

# WYSA'S Guide for Youth Soccer Coaches

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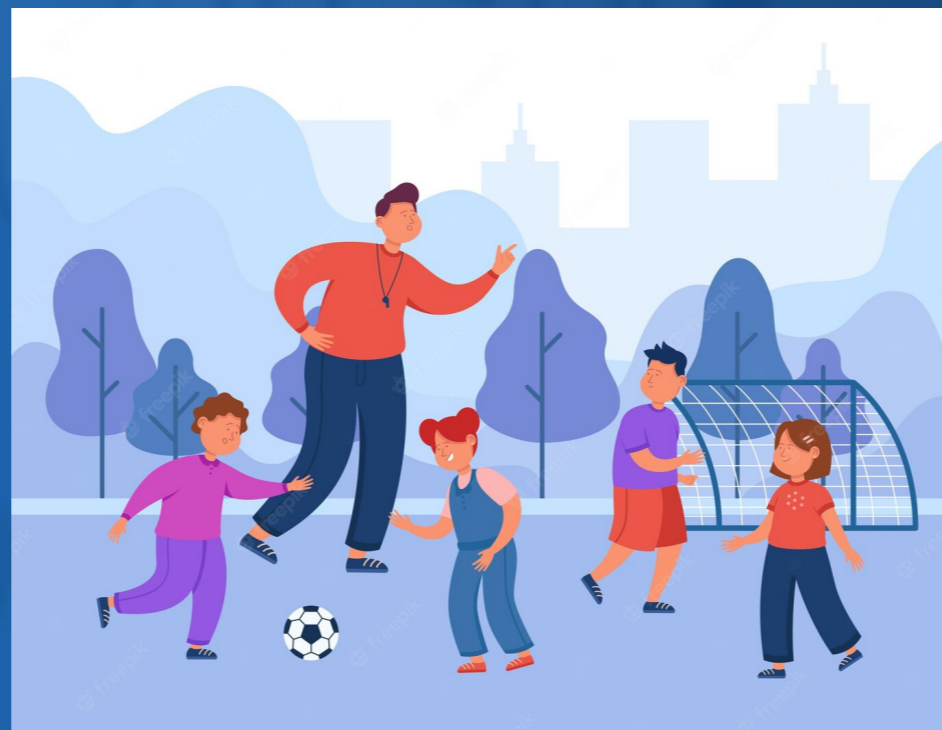
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# THE GUIDE

I have put together a complete, coach-friendly guide for the beginner soccer coach of players between ages 5-18. My goal is to help you, the coach, have a positive experience while developing passionate, enthusiastic young soccer players!

In the following pages, you will find useful advice on organizing a team meeting, preparing and planning soccer practices, running successful activities, teaching basic skills, coaching on game days, and more!!



