



Coaching Manual

A Compilation of Easthampton Youth Soccer Association, Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association and U.S. Soccer Resources

What is a good coach?

- Someone who rarely hears a Mom or Dad say “Hey thanks!” but who does receive a lot of advice.
- Someone who teaches their players that winning is not everything. Success is not based on winning, but on learning, improving, being physically active and creating friendships and fun memories.
- Someone who helps a child learn through “guided discovery” and to take mistakes in stride. Failure is not making mistakes but rather not trying hard, giving up, poor sportsmanship or unethical behaviors.
- Someone who creates a climate focused on performance, not outcome with controllable and realistic performance goals for the players based on learning, fitness and skill development.
- Someone who helps a child to develop ability by giving positive, encouraging feedback-giving the players confidence that sometimes did not exist before.
- Someone a child will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over.

I. Coaching Responsibilities

1. General. The coach is responsible for providing a safe and fun environment for players to develop their individual skills and learn to play and enjoy the game of soccer.
2. Conduct. Coaches must show respect for referees, parents, players and other coaches at all times. Coaches should set an example of self-control for players and parents.
3. Practice. The coach should prepare a plan for each practice, which might include a theme (*e.g.* passing) and list of activities. The coach should bring any necessary materials to practice, such as balls, pinnies, cones, etc.
4. Organization.
 - First Aid Supplies: Must have available at all practice sessions and games. Kits are supplied by EYSA.
 - Balls: Keep track of the number of balls that you were issued. Make sure that they are properly inflated (pump located in shed) before games and practices.
 - Rules: Review the EYSA rules of the game and bring a copy to games.

II. Pre-Season Meeting

Coaches are encouraged to hold a pre-season meeting with players and parents. Recommended pre-season meeting topics include:

1. Discussion of team goals and expectations.
2. Providing organizational materials, such as a schedule of games/practices, player/parent/coach contact sheets, etc.
3. Equipment requirements, such as ball size, shoes, shin guards.
4. Communications relating to practices and cancellations.
5. Game day information, such as arrival for warm-up time.
6. Expectations for player and parent conduct during games (e.g., parents may not address referees, supporters sit on opposite side of field from team, etc).

III. Games

1. **Roster:** Prepare a roster with the name of all players and the planned field positions that will be used during the game.
2. **Playing Time and Positions:** Every player should participate in at least half of the game. Players should be allowed and encouraged to try all positions.
3. **Sideline Organization:** Keep your team organized on the sideline. Players should remain in a designated area, such as between four cones or on a blanket while waiting to play. Players should be watching, learning and cheering for their team.
4. **Substitution:** Tell the waiting players who they will be substituting for and at what position. Players should wait at the half-line until the referee signals that players may substitute.

IV. Player Development

Grades K-1

1. Skills to be emphasized

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- Limit the amount of kicking
- Focus on inside of the foot passing
- Get in as many touches of the ball for each player as possible

2. Typical Characteristics of K-1 Players

- unable to see the world from another's perspective – asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic
- everything is in the here and now – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
- enjoying playing, not watching – Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
- limited attention span (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds
- effort is synonymous with performance – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
- active imaginations – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- look for adult approval – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- unable to think abstractly – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic
- typically have two speeds -- extremely fast and stopped
- usually unaware of game scores – we should keep it that way
- often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right

3. Some Recommended Games for K-1 Players

A) Tag---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees.

B) Hospital tag---Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body at which they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.

C) Red light/Green light---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light”, players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says “yellow light”, players must dribble very slowly. When coach says “green light”, players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.).

D) Freeze Tag---Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player’s legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion.

E) Planets---Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach’s order and dribble into the planet he calls out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up team so they start at different planet and then have them dribble through the solar system in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system.

F) Kangaroo Jack---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos.

G) Snake---In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players, The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands with players making up the snake the snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss.

H) Ball Tag---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player's ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players.

I) Capture the Balls---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team one minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again.

