

# Coaching 11 to 14 year olds

Coaching sessions for players of this age will begin to focus less on the technical aspects of the game and more on the tactical and physical elements of competitive play. Players should practice twice a week at this age, with sessions traditionally ranging from an hour and a quarter, to an hour and a half each time depending upon the age and level of the team.

Although most players will still need ongoing technical coaching to continually hone their core skills, by the time the players are 14, a significant portion of each practice session should be dedicated to game-related coaching. These practices should feature goals, direction, transition between offense and defense, and should be performed at game pace.

The breakdown below shows the typical technical, tactical, physical and psychological expectations we should have when working with 11-14 year old players.

## Physical

- Make repeated sprints throughout the game
- Withstand physical shoulder challenges
- Perform slide tackles (Senior league only)
- Be prepared to play for up to two periods of 30 minutes

## Technical

- Dribble with change of pace
- Perform fakes & moves
- Control the ball with all surfaces of the foot
- Maintain possession under pressure
- Pass with accuracy with both feet
- Correct shooting technique with both feet
- Shoot with power with dominant foot
- Head with change of direction

## Tactical

- Understand team shape
- Understand support and mobility in attack
- Understand compact team defense
- Understand goalkeeper distribution
- Play all rules and create options from restarts
- Understand how to play the offside trap
- Understand how to beat offside

## Psychological

- Give 100% effort every game
- Encourage other players
- Adapt appropriate mental set when winning and also when trailing
- Learn from mistakes

# Evaluating Youth Players

Evaluating youth soccer players can be a challenging process. Soccer is a very fluid game when it is performed well and unlike baseball, basketball and football, success in soccer cannot easily be quantified by performance statistics or skills tests.

Here is a list of criteria that can be used to evaluate performance within a game situation:

Does the player try to CONTROL THE BALL when it comes to them?

Is the player COMFORTABLE WHEN DRIBBLING the ball – can they dribble past a defender?

Does the player make ACCURATE and WELL WEIGHTED passes?

Can the player use their WEAKER FOOT to control and pass the ball?

Does the player MOVE INTO SPACE to receive passes?

Does the player naturally MOVE WITH THE GAME, or do they kick the ball and stand still?

Does the player take shots as soon as they are able and do they SCORE GOALS?

Does the player have VISION? Do they see the field?

Does the player UNDERSTAND when to pass, dribble or shoot and do they decide quickly?

Does the player try to RECOVER THE BALL when the other team has possession?

How well does the player DEFEND against their immediate opponent?

Does the player have SPEED, over 10 yards – 40 yards?

Does the player have STRENGTH in 1 on 1 battles?

Does the player have ENDURANCE, can they play at a high pace throughout the game?

Are they COMPETITIVE and intrinsically motivated?

Are they COACHABLE, do they have a POSITIVE influence on teammates?