

CFSC U8 Player Development Curriculum suggested practice: 1 day, 60-75min.

What follows is a curriculum of what should be taught to players at this age based on U.S. Soccer's "Best Practices for Coaching Soccer" Guide, the USSF "D" license course manual and other local soccer clubs.

Technical Training – the teaching of the techniques of soccer (ball mastery). These physical skills should always be taught with one ball per player or one per pair. They should be taught with little pressure at first (pressure refers to time and space dictated by defense) and then a gradual building of pressure as mastery improves. The idea is if they cannot perform the skill without pressure they certainly will not be able to perform when pressure exists in the games. So take it slow and make sure there is great repetition and most important that it is fun! Demonstrations for all of the following can be found on the websites listed on the back.

Dribbling – running with the ball into open space

- Players at this age should move beyond the "duck walk" dribble learned in micro and u6 and begin using the outside of their foot to advance the ball with greater speed
- Coaching points:
 - Changing speed and direction (rapid and abrupt)
 - Using all parts of the foot (inside, outside, sole, heel and toe)
 - Encourage risk taking
 - Encourage creativity
 - Get head up when on the dribble
- Moves to be taught: (teach yourself these moves by going to youtube.com and typing in the move)
 - The drag or roll
 - The pull back
 - Simple feints or fakes (the matthews)
 - The step over and scissors

Passing – playing the ball to a teammate

- Players at this age should pass with both feet using 3 proper techniques
- 1. Inside of foot "push pass" – plant foot is close and pointed in the direction kicking; passing foot should make contact on the top half of the ball w/ankle locked to ensure it does not become elevated
- 2. Outside of foot – used to finesse the ball, disguise a pass or bend the ball
- 3. Shoe lace pass – used for longer distances; be sure to approach from a 45 degree angle

Receiving – the ability to control a ball that is played to you

- Receiving ground balls away from pressure w/ both inside and outside of foot (a player's first touch should be away from the defenders not into them)
- Take a bouncing ball out of air from partner
- Get head up before receiving the ball in order to find the space or someone to pass to

Shooting – the act of striking the ball into the goal

- Proper striking techniques using the inside of foot and laces (see passing above)
- The art of "lifting" the ball – that is getting the ball off the ground by hitting low on the ball

Throw Ins – when the ball crosses the touch lines of the field players need to throw the ball back into play

- Player needs to keep both feet on the ground and bring the ball behind their head before throwing the ball to a teammate ensuring that the player follows through with one motion and without turning

Tactical Training – the teaching of the tactics (decision making) within the game. There are three types of

tactics to be taught: Individual, Small group and Team. At this age practice should be 80% technical and only 20% tactical training.

Individual Tactics – the decision making when playing 1v1

- Attacking – transition quickly, take chances and keep possession (in that order)
- Defending – transition quickly and apply the *proper* pressure GOAL SIDE (between opponent and goal)

Small Group Tactics – the decision making when playing 2v1 or 1v2

- Attacking – transition quickly, take chances and keep possession (in that order)
 - When/where do you take players on 1v1
 - Where and how do you support when you are the player without the ball (concepts of crossing and dropping the ball can be introduced)
- Defending - transition quickly and apply the *proper* pressure or make a “recovery run” – a run by a defender back toward the goal after they have been beat by the opponent in order to help later

Team Tactics – the decision making when playing 6v6 games should not be a priority; instead focus on the individual and small group tactics

- Positions should be introduced and understood in terms of how they fit into the small group tactical decisions like being in position for a cross or a recovery run
- Players should be playing all the positions
- How will your team organize itself on goal kicks, corner kicks and throw-ins offensively and defensively

Best Practices for a U8 Coach:

- There should be a lot of playing with the ball in small numbers for short periods of time
- Players should have plenty of opportunity to experience the ball at their own pace
- Players should be encouraged not to fear the ball by dealing with balls on the ground and bouncing
- Come prepared with what you want to teach at practice, be able to model it, and have players summarize it at the end of practice
- Training sessions should be built accordingly: drills with unrestricted space; drills with restricted space; drills that simulate game situations with small goals, target players or lines to cross; and then end with an actual game where players can try to apply what they have learned *without* input from the coach
- Modify drills to fit the lesson being taught by: changing the size or shape of the field, the numbers involved, the number of touches, how score is kept, or by keeping players in zones

Best Qualities for a U8 Coach:

- Understand the capabilities and limitation of this age
- Learn by watching the players play
- Be able to demonstrate proper technique or bring someone who can
- Emphasize fun at all times and foster a sense of love for the sport – you want them playing soccer when they are NOT at practice!

Best places for designing and planning your practices or training sessions:

<http://www.youtube.com> just type in soccer drills or be as specific as you want “matthews move”

<http://www.expertvillage.com>

<http://www.soccerxpert.com/>

<http://www.soccerclub.com/training/drills/default.asp>

http://www.finesoccer.com/finesoccer_drills_archive.htm

http://www.insidesoccer.com/learn_it/coaches/drills_practices

<http://www.strongsoccer.com/Kingdrills/clipspractice.htm>