J) Moving Goal---Two coaches use a pinny or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.

***** **Every practice should include a scrimmage*******

Grades 2-3

1. Skills to be emphasized:

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique- instep and inside of the foot
- Introduce passing only to the players who can dribble out of trouble (this can be done during the supplemental clinics where the best players can be grouped separately for some of the activities).
- Shielding

2. Typical Characteristics of 2-3 Players

- tend to play well in pairs – unlike 6 year-olds, these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- are now able to take another’s perspective – they now have a sense of how other’s are feeling
- still unable to think abstractly – still do not have this capability, be patient
- heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- still much prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines
- limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task) – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- have an understanding of time and sequence – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”
- many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible
- extremely aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently
- seek out adult approval – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age
- begin to become aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this
- wide range of abilities between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player

- some will keep score – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others. Surely some parents are fueling the motors with their own. Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age
- beginning to develop motor memories – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements
- less active imaginations than K-1 players – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year-olds allowed will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imaginations, just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

3. Some Recommended Games for 2-3 Players

A) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

B) Knock Out---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player's balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling five times).

C) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

D) Marbles---Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player two misses player 1's ball, then player one immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player two's ball (player two does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player one has a chance, then player two immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back. etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score. Hint: If two balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back.

E) Gates Passing---Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

F) Triangle Tag---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly one yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is “it”. However this time the player who is “it” tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player’s ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither play can go through the triangle. *Version 2:* Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle. *Version 3:* Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner. Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag.

G) Get Outta Here---Place two small (two yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other’s goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells “get outta here” and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players. *Version 2:* Coach can stop yelling “get outta here” after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive. *Version 3:* Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air. *Version 4:* Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played, 2 v 2 or 3 v 3.

H) Clean Your Backyard--- Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team’s goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.

I) 2 v 1 Keep Away---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 v 1 continuous keep away. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.

J) 1 v 1 to Endlines---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one endline and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball in control over the opposing player’s endline. *Version 2:* You can make this 2 v 2, 3 v 3 or 4 v 4.

***** **Every practice should include a scrimmage*******

Grades 4-5

1. Skills to be emphasized

- Dribbling
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Shooting with both feet—using laces and inside of the foot
- Receiving the ball with all parts of body
- Proper 1 v 1 defending
- Heading
- Tactical Priorities
- Basic Attacking Ideas
- Basic Defending Ideas
- Comprehend 1 v 1 concepts
- Comprehend 2 v 1 concepts
- Introduction to 2 v 2 concepts
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd defenders
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd attackers

2. Typical Characteristics of 4-5 Players

- attention span lengthens from 2-3 players- they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions
- they start to think ahead and think “If this, then that”
- they are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play
- demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility
- they start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts
- children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure
- players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for coach Amy’s team”
- players at this age are extremely rule bound—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live
- there is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams this is still a crucial age for technical skill development

3. Some Recommended Games for 4-5 Players

A) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session, kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move. *Version 2:* As players get comfortable, coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and

interaction. *Version 3:* Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other's balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own. Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times. You do not want players sitting out.

B) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

C) Gates Passing---Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have them pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

D) 1 v 1 To lines---In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other. *Version 2:* Make the grid larger and make this a 2 v 2 or a 3 v 3 game.

E) 1 v 1 To Two Small Goals---Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

F) 2 v 2 to Four Cross Goals---Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three, you must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of two on deck, they come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately.

G) 2 v 2 To Four Small Goals---In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other. *Version 2:* 3 v 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.

H) 4 v 4 Endzone Game---Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs).

The player cannot go into the endzone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.

I) Triangle Goal Game---Make a triangle with three cones in the center if the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place two goalies in the triangle and the two goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues. *Version 2:* Use two balls at the same time.

