Age Group Characteristics

- Typically in 1st & 2nd grade.
- Attention span is longer than U-6, but still relatively short.
- Approval seeking from adults. Negative comments may adversely affect effort & performance.
- Perceive personal effort as an indicator of their performance.
- Exert maximum energy while on the field, thus they tire quickly.
- Begin to understand the need for passing the ball to teammates.
- “Swarming” around the ball is still common and acceptable.

Coaching Considerations

- Ball size - #3
- Primary focus should be to excite youth about soccer and to have fun!
- Model & reinforce sportsmanship.
- Introduce names of positions.
- Provide opportunities to play all positions.
- Accept that “swarming” the ball is inevitable, and don’t become frustrated that players won’t spread out.
- Skill development using short-sided activities (2v2) should center around:
  - Trapping, passing, & shooting with the inside of the foot
  - Toe passing
  - Throw-ins
  - Dribbling to space using both feet
- Some very basis tactics to consider are:
  - 1v1 attach
  - Dribble or pass?
- Minimize comments during games. Players need to focus on the ball, not your voice.

Diagrams & References:

- soccerexpert.com (Soccer Expert)
- mayouthsoccer.org (Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association)
- vysa.com (Virginia Youth Soccer Association)
- soccerspecific.com

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Activities

Please consider incorporating some of the following activities into your practice sessions. Remember to include in your practice plan all equipment needed for the activity and to keep explanations clear & concise. You may use and adapt activities from other age groups depending upon the skill level & developmental readiness of your team.

Robin Hood

*Field Set-Up & Equipment*

- Set up a square with cones as shown. All balls into the center.

*Directions*

- Divide team evenly into the four corners of the square.
- Coach calls Go. Player from each team runs to center, gets ball, & dribbles back to start.
- Once player returns with ball, next players does the same.
- When all balls are gone from center, teams may steal from each other. Provide 1 minute for stealing.
- Winner = team with most balls.

*Coaching Considerations*

- Encourage dribbling with both feet, eyes up, & keeping ball close.

Dribble, Dribble, Dribble

*Field Set-Up & Equipment*

- Set up a square with cones as shown. Players inside with a ball.

*Directions*

- Players dribble while looking up occasionally. Using one hand, coach holds up a number of fingers. Players must call out the number.
- Next, players dribble & try to knock a ball from another player outside the square. If player’s ball is knocked out, she must retrieve ball & perform an activity to re-enter (ex. dribble around square, perform 10 toe taps on ball, etc.)

*Coaching Considerations*

- Encourage eyes up & keeping ball close while moving to open space.
- Turning with & shielding the ball from players.
1v1 Attack To Goal

Field Set-Up & Equipment
- Use 4 cones to set up a 12x5 yard grid just inside the penalty box. Can be done on both sides of field.
- 1 defender inside the box.

Directions
- Attacking players must successfully dribble through the grid (front to back, not out the sides) and shoot on goal.
- Defender attempts to take ball or knock ball away.
- If attacker loses ball, must retrieve it & get back in line after completing toe-taps, push-ups, etc.

Coaching Considerations
- Keep ball close & maintain control.
- Use speed and feints to beat defender.

Crush The Cones

Field Set-Up & Equipment
- 10 Cones & 8 balls
- Set up area as shown.
- Divide team into two groups, with one group wearing pinnies (colored vests)

Directions
- One team attempts to keep possession of the two balls while attempting to knock balls off the cones.
- The defense team attempts to stop the attacking team from knocking balls of the cones.
- Switch attackers & defenders after set time period.

Coaching Considerations
- Eyes up to locate undefended cones.

Variation
- Add/remove a ball.
- Remove a cone w/ bal.
Pass The Buck

Field Set-Up & Equipment
- 4 cones to establish grid size.
- 1 cone placed in center with ball on top.

Directions
- Offensive team attempts to knock the ball of the center cones using a pass (no shot).
- Defender (shown in red) attempts to steal ball.
- 1 point for steal. 1 point for knock-off.
- Players rotate positions.

Coaching Considerations
- Eyes up and communicate with teammates.
- Use open hips to allow greater range of motion.
- Do NOT permit shooting. Instead, encourage 1-touch passing.

Variation
- Permit only 1-touch passing.
- Permit only a set number of passes or the defender automatically scores a point.

Gate Dribbling

Field Set-Up & Equipment
- Set up desired amount of gates inside a square using cones.

Directions
- Players take a ball and find a space inside square.
- Upon Go, players try and dribble through as many gates as possible in 1-2 minutes.
- Player receives 1 point for each gate passed through.
- Player loses 1 point if they collide with a player or hit a cone.
- Cannot repeat a gate until all gates have been entered.

Coaching Considerations
- Encourage eyes up to locate open gates.
- Ball control.

Variation
- Use only one foot to dribble.
- Add a defender to kick balls out of the grid.
Bulldogs

Field Set-Up & Equipment

- Play from side touchline to other side touchline.

Directions

- Assign one player as the bulldog.
- Other players w/ ball line up along touchline arms length apart.
- Upon Go, players dribble to other touchline. Bulldog tries to steal or knock away a ball.
- If a player’s ball is stolen/knocked away, he becomes a bulldog.
- Repeat until there is one player with ball remaining.

Coaching Considerations

- Encourage eyes up dribbling.
- Use both feet & changes of speed.

Sharks & Minnows

Field Set-Up & Equipment

- May be played in a square as shown or inside center circle.

Directions

- Select 2 players to be sharks (no ball).
- All other players (minnows) dribble inside area keeping ball away from sharks.
- If shark knocks a minnow’s ball out of the area, the minnow becomes a shark.
- Continue until no minnows remain.

Coaching Considerations

- Shielding—keeping your body between the ball and defender (shark)-is important.
- Eyes up to spot sharks.

Variation

- If shark knocks a minnow’s ball out of the area, the minnow becomes a shark. The shark retrieves the ball and is now a minnow.
- If a minnow’s ball is knocked out, she must perform some activity (ie. toe-touches on ball, jumping jacks, push-ups) before re-entering the area.