether a child enters puberty early or late is significant. Girls tend to form cliques while boys take a broader approach to team relationships. The way they feel about themselves can determine how they relate to their teammates. Sometimes popularity influences self-esteem.

Age Appropriate Training Activities

The 6 and Under Player:

The technical focus should be on the proper dribbling technic with inside, outside, and laces. Also, learning how to stop and/or change direction with the ball with basic moves. For example, turning with the inside or outside of the foot, pull back, and roll-over using the bottom of the foot. Remember this age group of players are full of energy and need to be constantly playing with the ball as much as possible during your practices. Do your best to involve all the players and avoid lines (non-participating players). Ending with a small sided game (3v3 or 4v4) is recommended. It allows the players to play soccer which is what they really want to do anyway.

The 8 and Under Player:

By this stage, there still needs to be emphasis on the technical side of dribbling and changing direction with some control of the ball. Now you can try and introduce a few new moves that help change direction with control of the ball. The next step is also introducing the basic technic of passing short to medium range using the inside of the foot and laces. This age group is still high energy and need a lot of time playing with the ball during your practices. Try and avoid multiple lines during your practices. Again, ending with a small sided game will help them have fun and burn energy.

The 10 and Under Player:

This age group now understands working within a small group. Continue to emphasize technical foot skills and basic passing technics within small group activities while challenging their skill level. An introduction about the principals of play and shooting technic along with communication within the game can be done.

Principals of Attack:

- Possession/Penetration (First Attacker)
 - Pass, Dribble, or Shoot
- Support/Mobility (Second Attacker)
- Balance (Third Attacker)
- Transition (attacking to defending)

Principals of Defending:

- Pressure (First Defender)
- Cover (Second Defender)
- Balance (Third Defender)
- Transition (defending to attacking)

Again, try your best to keep all the players involved and avoid lines when possible. End with a game like scrimmage while emphasizing what was learned during practice.

The 12 and Under Player:

Players should continue to work on the fundamental technics of dribbling, passing, and shooting. Continue to cover the principals of play (Attacking and Defending) along with proper communication within the game. Try organizing your training/practice session to cover a specific topic. Focus on position roles within each line of your team along with the technical and tactical skills to help them be successful while still challenging their skill level. For example:

- Defensive line (Goal Keeper/outside backs/center backs)
- Midfield line (outside midfielders/center midfielders)
- Attacking/Forward line (Wingers/Strikers)

The ideas of Technical skills (How it is done) and Tactical (Why it is done) start to interact within each training/practice session. An example is the topic of crossing (attacking). First, work on how players cross/switch the ball. Second, introduce more players with low pressure from defenders and teach why (tactical - to create chances to score) the player should cross/switch the ball. Then, finish with a team scrimmage emphasizing the technical and tactical purpose of crossing or switching. Again, try and avoid players standing in lines for a long period of time.

The 13 to 19 Player:

At this age the focus should be on the enjoyment and respect of the game. Continue to cover fundamental technical and tactical skills along with principals of play all within some friendly individual or small-sided competition.

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO READ THIS GUIDEBOOK.

ENJOY YOUR SEASON & A LIFETIME OF COACHING!

Acknowledgements

United States Soccer Federation

US Youth Soccer

Sam Snow, Coaching Director, US Youth Soccer

Dr. David Carr, Associate Professor, Recreation and Sports Pedagogy
Ohio University

Louisiana Soccer Association

Mark Godwin, Recreational Director
Lafayette Youth Soccer Association

Ryan Lazaro, Director of Coaching
Slidell Youth Soccer Association

Kevin Sherry, Head Coach
Louisiana Tech Women's Soccer

Paul Burgess, Executive Director
Calcasieu Soccer Club