J) 4 v 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 v 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

***** **Every practice should include a scrimmage*******

Grades 6-7-8

1. Skills to be emphasized

- Continue with all 4-5 skills
- Basic combination play
- Proper 2 v 2 defending
- Speed Dribbling in Traffic
- Ability to chip the ball
- Accurately play long passes
- Offensive/Defensive Heading
- Power/Accuracy Shooting
- Tactical Priorities
- Communication
- Basic Support Positions
- Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure
- Combination Play
- How and when to switch the point of attack
- Pressure vs Containing
- Proper 2 v 2 roles
- Introduction to all roles in 3 v 3

2. Typical Characteristics of 6-7-8 Players

- all children are maturing at different rates
- players need to warm-up and stretch---muscle pulls and other nagging injuries are common otherwise
- players will typically understand elemental abstract concepts and hypothetical situations
- they like to solve problems
- peer evaluation is a constant
- egos are sensitive
- coordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt
- technique still needs to be reinforced constantly
- playing too much can lead to overuse injuries
- playing too much and not feeling like they have a choice in the matter can lead to burnout and drop-out
- this is the dawn of tactics!
- keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks---we never want them to stop doing these things
- ask for feedback from them---they will tell you how things are going
- try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them
- keep it fun!!!

3. Some Recommended Games for 6-7-8 players

A) Four Square Passing---Form a grid 35x35 with squares roughly 4 yards across in each corner. Two teams of 4 to 6 players try to score by passing the ball to a teammate who makes a run into one of the four squares. Players in the squares cannot be defended against they can pass or dribble the ball out. Balls out of play can be passed or dribbled back into play.

B) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

Version 2: make this competitive by breaking the group into two teams and seeing which team has more balls at the end of the time.

C) Colors-Warm Up---Half of the players in red pennies, half in blue. Teams playing together in the same space combine in the passing sequence blue-blue-red-red-blue-blue-red-red etc. etc. Ball can never stop, players can never stop moving, and ball cannot leave area of play. Coach can limit touch-count, mandate which foot to pass with or which side of foot to pass with as sees fit. When players can do first sequence adequately and without frequent errors change the sequence to blue-blue-blue-red-red-red-blue-blue-blue etc. etc. Stress communication and technical passing points throughout. Make this activity competitive by counting errors and setting goals by lowering allowed errors.

D) 2v2+2 or 3v3+3---Three distinct teams in colors (red, green, white), one team starts as defenders and the other two teams play together to keep the ball away from the defense (so it is actually 4v2 or 6v3). When the ball is taken by the defense, the color (two/three players) they stole it from becomes the new defenders. Players must pay close attention to who the defenders are, to score the teams in possession must make 6 passes before losing possession. If they do this, both teams on offense receive one point.

E) 2v2 with 2+2---In a grid 15x15 yards, each team has two players in the grid and two on the outside, on opposite sides from each other. The teams score by either making six passes (with teammate inside the grid or support players) or by executing a 1-2 (wall pass) with a support player. After 3 minutes switch inside and outside players.

F) 5 Goal Game---4v4+2 in 35x40 yard grid. Five 2-yard goals are spread out throughout the grid. The plus two players are always on the attacking team. The teams score by passing through any of the goals to a teammate. Must receive with inside of foot, then outside, weak foot inside/outside are different expectations that can be put on the players. First team to 10 points wins. Players need to be able to see where the open goals are, and receive with a "picture" of what is around them. With this in mind, if the players are advanced enough, the player receiving

through the goal must play one touch. Coach could require receiving player to perform a feint before touching ball.

G) 3v3 or 4v 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30x30 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. With three attackers the players now have the 1st attacker (ball) and 2nd attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1st defender (pressure), 2nd defender (cover), and 3rd defender (balance). This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets.

H) Bread and Butter---Typical 4 v 4 but with an additional 4 players who stand on outside of field and can be used by either team as outlets (with only two touches). If a team gets scored upon, they become the team on the outside and the outside team plays on the field. Use approximately a 20x25 yard area. Stress correct technique, receiving sideways on, and facing where they wish to play. May restrict the players to 2/3 touch to force quicker decisions, and better body position before the ball arrives. Keep score and make the game competitive.