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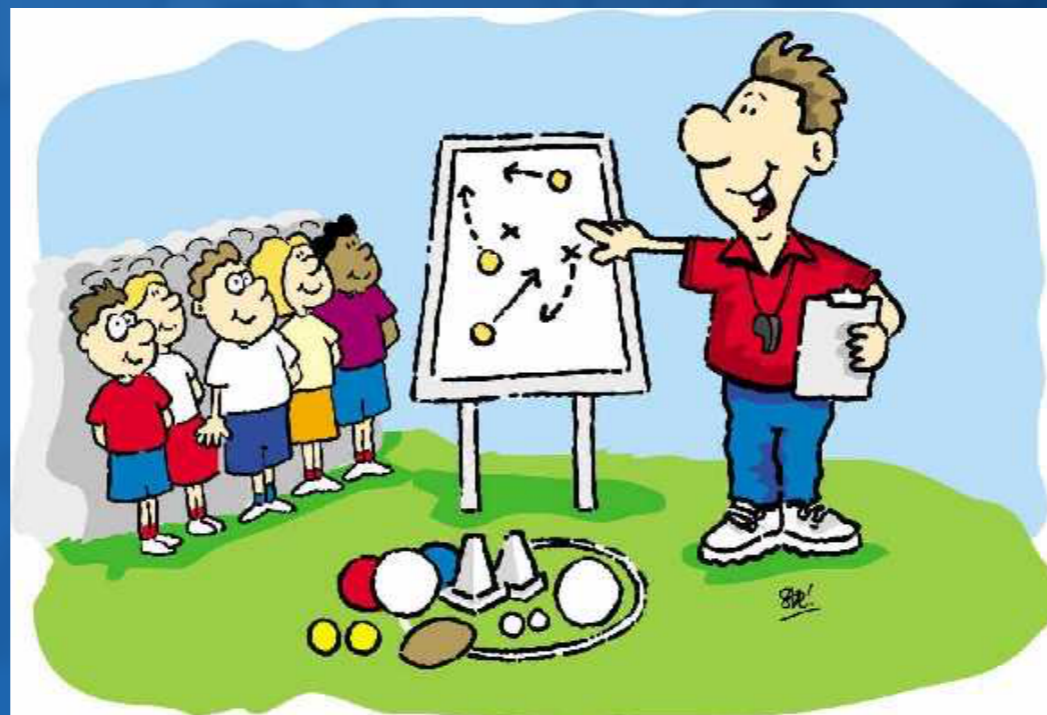
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# YOU'RE OFFICIALLY A COACH

As a coach, you serve as an authority figure and a role model, a leader, and a mentor. What you do and don't do, what you say and don't say, can have a profound impact on your players on and off the field for the rest of their lives.

You are in a position to affect a child's self-image and to help form character traits. You can help build the foundation for a positive attitude regarding teamwork, hard work, and fair play. What effect will you have this season? Next season? What legacy will you leave 5 years from now? Twenty years from now? What will your players think of you when they look back as adults on their childhood sports experiences?

If you have made the commitment to coach, why not be a good coach? Why not help players develop to their full potentials? The information on these pages will help you, but you still need enthusiasm, keen observation skills, and a healthy dose of common sense. In the end, success in coaching comes from solid planning, clear communication, and adaption.



# ABOUT THE GAME OF SOCCER

Soccer is a simple game. Two teams play. Players on one team try to kick the ball into the opponent's goal. The team with the most goals at the end of the game wins.

The size of the ball, the size of the field, and the number of players on the field vary depending on the age of the players and the local league rules. Younger players should play small-sided or "micro soccer."

Field players are free to move anywhere on the field. They can contact the ball with any part of the body except hands and arms. At older ages, often starting with U10 teams, goalkeepers are introduced. The goalkeeper is the only player that can use his or her hands to handle the ball in the designated area around the goal.

In its true form, soccer is played with 11 players on the field per team. One player is the goalie and the others have positions usually described as defenders, midfielders, or forwards. Positions also typically describe a vertical column of the field, such as left, center or right. Positions help players understand their roles by keeping organized and spread out.

↙ The Basic Rules of Soccer ↘

[The Basic Rules of Soccer for Kids and Adults](#)

# COACHING WITH A PURPOSE

- Creating a fun social and learning environment
- Building self-esteem, the character and confidence to compete
- Teaching respect for others and for their efforts
- Encouraging the discipline necessary to learn and improve



*“Successful teams, and successful coaches, understand that the process is the focus, not the end result.”*

## Why Coach?

Give some thought to what you are doing as a coach and why you are doing it. Think about your coaching philosophy and coaching style. You will probably base your style and philosophy on your own experience with sports (past coaches, etc.) and your belief in the purpose of youth sports. Ask yourself, “What is the purpose of youth sports? Why am I coaching? What is my objective as a coach?” Thinking about these questions should provide positive goals that you can keep in mind throughout the season.

# THE PRE-SEASON MEETING

The preseason meeting is important! As you meet players and parents, the team meeting serves as the ideal venue to make a good first impression. It is a chance to explain your expectations regarding behavior, practice attendance, and any other procedures that need talking about. It is also a chance to suggest a few basic team and individual goals.

