

Coaching 6 and Under

In their first few years of soccer, the child will focus on the ball and on very little else! You will frequently find that your carefully planned practices are quickly reduced to a free for all because the children have failed to recognize the lines, cones, flags or goals and have continued dribbling way into the distance eyes fully focused on the precious ball!

The children will also find it difficult to cooperate and your practices will need to reflect this. Children should be given maximum opportunity to work on their own with the ball and the majority of your early practices will involve dribbling, turning, stopping and kicking the ball, rather than passing and control.

Soccer at this age is all about the child learning to love the game. They will quickly learn to enjoy the constant running around, the dribbling and shooting, playing games and scoring goals. Coaches will be required to create the environment in which players are allowed to experiment and copy, and practices must be kept very simple and lots of fun. An important goal at this age is to make sure that the children look forward to coming to practices and games.

To do this a coach will be required to run age appropriate practices where the children are given the maximum opportunity to explore and discover all of the fundamental skills used in the game. It is important to spend the maximum amount of time on the most commonly used skills at this stage of the child's development and not try to coach things that you have seen players doing at the older age groups. Although the coach may have no soccer background what so ever, it is extremely helpful for them to have a base understanding of the fundamental techniques of passing, control, dribbling and shooting – if they are not able to demonstrate these to the children they can normally find one of the children who can demonstrate.

The breakdown below shows the typical technical, tactical, physical and psychological expectations we should have when working with young children who are relatively new to the sport of soccer.

Physical

- Run forwards & backwards
- Sidestep, skip and hop
- Jump in the air
- Sprint for 5-10 yards
- Fall over without being hurt
- Be able to play for two periods of 15 minutes.

Technical

- Dribble the ball forwards at jogging pace
- Move the ball to the left or right when dribbling
- Stop the ball when dribbling
- Turn 180 degrees when dribbling

- __Kick the ball forwards
- __Push the ball a short distance with the inside of the foot
- __Stop the ball when it is rolling towards them

Tactical

Understand the concept of attacking one goal and defending another
Understand in and out of bounds
Understand the basic rules – no handballs, no tripping etc

Psychological

Have fun
Try to score goals & try to stop the other team from scoring
Try to take the ball away from the opponents
Be a good sport

Practice session at this age should run for no more than one hour. It is important for coaches to make sure that the parents understand what you are trying to accomplish, how you will be going about it, and how much help and support you will need. An assistant coach is invaluable at this age group and even parents with zero soccer knowledge can be of great help.

Warm up

The coach can use a combination of fun playground games to get the children warmed up. These warm up activities will involve running, chasing, jumping and will help the coach get the group settled down and ready to listen to instructions.

Ball Familiarity

The players should be provided with an opportunity to become familiar with the ball without having to worry about specific directions, game rules or opponents.

Fun Games

As the players become more comfortable with the ball, the coach can create games that allow the players to practice fundamental techniques within a fun and often competitive setting.

Small Sided Games

The coach should conclude each practice by playing a small sided game using the appropriate number of players, field size and rules that will be used throughout the season.