I) 6v6 team touch---Play a normal 6v6 game except for the fact that every player on a team must touch the ball before their team can score. This forces players to show for the ball, to communicate, and to spread out the field. Version 2: If players are advanced, you can enforce a 3 or two touch limit on players.

J) 8v8 dual sided goal---Using a coerver goal or setting up a goal in which the goalie must protect both sides of the goal, play 8 against 8. Both teams can score from either side of the goal. If a goalie makes a save she just punts the ball out. Teams must learn to change the point of attack and must give support to each other and communicate constantly. This will help teach teams to make the field big when on offense and to try to compact the field on defense.

***** **Every practice should include a scrimmage*******

General Practice Organization

Plan to practice at least once a week for 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Practice is used to improve the performance of the players and at the same time to have fun.

Design activities that are developmentally appropriate for the age of the players. At all age levels, players should learn and practice the techniques of dribbling, receiving, passing and kicking. At the higher age levels, players are ready to learn more advanced tactics of team play.

Some practice time must be used to teach the rules of the game.

Develop creativity by allowing players to make mistakes and learn from them. Soccer is a fast moving game and players develop by learning to make quick decisions on their own.

Try to get parents to assist you during practice and explain what you want them to do. Set up stations and divide the players up to provide more opportunities for players to touch the ball.

Practice activities should follow the principle of “No Laps, No Lines, No Lectures.”

1. General fitness-related activities and warm-ups are important to developing healthy and fit players. Activities such as running laps should be presented as part of achieving physical fitness and not as a “punishment.”
2. Use activities that get all of the players involved and provide an opportunity for a lot of touches on the ball. Avoid activities that involve waiting in line. Players do not learn to play soccer while waiting in lines and are likely to lose focus and create distractions.
3. Limit the length of time spent talking with players between activities. Players are not likely to pay attention for more than a short time. Provide short explanations, a demonstration of a technique or activity and then return to working with the ball.

Sample Practice

Warm-up with dynamic stretching activities, such as light jogging, jumping jacks, etc.

Practice basic techniques with a partner, such as passing with the inside of the foot 15 times for each foot.

Progress through a series of activities that are based on a theme, such as passing. Some examples of activities are included in this manual. Other activities can be found online, such as through the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association website at <http://www.mayouthsoccer.org>, www.soccerspecific.com, or the US Soccer national association site www.ussoccer.com.

Presenting each practice activity:

1. Explain the activity and how it helps to improve skills
2. Demonstrate the activity, slowly, step by step
3. Players engage in the activity
4. Coach evaluates the activity and makes adjustments as necessary

Use small-sided game activities (1v1, 2v2, etc.) that ensure that all players are involved and getting lots of opportunities to touch the ball. The advantages of small-sided games include:

- Players get more touches on the ball
- Smaller goals develop accuracy
- Introduce unbalanced situations 3v2, 5v3, etc.
- Impose conditions that reflect the overall theme of a practice (e.g., each player must touch the ball at least two times before passing/shooting, three passes before shooting, etc.)

Always end practice with a “scrimmage” that involves all players. Actually playing the game is fun for the players and is the most effective way to learn soccer. Small sided games are highly encouraged- more players are apt to get more touches.

General Tips on Technique

Dribbling

- Small steps keeping the ball within a few feet
- Strike the ball softly with inside or outside of your foot
- Look up at the other players
- Change speed and direction
- Use both feet
- Longer touches when there is more space

Juggling

- A fundamental skill that improves dribbling, receiving and kicking
- Introduce control through “pattern juggling” that always ends with the player catching the ball
- Initial pattern is to drop the ball to the foot, juggle once and catch
- Introduce how to pull back the ball and begin juggling

Passing

- Ankle is locked
- Foot slightly up at the toe
- Thigh turned outward
- Look up to where you are passing
- Make contact with the inside part of your foot and follow through, players have the most control with this pass.