**Give some thought to organizing your team meeting. Here is one possible order of events:**

- Introduction
- Coordinate uniforms
- Hand out team roster and season schedule
- Deliver useful materials, such as MYSA League Rules, and /or WYSA Code of Conduct for players and parents
- Confirm practice time and field locations
- Explain your coaching style and philosophy(Ex. “I am here to help you develop within the game of soccer, and if we work together and have fun we’ll be rewarded with SUCCESS!”
- Explain the expectations you have of players and parents
- Sign up volunteers to help with the team ( Ex. assistant coaches, team manger, etc.)

The team meeting can provide fertile ground for acquiring help with your job. Look for a team manager, assistant coaches, and other helpers. At these meetings try to introduce a spirit of cooperation and volunteerism. The team meeting should set a positive tone for a good season.

# FIND AN ASSISTANT COACH

As a Head Coach, you will have an easier and more enjoyable job with the help of assistant coaches. Assistant coaches will allow you to work with smaller groups and give each player more individual attention. They can help run smoother and more productive practices than you could on your own. When asking for parental help you may experience some resistance and evasion. The key to acquiring help is to encourage parents properly.

**Here are a few suggestions on how to hook a reluctant volunteer:**

- **Simply ask - “Would any of you be interested becoming an assistant coach for the team?!”**
- **The cry for help - “Don’t send me out there alone. I need help!!”**
- **The threat - “If nobody coaches the team, there will be NO TEAM!”**
- **Parents may respond, “But I don’t know anything about soccer”. Your responses, “Neither do I, so what, I’ll tell you everything you need to know.”**





# COACH and PLAYER EQUIPMENT

\*Soccer equipment is **ALWAYS** available at the Shawsheen Clubhouse

## Soccer Ball Size Guide:

- Size 3: U8
- Size 4: U9-U12
- Size 5: U13+

**Cones** - 12-20 Cones and Markers

**Markers** - Helps create player lines, positions, and splits field

**PUGGS** - Cones can make a fine goal although for younger players it is best if you have access to portable goals. Players will be more enthusiastic if they are shooting on small goal target/s.

**Pinnies** - Colored Pinnies help identify teams / groups during activities.

**Medical Kit and Ice Packs**— Accessible at Shawsheen Clubhouse. Consider bringing a cell phone to the field to call for help, if necessary.



## PLAYER EQUIPMENT

**Practice Gear** - Players should come dressed in proper athletic clothing. **NO** jewelry.

**Cleats** - Soccer Cleats are highly recommended. Youth players cannot wear metal studs.

**Guards** - Players should wear shin guards w/ soccer socks at all times.

# RUNNING A PRACTICE

## Tips to consider:

**Be Prepared** - The number one key to success is to plan your practice in advance. Most of your coaching should take place before practice, planning and setting up an appropriate series of activities. You must know what you're going to do and what you want to accomplish before you start practice. A good practice needs a warmup, primary activities, and a scrimmage, all of which should be tied into the theme of the practice

**Starting Practice** - Warm ups should primarily serve to engage the kids, to get them both focused and excited for practice. It is important to get players moving around with the ball. One way to do this is to simply start with an engaging game or passing pattern. See **WYSA Warm-up Ideas**.

**Main Activities** - The main activities form the heart of the practice. With younger players(U6-U8) you want to keep practice and activities moving. Games or activities should not last longer than 15 minutes. When an activity doesn't work, you might have to adapt by making the game easier or trying something new. Take water breaks between activities so that you can set up the next activity without making the kids wait. Don't give your kids the chance to lose their attention.

**Practice Progression** - Ideally, activities will progress in difficulty throughout practice. Each activity might add a new technique or concept for players to work on. Practice should build towards a final scrimmage or small-sided game.

- Be prepared and organized in advance
- Be ready to move from one activity to the next
- Use each player's name frequently
- Treat all players with respect
- Acknowledge specific things individual players do well
- Be enthusiastic
- Fluctuate the volume of your voice to emphasize certain points
- Demonstrate skills and concepts
- Give knowledge, constructive feedback

# RUNNING A PRACTICE

## More tips to consider:

**Use Your Voice** - As a coach, you need to communicate ideas clearly and in a positive way. You need to say the right cues in the right way, at the right times.

