

Crash Course for Coaching U10 soccer

In our program, at the U10 level, you will have kids that have played for many years and you will have kids who have never played before. And sometimes, a kid who has never played before might be the best athlete on your team! One of the challenges of coaching this age is doing your best to make practices and games fun for kids on both ends of the talent and experience spectrum. Regardless of how many years they've played, you will still need to devote some practice time to skill development, especially at the U10 level.

GENERAL INFO

Ball: Size 4

Players: 7 players on the field, 1 of which is goalkeeper. All children must play at least half of a game, and no child should play the entire game unless there are only seven or eight players present. At this age it is understood that the competitiveness of the game may require you to play players in a certain position, but it should never affect their playing time. Please allow players to rotate to play every position on the field, including goalkeeper if they want to try other positions.

Fouls and Handballs: Referees will be provided at games and will call fouls and handballs. Please let your players know to always be respectful of the referee. Your individual behavior towards the referee will go a long way in determining your players' behavior.

Duration of Games: U10 consists of two 25 minute halves with a 5 minute halftime.

Substitutions: U10 players may sub on any dead ball, such as a throw-in, goal kick, kick-off, or an injury. Always get the referees' attention and permission before subbing and sending a player onto the field.

Throw-Ins: Please stress to the kids they need to keep both feet down and use two hands to bring the ball directly over their head. Spend time at practice working on correct throw-ins, they will not get retries in games.

Goal Kicks: Taken from the corner of the goal box after the offensive team last touches the ball before it goes over the end line. Encourage whoever is taking the kick to wait until the opposing team is behind the half line. After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the half line and play resumes as normal.

Corner Kicks: A corner kick is awarded when the defending team last touches the ball before it goes out of bounds over the goal line. Opposing players should be at least four yards away on a corner kick.

Offsides: Offside position is defined as being nearer to the opponents' goal line than both the ball and the last defender when the ball is passed. This can be a little confusing. Just remember that your offensive player has to either have a defender between him/her and the goalkeeper if the ball is passed to them. You can't be offside on your own half of the field, or on goal kicks, corner kicks, and throw-ins.

Goalkeeper: A goalkeeper may pass or throw the ball from anywhere within the penalty box if they save the ball from going in the goal. NO PUNTING. Encourage them to distribute to the outside, not up the

middle. A GK is not allowed to touch the ball with their hands if it is intentionally passed back by their team member. This will result in an indirect kick for the opposing team from the spot of the infraction.

Tactics

Tactics make up an important part of U10 soccer. However, the kids can easily get bogged down with a lot of concepts, so keep it simple.

Offense: **1.** Kick the ball wide (or towards the sideline) when on defense. **2.** Kick the ball across the front of the goal when attacking on offense. **3.** Most importantly, if your teammate has the ball, don't run at them and stand too close, instead go to an area where they can kick the ball to you. SPREAD OUT!

Defending: Stress that defending does not mean taking the ball from the other team, it means preventing them from scoring. The easiest way to do this is by staying between the attacker and your goal at all times. Introduce the concept of "closing down" an attacker by getting gradually closer to them as they get closer to your goal. Also stress that we defend with one foot forward and one foot dropped, and always try to force the attacker towards the sidelines, not up the middle. DEFENDERS SHOULD NOT BE ON THEIR OWN END WHEN THEIR TEAM IS ABOUT TO SCORE, THEY SHOULD AT LEAST BE CLOSER TO THE HALFWAY LINE. Forwards need to come back and help on defense as well. The kids will have so much more fun if they are always engaged in what is going on, regardless of their position.

Corner Kicks: Spend time at practice, especially before the first game, going over the set up for this both from an offensive and defensive point of view. One defender should stand with shoulder on the near post. Other defenders should stand on the goal side of the offensive player in order to stay between offensive player and goal. Offensive player kicking the ball should kick the ball toward the front of the goal and other offensive players set up in front of the goal to try to kick the ball in. Do not kick towards center line.

