



GUELPH SOCCER CLUB  
RECREATIONAL PROGRAM  
CURRICULUM



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This Handbook was written, created and designed by David Shankland, on behalf of Guelph Soccer Club.

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References:

Scottish Football Association, Early Touches course material  
Canadian Soccer Association, Long Term Player Development model  
British Columbia Soccer Association, District Development Program  
International Confederation of Futbol-de-Salao  
SAQ International

All training diagrams created by David Shankland using the **Easy Sports Graphic Program & Academy Soccer Coach Program**

# CSA Long Term Player Development Stages

## **Stage 3: Learning to Train**

This stage introduces players to disciplined training and begins to develop their understanding of principles of play alongside their skill practice. Repetitions are important to develop technical proficiency, but creating a fun and challenging environment is still paramount to stimulate learning and promote a love of the game. Game formats can range from 6v6 to 8v8 as players advance through this stage, and a simple league schedule can be created, but no standings should be kept- the emphasis is still on FUN. All players play equal time and try all positions, including goalkeeping, and the training to competition ratio should be 2 to 3 training sessions to every game

**Stage 3: Learning to Train** – Golden Age of Learning (Males 9-12 yrs / Females 9-12 yrs)

**TRAINING GOALS:** *Focus on technique and skill development and introduce tactics. Fun is still paramount*

## **TECHNICAL**

- Teach more advanced skills and movement
- Practice skills in games to encourage decision making
- Skills progressively refined, combined and elaborated upon during training ie..turns drag backs, shielding, hook, stopovers etc..
- Refine short passing, develop passing with outside of foot, chips and introduce medium and long range passing
- Introduce receiving with all parts of the body and shooting with volleys/ half volleys
- Heading maybe introduced towards the end of this stage.

## **TACTICAL**

- Ability to play in modified and small sided games
- Introduce attacking and defending principles
- Introduce small sided games; numbers up (3v5 etc)
- Develop player awareness, pass and move concepts
- Introduction and develop and understanding of positional awareness
- Teach basic set pieces; throw in, corners and goal kicks etc
- Understand the rules as it pertains to this level of play
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# CSA Long Term Player Development Stages

## PHYSICAL

- Continue to develop basic motor skills; jumping, running, throwing and turning
- Continue development of speed, power and endurance through training games
- Develop strength through own body weight exercises, medicine and swiss ball exercises
- Maintain suppleness and perform basic flexibility exercises
- Understand importance of warm up and its benefits
- Basic body awareness
- Body should display shoulder, elbow, core and ankle and spine stability

## MENTAL

- Introduction to basic mental preparation begins. *e.g.; short term goal setting*
- Understand the role of training
- A display of perseverance, confidence and concentration should begin to develop
- Following success the receiving of positive reinforcement is essential

## LIFESTYLE

- Involvement in multi and complementary sports
- Introduction of sport as a priority in lifestyle

## PERSONAL

- Positive attitude and self-esteem
- Understanding the changes puberty will bring on
- Accept discipline and structure
- Understand the Teamwork concept, fair play and ethics
- Parental support of the player's motivation to participate

### Stage 3: Goalkeeping

Players still take turns in goal. Continue developing ball handling, rolling and over-arm throws, footwork, goal kicks, drop kicks. Moving back passes and punts. Introduce side arm and javelin throws, deflecting. Introduce a variety of dives. Introduce catching and deflecting crosses from simple thrown service.



### **Preparation and Organization**

***By playing the small sided game, children can be given the opportunity to play soccer for enjoyment, with minimum coaching. However, it is important that we give some initial structure so that young players learn to identify the relationship between the training session theme and the game. It is also important that players learn about shape in the game. This phase is vital to the development of young players.***

When preparing and conducting a session. Please try to take the following into account to ensure the quality and effectiveness of each session during the program:

- Use the contents of the handbook to prepare each session in advance.
- Show patience and understanding at all time
- Set realistic targets for the players.
- Ensure the warm-ups and cool-downs are carried out.
- Ensure that all players get maximum participation – no one sitting out.
- Be aware there may be various skill levels within your group, practices should be adapted accordingly.
- Pay particular attention to equipment, for instance, that the balls properly inflated.
- Keep instructions clear, simple and precise.