**Simplify Instructions** - It's easy to over-coach. Doing so can make practice boring and confuse players. Try to keep instructions for activities as simple and quick as possible.

**Tone and Volume** - Pay attention to the tone and volume of your voice. The coach communicates a strong, confident stream of information. When things break down, when players aren't paying attention, the coach can jump to a demanding tone for a few quick remarks. You want to vary your voice to emphasize certain points although you want to avoid screaming whenever possible!

**Freezing Play** - As players perform a drill or game, you can yell "freeze" or "stop" to explain a concept or make a point. With younger kids, coaches should limit play stoppages. Make a quick point and get back to the game / activity.

**Constant Encouragement** - Be patient and be realistic. Don't expect players to improve overnight. Especially with younger players, compliment success whenever possible. This encourages improvement by keeping players involved and excited about their effort. Try to compliment everybody, even if you need to invent compliments. Keep your vocabulary simple but varied.

**Positive Criticism** - When a player makes a mistake, try not to say "What are you thinking..?". Instead, try to make a positive, "if-then" statement. "John, if you want to kick the ball farther, try doing this..."

# RUNNING A PRACTICE

## Even more tips to consider:

**Demonstrate Soccer Skills** - Players learn by seeing. It is important to demonstrate new skills or concepts. If you can't demonstrate a skill yourself, then try to find a player or coach who can.

**Repetition** - Players also learn from repetition. Have players' repeat fundamental skills and movements.

**Adapt for Success** - Players should be successful at practice. Successes increases the sense of joy and fulfillment that players experience. Success motivates players. When players do something well they strive to do well again so that they will receive positive feedback or acknowledgement for their efforts. Success breeds self-confidence and vice versa. If an activity proves too difficult, players become frustrated and discouraged. Primarily, choose activities that players can accomplish. Be prepared to adjust an activity so that players can accomplish the objective. For example, you may have to make a area larger, or a goal wider. You may have to decrease the number of defenders.

**Progressions** - Begin by practicing basic mechanics with little or no added pressure. Players are allowed repeated attempts to get the feel for the basic movements. As the practice continues, coaches can add more pressure or restrictions. As the final step, players should try to perform the skill in game-related situations. Remember, however, that you want practices to encourage success. When coaching younger players, you don't want to ask them to perform skills that they can't do. Progress activities only when appropriate, when players are ready for a bigger challenge.

**Player Analysis** - Even with younger teams, you can let players give feedback on practice. At the end of the session, you can try gathering them to analyze the practice as a group. You can ask players, "How did it go"? "What did we do well"? "What do we need to work on" Help players think and solve problems on their own. Have them avoid criticizing each other or themselves.

**Homework** - Give players specific assignments to accomplish by the next practice. Examples include: dribbling moves, juggling, watch the game

# RUNNING A PRACTICE

## Teaching Basic Skills:

**Dribbling** - Dribbling means controlling the movement of the ball with the feet. The ball is pushed, tapped, or dragged to cover space or to change direction. Players can use all parts of the foot (top, inside, outside, sole) to dribble.

**Receiving** (or trapping) - Receiving is the ability to “trap” or “control” the ball. Players need to control the ball in order to shoot, pass, or dribble. Any part of the body except the arms or hands can be used to receive the ball.

**Passing** - Passing means kicking the ball to another teammate or into “strategic” space so that a teammate can run onto it. Some keys to accurate passes include balance, timing, and proper technique. Players should make short passes with the inside of their foot. The ankle is locked and the toe is pointed outward and raised slightly. Players can use the top of the foot to strike longer passes.

**Shooting** - Shooting means kicking the ball with the intent to score a goal. The technique for shooting optimizes power and accuracy. The kicking motion involves the hip and knee joints, as players take fuller leg-swings than they do when passing the ball. When shooting, players should generally contact the ball with the top(LACE) of their foot, with the inside laces, or the instep. They should keep their toe pointed down and their ankle locked.