Practice ideas, Games, Drills

Avoid lines if possible and have each player have a ball at their feet as much as possible. You could structure individual practices around shooting, passing/receiving, dribbling, defending, attacking, etc. At this age players should start working on using all parts of the foot to move the ball around (inside, outside, pull back, etc). There are tons of ideas to be found online by searching U10 soccer drills. Youtube is sometimes easier to comprehend drills because you can see it being performed. After the first practice or two it is a good idea to start implementing some scrimmages or scrimmage situations on half a field at the end of practice. This could be within your own team or against another team that is practicing at the same time. Relay races and competitions work well for this age. Don't ever be afraid to contact the soccer board if you have questions or need ideas. We are happy to come watch and offer suggestions.

Warm up: tic tocs, toe taps

Cone dribbling: Set up a line of 5-7 cones a few feet apart and have players dribble weave in and out of cones. Have multiple lines of cones if possible so less standing around. Start with using both feet and then progress to using only right foot and only left foot. Players should get used to using inside and outside of foot to move ball in each direction. You can add a cone several yards out from the end of

cones for players to dribble with speed to and turn/pull back and return to start. Encourage more advanced players to start using top of toe to dribble with speed when going in a straight line.

Dribble, pass, switch: space out cones in two lines with a few yards in between them. Divide into pairs with each player starting on a cone. First person passes to teammate opposite of them. Receiving player then dribbles to opposite cone of teammate who passed, while the player who passed switches to opposite cone. Dribbling player dribbles around cone and passes to teammate who just switched with them, and this continues.....dribble around opposite cone, pass back to teammate and switch to other opposite cone. This should be non stop. Separate cones further apart for more advanced players.

Knock out: Create a circle of cones or use the center circle. Start by having all the kids dribble inside the cones/circle with control and without running into each other. Once they get the hang of controlling the ball in traffic, yell knock out and have them try to kick the other players out of the circle while keeping control of their own ball. Once out they have to do 10 toe taps or tic tocs before they can come back in. To end the drill, have the ones knocked out stay out until there is a last person in.

Passing with a partner: Set up two lines of spaced out cones opposite of each other. Have the kids partner up with one ball for each pair, the players will pass back and forth using proper technique, as you go around correcting their mistakes. They should lock their ankle, and use the inside of their foot. Emphasize the pace and direction of the ball, and that their partner should not have to move to receive the pass. It also needs to have enough speed that it won't be intercepted. Also emphasize importance of receiving ball with good first touch, with inside of the foot, and player should attempt to "absorb" the ball as it hits their foot. They should not be trying to pass the ball back with first touch. Have them move their cones back one big step as they get better or for the more advanced kid. It can be helpful to pair up similarly skilled players.

Scrimmage – Try to spend time at every practice doing some sort of scrimmage or scrimmage type drill. On a half of a field you can play 3 on 3 with one of the defenders being the goalie. This is a good drill to concentrate on spreading out and passing. If there is another team practicing at the same time in your age group, you can scrimmage with them at the end of practice. This is a great opportunity to work on real game situations, positioning, and work the kinks out. Stop the drill/scrimmage (yell pause or stop) to point out some things like how they are not spread out. Work together with the other team to help each other improve.

Positional Shadowing: This is going to be a bit boring at first for the kids, but it will prove invaluable to your team down the road. You start by putting seven kids into the seven different positions on the field, along with someone as a goalkeeper. (4 or 5 kids will be "subs" at this point). Make them say the name of their position, and have them spread out over your entire/half of the field in those respective positions. Then you introduce a ball, which is slowly passed around as the kids adjust their position on the field according to where the ball is. Repetition is the key to this exercise being successful. Do this over and over and over. Bring in different kids in different positions. Move kids around and make them play at different spots on the field. Tell a sub to go in at right midfield and see if he/she gets it right. You should be in the center of the field directing traffic for the whole exercise. After 20 or 30 minutes of this you become a defender trying to steal the ball, and the kids see how many passes they can complete while maintaining their positions. Once they get the hang of that, bring in a couple of the subs to defend with you.

I recommend having your team get to games 15-20 minutes early, and use that time to do a mini practice that focuses on something your team is struggling with...passing, positioning, and moving without the ball. This is the main thing that our teams struggle with, and once they start to "get it" the on-field results are amazing! The main thing is for you to have a good time coaching (after all, we want you to volunteer next year). If you are having fun, the kids are going to have fun. Thanks again for volunteering.