### Coaching Techniques

- **Start Simple.** Proceed from the simple to the difficult. Do not baffle the children. Corrections should be made one at a time, but make sure you correct poor technique, there is no point in practicing any skill a hundred times incorrect.
- **Get Ball Moving.** Avoid a long winded explanation of the activity. A picture paints a thousand words.
- **Demonstration Position.**
  - Coach must see every player. Do not speak until all players are in front of you and standing still. Players nearest should crouch down.
  - Do not speak into strong wind.
  - Players should not be looking into the sun. It is better that the sun is in the coaches eyes.
  - Speak with authority. Only one person speaks at a time.
  - Speak when still. If you are demonstrating, a brief explanation before and after is best.
  - Coaching feedback should be clear, emphasizing the positive where possible and observed from outside the activity.
- **Maximize Participation.** When children are practicing, give them as many opportunities as possible to repeat the skill. Organize the players into small manageable groups. Avoid long lines as these hinder a child's development and can induce distractions and boredom. Involve all players in practices and games.
- **Active Coaching.** Too often, coaches organize skill practice or drills, then relax and admire their work. Once the group is working, it is essential that the needs of all players are addressed. Be active and **coach**.
- **Immobilize all Footballs.** When speaking to the children, the coach must command the attention of the whole group. The ball is a distraction and should be still and if necessary kept out of reach of the players.
- **Adaptation of Practices.** It is common for coaches to give practices to children which does not take into the account the varying abilities within the group. Too often the session is tailored to suite the ability of the middle range of the group or worse, they are given drills too basic for the whole group. Consequently, the players are not being challenged enough.

It is the responsibility of the coach to try to introduce skill practices in such a way that the players can experience realistic challenges at their own level. A good coach must be able to adapt a practice to stimulate and challenge all players.



## ***Coaching Techniques (Continued)***

In practice terms, this means the coach must introduce a skill which he / she feels that is appropriate for the majority of the group. This is called “**The Core Practice**”.

As the coach observes the players working, he quickly assesses which players need help to reach the level of the skill, this is called “**The Support**” and which players need a greater challenge, this is called “**The Extension**”.

These adapted practices should be introduced in a low key, discreet manner while others are working in the group. It is very important the coach continues to re-evaluate regularly to provide players the opportunity to progress. Support practice may be required only for a short time and players should be moved on when they are confident to do so.

Some examples of adaptation of a practice:

- Use of different body parts eg. Inside/outside of weaker foot.
- Modify the distances involved
- Introduce or eliminating a bounce
- Taking more or fewer touches of the ball
- Increase/decrease time
- Vary the height of the ball
- Vary the complexity of the skill eg. Turning.



### Session Structure for Under 4's / 5's and Under 6-8's

In the interest of continuing the young player's development through this program, the session structure for the U4 & U5's should contain the following components:

- **Warm-up / Warm up games.** We have created warm ups for all players which included are some examples of fun warm up games. Details and diagram are included in this handbook. ( **10 minutes** )
- **BAC.** Balance, Agility and Co-ordination exercises should be included in every session. This could be in the form of various "TAG" games which are also covered in this hand book. ( **5 minutes** )
- **Activity / Skill / Technique.** Where a player can refine a specific skill or technique (ie passing ) for that session. ( **10 minutes** )
- **Small Sided Game. 3v3 or 4v4 games for the U4-U6 and 4v4 with no goalkeeper or 5v5 with goalkeeper for the U8's.** Once again the skill can be encouraged throughout the game ( from the side line ) " **Just let them Play** "

### Session Structure for Under 9's – Under 12's

In the interest of continuing the young player's development through this program, the session structure for the U9-U12 should contain the following components:

- **Warm-up / Warm up games.** We have created a standardized warm up for all players. Also included are some examples of fun warm up games. Details and diagram are included in this handbook. ( **10 minutes** )
- **BAC.** Balance, Agility and Co-ordination exercises should be included in every session. This could be in the form of various "TAG" games which are also covered in this hand book. ( **5 minutes** )
- **Activity / Skill / Technique.** Where a player can refine a specific skill or technique (ie passing ) for that session. ( **10 minutes** )
- **Mini or Small Sided Game. 2v2, 3v3 6v6 games.** Once again the skill can be encouraged throughout the game ( from the side line ) " **Just let them Play** " ( **15 minutes** )
- **Cool-Down.** Build good stretching habits and take this opportunity to get feedback from the players on the sessions coaching points. ( **5 minutes** )



## Standardized warm up

As you know, before taking part in any strenuous exercises, the body should be prepared. The warm-up should achieve a change in a number of physiological responses, in order that the body can work safely and effectively at **all ages**.