**Improving Basic Skills** - Players can always improve soccer skills. No matter what age or ability, players can always learn to dribble faster and with more control. They can receive with a better first touch. They can pass with greater accuracy. They can shoot with more power. Players can always become more comfortable with the ball. These basic skills serve as the foundation for all soccer players no matter what age or ability. As players develop, they will need to perform the basics under greater pressure with more speed.

# RUNNING A PRACTICE

## Disciplinary Actions:

**Discipline** is critical to maintaining control over your team. Children will have more fun in a controlled environment than in an environment that lets them run around and do as they please. Be firm from the start - At the start of the season, it is important to lay down the rules and consequences of breaking those rules. Immediately communicate what is acceptable and what is not so that players know your expectations. This keeps punishment fair and consistent. You do not want bad behavior to derail the positive momentum of your practices.

**If/when players misbehave, you should take action immediately. Try taking one of the following actions:**

- Give a verbal warning
- Separate the player/s from the rest of the team
- Talk to the player/s at the end of practice
- Talk to their parents

Talking to parents throughout the season is crucial to maintaining a positive and clear channel of communication with your team. Talking to parents often serves as the most effective solution to behavioral problems. Parents can talk to their children about the issue. They might be able to help or give you useful information about their child's behavior. If you have to reprimand a child for behavioral issue, you do not want that child to relay false information to his or her parents. Tell their parents about the incident or the problem. Parents should appreciate the concern you show for their child and the effort you make to keep them informed. Most importantly, talking to parents will make them want to support you. This simple communication can eliminate conflicts with both parents and children.

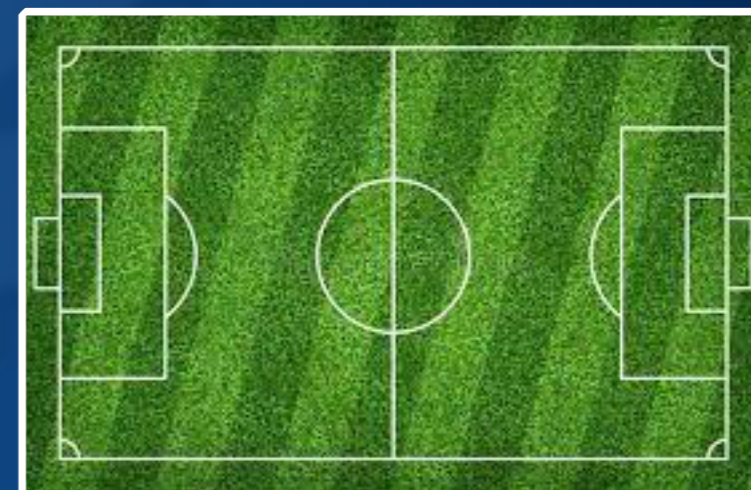
# COACHING ON GAME DAY

Coaches have a different role on a game day than they do during practices. Practices are for coaching. Games are for playing. The main roles of the coach should be to organize players and observe. You can't control the players on the field. Only send cues and signals, as well, words of encouragement.

**IMPORTANT** - Please do not be one of those coaches that yells wildly at the players and referees during games. You will look like a fool, and your players and parents may resent you. Demonstrate proper sportsmanship. Be an example for players and parents. Take control of your sideline. Don't let parents yell abusive comments. Above all, let the players play and have fun. Soccer is fun - Don't ruin it.