- Other passes: Contact the middle of the ball with the instep(shoe laces) of the foot
- Other foot should be pointed to where you want the ball to go
- Follow through

Kicking/Shooting

- Head down
- Ankle locked
- Strike the ball with the laces of your shoe
- Follow through
- Accuracy is more important than power
- Inside of the foot shot is similar to pass, for close range shots

Receiving

- Move to the ball (do not wait for the ball to come to you)-very important
- Inside or outside of the foot used most often
- Foot should not be locked but prepared to cushion and or pull back to receive the ball
- Ball should not be stopped but should be kept under close control
- You may also just go with ball without touching it if it is going in the direction you want

Shielding the ball

- Body balanced
- Knees bent
- Shoulders down, this is where players will make contact with opposing player
- Arms at side

Heading

- Lean back at the waist
- Lunge into the ball, trying not to snap your neck forward, use your back/torso to lead you to the ball
- Strike the ball in the middle of your forehead

Throw-ins

- Ball must go completely over the head
- Both hands must be on the ball, thumbs behind the ball
- Both feet on the ground, you may drag a foot-develop after basic throw-in is taught

Defense

- Position yourself so you are at a 45 degree angle from the opposing player, trying to use the sideline as another defender
- Do not get caught being “flat footed”
- Do not dive or stab at the ball, hold your position until there is a good chance to win the ball or the player is getting close to the offensive third of the field

V. Sample Practice Activities by Focus

Dribbling

Beehive – Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd grid (or approximately one sq yard per player). Each player has a ball. Players dribble inside the grid randomly using correct techniques and practicing avoiding other players. Players should practice inside and outside foot dribbling, stopping, changing direction, and maintaining control while in the beehive.

King of the Ring – Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd grid where each player has a ball. One player or the coach is “it” without the ball. Players start to dribble in the grid while trying to avoid having their ball kicked out of the grid by the player who is “it.” Players can reenter the grid after retrieving their ball and completing some type of small skill penalty activity, like juggling the ball twice in their feet or knees or dribbling around a nearby tree before returning to the grid.

Red Light-Green Light – Just like the traditional game except the players dribble their balls forward and must learn to control and stop their balls on the “red light” command. Line all the players up and have the coach be the traffic cop. Send out of control players back to the starting line.

Attack and Protect – Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd grid. Each player has a ball. Players dribble around in the grid trying to kick another player’s ball out of the grid while at the same time protecting their own ball. Provide the players with a skill “condition” that they must complete before they may reenter the grid.

Spiderman – Provide a 20 yd x 20 yd grid. Each player should have a ball. The coach starts as the first spider. The players dribble around the grid while trying to avoid the tag of the spider. When a player is tagged by the coach, they join hands and go after new prey. Each successive tagged player makes the web of the spider grow bigger, but, alas, less organized. Young players will request this game constantly.

Passing

Keep Away Circle – Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle of cones. One player or the coach stands inside the circle and tries to intercept passes made between the players. Passes completed between partners count as goals. Change the player inside the circle after a pass is intercepted or after a short time interval.

Cone Game – Players pair up and stand across from each other around a circle. Set up 6 or 8 cones in the middle of the circles as targets. Partners try and knock over the cones in the middle with accurate passes.

Triangle Pass – Set up a three player triangle. Each group has one ball. Players pass to each other around the triangle shape. Make sure they reverse the direction of their passes from time to time. After a certain level of proficiency is reached, add a defender to the center of the triangle who will try to intercept the ball.

Four Corner Pass – Set up a 10 yd x 10 yd grid with cones at each of the four corners. Four players work with one ball, one player on each side of the grid. A fifth player defends inside the grid. Players may only run between the cones on their side of the grid as they attempt to pass the ball across the grid. Change the middle player often to keep the play crisp and fast.

