



Coaching U4 - U6

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U4-U6 Coach Clinic

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*Information compiled from a variety of sources to support coaching education. Most information is not owned, invented, or a unique creation of Kyle O'Keefe or SoccerHomework.com.

4 pillars for U6 -

 Have Fun!

 Run, jump, hop, skip

 1 player, 1 ball

 Have Fun!

Components of the Game for the U-6 Age Group* -

Fitness: Introduce the idea of how to warm-up and movement education. Balance, walking, running, how to start and stop, jumping, hopping, rolling, skipping, changing direction, bending, twisting and reaching.

Technique: Dribbling (stop and start) and shooting. Experiment with the qualities of a rolling ball.

Psychology: Sharing, fair play, parental involvement, "how to play" and emotional management.

Tactics: Where is the field? The concept of boundary lines, which goal to attack and score on, which goal to protect.

Please note that the components of the game are in a **priority order for this age group.*

Practices should be centered around -

- Games
- Listening to directions**
- Physical coordination
- Directional dribbling and turning

** Be smarter than the kids. Don't argue with them, if you do you've already lost the argument.

A little trick I use is a quick Simon Says to get their attention. When they stop listening just say, "Touch your ear." Then speed it up and add more parts till you have their attention, "Touch your shoulder, put your hands up, touch your nose." etc. Then move on...

"Soccer is an art not a science and the game should be played attractively as well as effectively. Soccer is a game of skill, imagination, creativity and decision- making. Coaching should not stifle, but enhance those elements."

- Bobby Howe, U.S. Soccer, former director of coaching, professional and National Team coach

"Players in this age group are egocentric – a me, my, mine mentality. Young children do not play together; they play next to one another, meaning they do not necessarily interact as they play. This psychosocial reality is called parallel play. Each child is engaged in his or her own game and is not sharing or cooperating in a game. In soccer, this is most evident in the U-6 age group and still occurs to a lesser degree in the U-8 age group. Players in these age groups swarm around and go after the ball because it is the only toy on the field. They have not yet learned the social skill of sharing, hence why passing (sharing) the ball occurs by chance.

The training session must be player-centered with the coach as a facilitator of the soccer experience. It is necessary to go with the flow and be adaptable with this age group."

- US Youth Soccer Player Development Model

Coaching Your Team -

I. Team makeup and player characteristics

a. Roster size: 8-12

b. Ages

- U4: 3-4 - beginners

- U5: 4-5 - beginners

- U6: 5-6 - beginners with some playing experience

c. U6 general player characteristics

- Catching skills not yet developed

- Constantly in motion – love to run, jump, roll, and climb

- Physical coordination is immature

- Only understand simple rules

- Individually oriented (me, my, mine) – little or no concern for team activities

- Short attention span – tends to one task at a time

2. Team Meeting

a. Initial meeting

- Outline expectations with the parents and recruit help. This includes behavior expectations. You are not a babysitter. Parents must stay at practice. If there is a behavior issue, simply send the kid to sit with their parent. Do NOT run a kid for punishment. (Running is a fundamental part of soccer. Do not teach them that running is a punishment at a young age.)

- Set snack schedule - this is one of the kid's rewards

b. Monthly communication and Review

- At least 1 time per month call parent meeting at the end of practice and review what you are working on.

3. Practice Planning

- The training session must be player-centered with the coach as a facilitator of the soccer experience. It is necessary to go with the flow and be adaptable with this age group. Remember - This practice is NOT about you the coach!
- Practices should last approximately 45 minutes. Do not go much longer than this!
 - 7 minutes - coordination and movement fitness with and without ball (mainly without)
 - 7 min - directional dribbling and turns, shooting, limited passing, etc.
 - 10 min - GAMES - see examples below.
 - 10-15 min - SCRIMAGE - small sided - 3v3 or 4v4 Use small side pop up goals. Scrimmage is a must. Do not plan a practice without free play against another team to goals at the end of practice.
 - * Teach rules and establish boundaries and out of bounds of the field.
 - * As much as possible put the kids in GAMES.
- 1 player, 1 ball - this means that each kid needs to have a ball at practice.

4. Running Practice

- Execute your plan - do not show up and improvise.
- Try not to experiment too much - and if you do know when its not working, no pride here simply send them to water break and move on.
- Be energetic and positive.
- You are the leader and must take them with you.
- Communication - remember you are talking to little kids.

5. Little GAMES in your practice

- a. Are the activities fun? Are they enjoyable to perform and will it keep their interest?
- b. Are the activities organized? Are the objectives clear? Are they simple?
- c. Are the players involved in the activities? Is there maximum participation of all players?
- d. Is creativity and decision making being used by each player?

Sample GAMES to play at Practice -

- Ball retrieval - stand in middle of grid. throw balls out and make them bring them back
- Body part dribble - dribble ball around and make them stop with a body part you call
- Sharks and minnows - one shark in middle to start. Players line up on one side of field and shark tries to kick balls away. Anyone shark gets becomes a shark until last player is left.
- Start without a ball and vary jogging around: side on, one foot hop, skip, etc. Then add ball to the jogging around
- Everybody's it tag - try and tag as many without being tagged. Stay in boundary. 20x20 yards.
- Dinosaur eggs - place all balls inside a circle of cones. You are a sleeping dino. Let them sneak up and steal the eggs from you and take and shoot in the goal. Wake up and chase them.
- Obstacle course with and without ball
- Moving goals
- Follow the leader snake dribble

- Tails - each player tucks a bib into their shorts (preferably on the side). They all must stay in bounds and try to pull each others tails out. Last man standing, count how many you get, teams, etc. Then ADD a ball, same game.
- Races, and relays. With and without ball.
- Tag and freeze tag with and without ball.

6. Saturday Games

- a. Be on time - don't be late!
- b. Have ref money.
- c. Be ready to run 2 fields.
 - Need assistants help - 1 for sure, 2 is better
- d. Have fun - celebrate all goals!
- e. Snacks!

“Igniting a passion for the game must be the number one objective for coaches of this age group. The aim of the coach is to keep their soccer experience fun, enjoyable and to foster a desire to play. This love of the game keeps people in the game for a lifetime.”

- US Youth Soccer Player Development Model