## Game day Tips:

- Have the team meet 15-20 minutes before kickoff
- Develop a standard stretching / warm up routine.
- Deliver Team Roster to referee
- Give tactical discussion before kick-off to go over formations and positions
- Make substitutions accordingly - Equal Play Policy
- Keep instructions simple and stay POSITIVE



Continue



# COACHING ON GAME DAY

## What to observe:



- Take short notes to instruct players during halftime and to prepare for the next practice
- See what players are doing well and what they need to work on
- You don't want to criticize or even instruct players much during the game as this will only distract players and diminish the players' experience
- The best coaches are silent for 'most' of the game
- If you need to talk, restrict yourself to encouraging, positive words
- Remember, you are a role model for other players and parents on the sideline, so be a positive one



# COACHING ON GAME DAY

## Communication w/ your Team:

### HALFTIME TALK

Some tips for a successful halftime talk:

- Keep your comments simple and to the point
- Highlight what your team is doing well and needs improvement
- Try to use players name for specific comments
- Look to highlight specific actions that players did well
- Avoid sweeping generalizations. Give the kids encouragement that they can remember and duplicate
- Consider organizing your comments in terms of defense, midfield and attack For example:  
“Defensively, we’re playing well. We’ve allowed only four shots on goal. John, you’re marking your man well. Look to pass the ball wide when you gain control. Steve, great tackle near the end. In midfield...”

### POST-GAME TALK

As a coach you will have two post-game situations. One when you win, and the other when you lose.

#### **After a win**

The post-game talk after victory is easy. The kids should be excited. Try to demonstrate humility and good sportsmanship. Continue to recognize individual and team efforts. Be specific so that players remember what they did well and can strive to duplicate it.

#### **After a loss**

Note that parents and coaches often show more concern than players do when the team loses. Players care about the score immediately after the game, but usually start thinking about other things. The things players remember should have little to do with the final score. Did they get to play? Did they have fun? What did they do well? Did they get acknowledged for it? After losses, the coach can identify weaknesses to motivate players at the next practice. Applaud effort and pick out positive aspects from the game. Did the players try hard? What did they do well? Can you think of several great plays to acknowledge? Did the team show improvement from the last game? Team and player improvement matter more than winning and losing

# SMALL- GAME FORMATS AND POSITIONS

Small sided games serve as one of the most effective ways to teach young players techniques and tactics. Small-sided games break soccer down into its most essential components, creating a developmentally appropriate environment for young players. Players get frequent and intense exposure to game-like situations and problems. They stay excited and involved in the game.

Also, these games allow the coach to spend more individual teaching time with players.

Small-sided games emphasize technique. They give young players the chance to develop comfort on the ball by getting lots of touches. Also, small sided games naturally reward basic tactical awareness. They encourage spacing and movement by rewarding depth and width on the field. Young players learn to support teammates and move off the ball to create space, get open, and produce goal scoring opportunities. Lastly, small sided games naturally teach players to work on both sides of the ball, to defend as well as attack.

## 4v4

4v4 is an effective format for players of all ages, especially young ones. With more players, passing and spacing become more important. Players will need to ask themselves: “If we lose the ball, what will happen?” “Am I in a good position to receive a pass?” “Is this a good situation to dribble the ball?”

Team Formation w/ 4 players - Square or Diamond

The typical formation when playing 4v4 is “the diamond”. This formation encourages spacing and movement. Two players go wide, one right, one left; The third player pushes forward and provides depth up the field. The last player stays back. These positions should be dynamic. Players should move and interchange constantly to unbalance the opposing team.



# FORMATIONS AND POSITIONS

## 7V7



# FORMATIONS AND POSITIONS

## 9V9



# FORMATIONS AND POSITIONS

## 11v11



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# RULES OF THE GAME

**Direct Kick** - A kick awarded after a serious foul in which the ball can be kicked directly into an opponent's goal. Intentional fouls that result in direct kicks are: Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent, tripping, jumping at an opponent, charging from behind, holding or pushing, using hands on the ball.

**Indirect Kick** - A kick awarded after a minor foul in which the ball must be touched by another player from either team before going into the goal. Fouls resulting in an indirect kick include: dangerous play, obstructing an opponent, and a number of infractions that the goalkeeper can commit such as handling the ball after a deliberate pass from a teammate.

**Offside** - A player must not be ahead of the ball when the ball is played by a teammate in his or her direction unless two or more opponents are ahead of, or even with, him or her. Two opponents or the ball must be between the offensive player and the goal. Offside is judged the moment the ball is kicked. A player cannot be offside when in his or her own half the field, or if the player receives the ball from a throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick. The offside rule does not apply to younger players (3v3 and 4v4 formats).