Star Wars – This classic game is very exciting for younger players. Set up a 10 yd x 20 yd grid. Have all the players line up at one end prepared to run to the other end. The coach or a player stands just outside the grid at midway with several balls at the ready. On command the players attempt to run to the end line while evading balls kicked at them by the coach. All shots should be kept below waist level. Players hit by the balls become new additional shooters until only one runner is left.

Shooting

Marbles – Players are organized into pairs, each with a ball. Standing with his back to the field of play, the first player throws his ball over his head. The second player then kicks his ball from the starting point and tries to hit the ball that was thrown. Play alternates by kicks until one ball is hit. The players then reverse and start again. Coaches should emphasize instep kicks for length and side of the foot kicks for accuracy. Make it a condition that every other game is left foot only.

Four Goal Game – Set up four cone goals about two yards wide in each corner of a 20 yd x 30 yd grid. Divide players into two equal teams. Players may score at any of the four goals. This game encourages teamwork and results in lots of shooting.

Shoot Between Cones – Set up a cone row with cones spaced 3 to 5 yards apart. Pair up players and position one player on each side of the cone row facing the cones and each other. Players should start close to the row of cones at first, striking the ball between the cones. The partner receives the ball and strikes it back between the cones. Move players farther away from the cones as their technique and accuracy improve.

Go for Goal – Players form two lines on either side of the coach who is standing about 18 to 20 yards from a goal of any size. The coach serves the ball toward the goal while one player from each line races to win the ball and shoot. As skills progress, add a goalkeeper. The coach should encourage correct shooting technique and a good first touch on the ball.

Dribble Cones and Shoot – Set up two cone lines for a dribble weave about 30 yards long with a two yard goal at the end. Divide players into two lines or teams. Players must dribble through the cones and score at the goal at the end before the next player in line starts.

Other Activities

The Numbers Game – Young players will play this game for hours. Set up a 20 yd x 30 yd grid with goals at each end. Divide players into two teams and place each team on one of the end lines. Number the players 1-6 (or use colors for very young players). The coach stands at the half-line and serves a ball into the grid while calling a number. Players who are called sprint off their end line to win the ball, play 1 v 1 and try to score. Players standing on the end line may keep the ball in play but may not protect the goal. The coach should try 2, 3, 4, etc. numbers. Ball can be served on the ground or in the air.

5 v 5 Pass and Strike – Set up a 30 yd x 30 yd grid with two opposing goals. Divide players into two 5 person teams. Players must pass the ball to each team member or make 4 complete passes before they can shoot on goal. If the ball is taken by the opponent the team must start over in its pass count.

VI. Professional Attitude and Conduct

EYSA coaches should strive to maintain an appropriate perspective of the game by demonstrating a professional attitude and good conduct. Coaches are constantly being observed and evaluated by players, parents and the general public. The conduct displayed by coaches has a great effect on the image of the EYSA program. Coaches must show respect for referees, opposing teams and coaches, players and parents. Coaches must abide by and support the EYSA soccer program and all regulations and policies of the EYSA and, if applicable, the Pioneer Valley Junior Soccer League.

Coaches are encouraged to seek to improve their knowledge of soccer and their ability to create a constructive and effective environment for players to learn the game. EYSA encourages coaches to enroll in courses and attend clinics to continually learn about the sport, including the coaching courses that are routinely offered by the Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association.

VII. By-Laws, Article 7 – Disciplinary Action

“A player or coach that has been disqualified (red card) from two or more games during a single season or whom has endangered other players may be recommended for suspension or expulsion from participation in the Association. Such player or coach shall be notified in writing at least seven days prior to, and shall have the right to appear with one adult representative before a Disciplinary Committee appointed by the President. The Disciplinary Committee shall have the authority and responsibility of deciding on the player’s or coach’s retention, suspension, or expulsion from future participation in the Association. All decisions of the Disciplinary Committee are binding upon the player or coach, and the BOD. There shall be no appeals process.”