

Crash Course for coaching U8 Soccer

5 Rules to Live By

1. Players at this age can accept instruction and be held accountable for it in a positive manner. Correct their mistakes, by reminding them of what you have worked on in practice. Show or describe to them the correct way and give them a chance to demonstrate immediately.
2. ALWAYS emphasize proper technique. The longer a child performs something incorrectly the slower they will develop and the less fun they will have. This is the age group where bad habits will form, so try to help the kids avoid these. By the end of the season your kids should know how to pass, shoot, and receive the ball correctly.
3. Your practices (and games when possible) should be organized into a warm-up, then instruction on whatever your topic or topics are for the day, and then a game emphasizing whatever your instruction topic is. Avoid lines and each child should have a ball at their feet as much as possible.
4. Try to emphasize positions and passing. This will take a great deal of patience on your part, but if you stick with it you'll be amazed. Stress teamwork and how it is just as good to assist a goal as it is to score one.
5. Have Fun. These are still six and seven year olds who want to have a good time. Learn to balance instruction and fun, depending on the skill level and personality of your team. Play similar games as you do with younger teams (freeze tag, sharks and minnows, kick the coach, etc.). Teams are very different at this age, so try to find what works.

RULES and INFO

Ball: Size 3

Players: four at a time on the field. NO Goalkeepers. It is the coach's job to keep the players from standing close in front of the goal acting like a goalkeeper. Four field players only. Each child on a team will receive an equal amount of playing time during the game/season. A player should not play the entire game unless there are only four players present.

Fouls: Coaches will officiate all games. Coaches are strongly encouraged to call all fouls committed by their own team. All fouls result in an indirect free kick with the opponent at least five yards away. (All kicks must be touched by another player before they go into the goal.) If a player is repeatedly committing fouls, his coach should remove him from the game and explain to the child (and his or her parents) why their behavior is not acceptable in the game. Just because a player (or team) is bigger and/or stronger this does not validate overly physical play against smaller opponents.

Duration of Games: U8 Games consist of four 10 minute quarters with a two minute break between quarters and a five minute half time break. Clock runs continuously. Designate an assistant coach or parent on the sideline as your official timekeeper.

Substitutions: Can be made on any dead ball.

Throw-Ins: The ball is placed on the sideline nearest the point where it went out of bounds. The opposing team should be at least five yards away from the thrower. Encourage throwers to keep both

feet on the ground and use two hands to bring the ball directly over their head. There is no penalty for an incorrect throw, simply offer positive reinforcement and instruction, and let them try again.

Goal Kicks: A goal kick is awarded when the ball is last touched over the end line by an offensive player. The kick is taken from the goal box and the opposing team should be on their own half. NO PUNTING

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.

Kick Offs: Will be taken from the center at the start of each quarter and after a goal is scored. The opposing team should be outside the circle.

Instruction Topics

Introduce the topic, demonstrate (or have one of your players demonstrate) the proper way to perform, then let the kids demonstrate individually for you to watch and correct, then proceed to an activity).

Passing- Put children in groups of two and emphasize using the inside of the foot. You can set up cones and put each child in between them, this way you can work on accurate passes. Have them switch feet so they use both left and right. You can lengthen the area they are passing across as they get better.

Receiving (or Trapping) the ball- you can use largely the same set up as passing, but emphasize the child's technique who is receiving the ball. This First Touch should be inside of the foot and the player should attempt to "absorb" the ball as it hits their foot. Switch feet. Ball should not bounce off foot far from player.

Shooting- The easiest way to remember this technique is "toe down" or "hit it with the laces". The opposite foot (than the one you are kicking with) is the plant foot and it determines where the ball will go. Try with both feet. Tell the kids no to worry about how hard they kick it, but where (and how) they kick it. The power will come as they get older and stronger. They should NOT be kicking the ball with the end of their toe!

Dribbling- Dribbling is less about technique and more about just playing. Use practice games and your warm-up as an opportunity to work on dribbling. Play knock-out, kick the coach, an obstacle course, gates, and use relay races to work on dribbling. The main thing is every kid has a ball at their feet at all times when working on dribbling.

Tactics, Positions, Etc

Tactics make up an important part of U8 soccer. However, the kids can easily get bogged down with a lot of concepts, so keep it extremely simple. Try to stress the following three things: **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 or try to take the ball from them, instead go to an area where they can kick the ball to you. SPREAD OUT! There are a thousand other little points, but if they learn these three you can avoid 'amoeba' ball.

Practice ideas, Games, Drills

There are tons of ideas to be found online by searching U8 soccer drills. Youtube is sometimes easier to comprehend drills because you can see it being performed.

Warm Up: tic tocs, toe taps

Have the kids dribble across the field, use cones for them to go around in different patterns.

Set up two lines of kids facing each other a few yards apart and have them try to pass the ball to each other with you correcting form and moving cones further apart.

Freeze tag- players dribble while you try to tag them. If you tag them, they stand until a teammate kicks their ball through their legs and “unfreezes” them.

Kick the coach- kids love this one. They have to dribble and try to shoot the ball and hit you while you are running around. It forces them to pick their head up and look around while dribbling, and also to shoot while the ball is moving.

Sharks and Minnows- They dribble the ball and try to score while you or one of the players tries to steal their ball, if their ball gets stolen, they have to be a shark in the next round until you have no minnows left.

Gates- Set up gates (two cones a few feet apart) around the field and say go, and the kids try to dribble through them. Scatter the gates so there is no pattern and the kids decide where to go for themselves. Yell “stop” and ask them how many gates they have gone through. (They will usually lie in their answer, but that is half the fun!).

Hot Potato – Divide the kids into two teams and put all the balls out in the middle. Make a halfway line and each team doesn’t want any balls on their half when you yell stop.

Scrimmage - after a couple weeks you can start trying to scrimmage at the end of practice with some game like situations, even on a half a field. Stop the scrimmage (yell pause or stop) to point out some things like how they are not spread out.

This age group is a fun combination of the light-heartedness of the U6 kids and the coachability of being older kids. 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.