**Penalty Kick** - The referee awards a penalty kick when the defending team commits a major foul inside the penalty area. All players except the goalkeeper and kicker must stay outside the penalty area and the ball is struck.

**Advantage** - When the referee allows a foul to occur without penalty or stoppage of play. This occurs when the referee judges that the offensive team would benefit from allowing play to continue.

**Goal Kicks** - The defending team is awarded a goal kick when the attacking team sends the ball over the goal line. The goal kick must leave the penalty area. A player other than the kicker must touch the ball before the kicker can play the ball a second time.

**Yellow Card/ Red Card** - The referee can warn and eject players from the game for violent conduct, serious fouls, or abusive language. A yellow card is a warning. A red card is an ejection. A second yellow card results in an automatic red.

**Throw in** - A throw in restarts the game after the ball goes out of bounds over the touch line /sideline. Throw ins are taken from the point where the ball crossed the line. The ball must be thrown with two hands from behind the head. Both feet must remain on the ground and from on, or behind, the touchline /sideline.

**Corner Kick** - When the defending team sends the ball over their goal line /end line, the attacking team restarts play by kicking the ball from the corner closest to where the ball went out. Opponents must stay 10 yards away until the ball travels its circumference. Another player must touch the ball before the kicker can play it again. A goal can be scored directly from the corner kick.

# SOC CER LINGO

- **50/50 Ball** - when the ball is in a position in which either team has an equal chance to gain possession.
- **Chip** - to lift or kick the ball in the air, with backspin
- **Clear** - when the defensive team kicks the ball far away from goal
- **Cross** - to kick or center the ball from near the sidelines of the field into the center
- **Give and Go** - a passing play that occurs when a player passes to a teammate and then immediately runs into open space to receive a return pass
- **Goal-Side** - refers to a position in which the defender gets between the ball and his or her own goal
- **Hat-trick** - term used to describe three goals scored in one game by one player
- **Juggling** - a technique that describes keeping the ball off the ground by using any body part besides the hands or arms
- **Marking** - when a player defends or covers an opponent
- **Nutmeg** - when a player pushes the ball between the leg of a defender
- **Passing Lane** – a position in which a player is able to receive a pass without a defender intercepting it
- **Square pass** - a pass made straight across the playing field, or a pass that does not go forward or backward

# SOCCER COACH RESOURCES

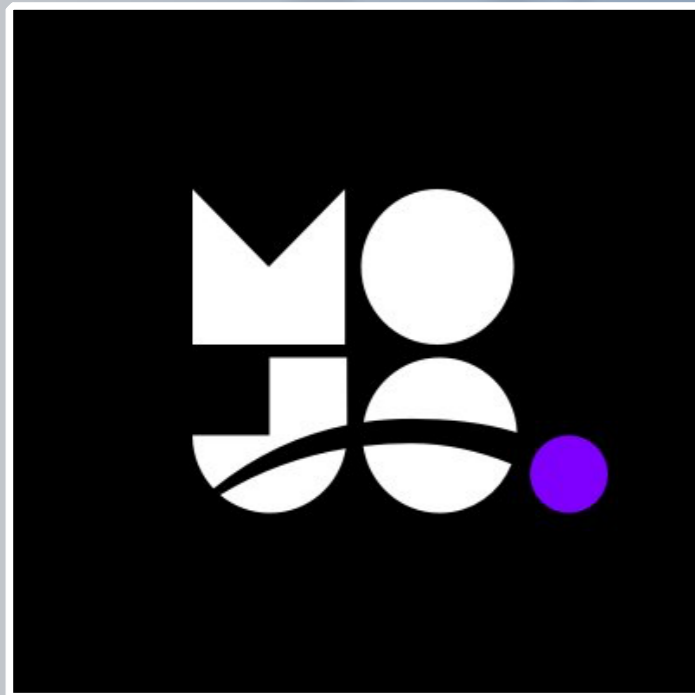
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