- Increase the body temperature, specifically core (deep) muscle temperature.
- Increase the heart rate and blood flow.
- Increase the breathing rate.
- Increase the elasticity and flexibility of the muscular tissues.
- Activate the neuro-muscular system.
- Increase mental alertness.



### **Balance, Agility & Coordination**

Balance, agility and coordination training is a vital part in the development of all soccer players. Players need to be able to turn quickly, change direction and jump while being in control of their body.

**Balance** is the foundation of athleticism. It is best to conduct balancing exercises early in the training session when players are alert and ready, as the nervous system and muscles are more receptive to various type of movement. Training balance only takes a few minutes two or three times a week, so when possible give the players a couple of exercises to do on their own away from the team. You will notice results in a short period of time, if they practice. Examples of balancing exercises include: Standing on one leg, walking backwards with your eyes closed, and throwing and catching a ball with a partner while standing on one leg.

**Agility** is the ability to change direction without losing your balance, speed, strength or body control. There is a direct link between improving agility and the development of an individual player's rhythm, timing and movement. Agility training also helps to link and improve other physical elements such as balance and coordination and can be permanently imprinted in the body's muscular memory.

**Co-ordination.** When conducting coordination training, emphasis should be placed on correct biomechanics. Training can be done by breaking down a skill in parts, then slowly joining them together. Coordination training should include footwork drills, jumping, rolling etc.

Balance, agility and coordination exercises are included in the handbook. It is imperative that correct mechanics are emphasized and coaching points are there to assist you. Just like technical training that starts basic and slowly progresses, so should BAC training. Begin without the ball, then once the correct mechanics are learn and refined by the players, you can introduce the ball to make the exercises more football related. Remember creating additional exercises are only limited to your imagination.



### **Code of Conduct – Coaches/Adults.**

Children should play soccer for the love of the game and the pleasure it brings them. These training sessions and games have their origins from traditional street soccer. They are highly competitive and were motivated by the desire to experiment with new skills and tricks. Today, the excesses of cups and medals bring added pressure to win. An over emphasis on winning by adults can reduce the joy of participating and being part of team.

With this in mind, coaches and parents attending these games should:

- Give positive feedback.
- Be patient.
- Ensure evenly matched games.
- Emphasize good behavior and sportsmanship.
- Be supportive of good play from both teams.

Coaches and parents should not:

- Shout abuse.
- Emphasize results.
- Use too many technical terms.
- Over coach. **Let them play.**

### **Code of Conduct – Players**

Children should be encouraged to:

- Display fair play and sportsmanship at all times.
- Shake hands with the opposition after the game.
- Accept the match supervisor's decision.
- Play to the best of their ability.
- Experiment with skills and moves.
- **Have fun.**



## Summary

The purpose of this handbook is to assist in making our program successful from year to year. The young players will come to these sessions full of enthusiasm and excitement and the key to their development lies mainly with us.

In conjunction with a structured training program, the small sided game is vital for the development of our young player at the club. All research shows, young players learn quicker and become more adaptable when participating in small sided games, with modified rules and a sensible approach to competition.

The small sided game and league provides:

- Frequent touches of the ball.
- Many opportunities to attack and defend
- Repetition of basic soccer situations 1v1, 2v2.
- Realistic demands and challenges for young players
- A lively tempo which encourages good fitness levels.
- A game with simple rules and tactics.

The Guelph Soccer Club wants to promote through all its programs;

- Sporting Behavior.
- Skillful play
- Total involvement
- Quality of performance.
- **A love for the game.**

This handbook sets out a step-by-step framework for coaches to provide the necessary soccer environment for all our players to develop. Please refer to it as often as possible, discuss it with fellow coaches and please contact me with any questions or comments.

Yours in the development of the **beautiful game**,

David Shankland  
Technical Director  
Guelph Soccer Club.

