

6U COACH



First Impressions last a lifetime...
6U is a time for Exploration!



AMERICAN YOUTH
SOCCER ORGANIZATION

COACHING SERIES

6U COACH



Accredited By:

AYSO National Office
TEL (800) 872-2976
FAX (310) 525-1155
www.AYSO.org



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AYSO National Office
19700 S. Vermont Ave., Suite 103
Torrance, CA 90502
800-872-2976

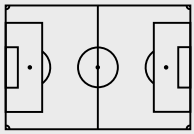
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WELCOME TO THE FIRST TEAM!

FROM THE **FIELD**



“Our National Coaching Program is expertly designed, tested and accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Coaching Education. We have a proven method for player development and I am proud of our contribution to the game in the USA.”

John Ouellette, AYSO Hall of Fame and Former National Coach

THANK YOU FOR VOLUNTEERING!

The American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) welcomes you to the colorful world of youth soccer coaching.

AYSO is a place where every child plays in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship and positive coaching. In addition to the game’s technical, tactical and physical components, we fully recognize and prioritize the psychosocial needs of our children and work toward the fulfillment of those needs in all our programs. Staying truly child-centered makes AYSO a model for other youth sports groups and is a key to our position as a player development leader.

The content of this manual is drawn from the knowledge and experience of AYSO’s Player Development Team and our National Coaching Advisory Commission—people with vast soccer knowledge, yet volunteers of AYSO—just like you. The coaching methodology and soccer skills included in this manual have been carefully researched and have natural alignment with US Soccer’s Zone One (6-12 years) objectives for player development: Development over Winning, Age Appropriate, Quality Training, and Having Fun/Inspiring Players.

We encourage you to attend your local Region’s Annual Coach Orientation, as well as other AYSO coaching courses available in your area or online. Your Regional Commissioner or Coach Administrator can provide you with information about what’s required for your specific age group.

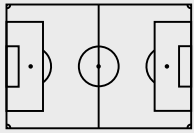
On behalf of the entire organization, thank you for joining the team!

NATIONAL COACHING COUNCIL

AYSO PLAYER DEVELOPMENT TEAM

AYSO

FROM THE **FIELD**



“We strive to galvanize the player development pathways of our youth soccer organizations. The common objective is to develop the next wave of youth players. In this collective effort, it is critical to promote a single message and common coaching methodology with respect to player development. AYSO’s National Coaching Program is in line and coherent with these efforts.”

*Dave Chesler, U.S. Soccer Director of Coach Education
Current WNT Performance Analysis Coach*

THE WORLD’S BIGGEST SOCCER CLUB

Founded in Torrance, CA in 1964, AYSO is a distinguished cornerstone of US Soccer and with approximately 60,000 teams across all age groups; AYSO is the world’s biggest soccer club!

Success can be measured in many ways, from the careers of professional players who got their start playing AYSO to the thousands of coaches (youth, high school, collegiate and professional) who developed their passion and understanding of the game in AYSO. Regardless of perspective, our contribution to the US game’s success is founded upon our unique Vision, Mission and Philosophies.

KEEP IN MIND



Any player development or instruction should always include a comprehensive understanding and practical application of our core values.

AYSO VISION

To provide world-class youth soccer programs that enrich children’s lives.

AYSO MISSION

To develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs in a fun, family environment based on the AYSO philosophies:

AYSO SIX PHILOSOPHIES

EVERYONE PLAYS®

Our goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

BALANCED TEAMS

Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.

OPEN REGISTRATION

Our program is open to all children who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.

POSITIVE COACHING

Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.

GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP

We strive to create a safe, fair, fun and positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

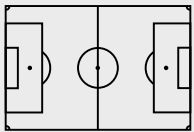
KEEP IN
MIND



AYSO Six Philosophies:

- Everyone Plays®
- Balanced Teams
- Open Registration
- Positive Coaching
- Good Sportsmanship
- Player Development

FROM THE **FIELD**



“It is better to win ten times 1-0 than to win once 10-0.”

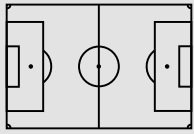
Vahid Halilhodžić, Bosnian Coach and Former Professional Player

DIVERSITY. EQUITY. INCLUSION.

AYSO commits fully to its founders’ legacy of diversity, equity and inclusion. Providing fun and enriching soccer programs is what we do. We welcome everyone regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, social-economic position, ability or disability. Differences are respected and embraced. AYSO is proud to be at the heart of communities where all feel that they belong.

STEWARDS OF THE GAME

FROM THE **FIELD**



“We must all work together; coaches, officials and parents to create the optimal performance environments for our players’ development.

Players need to play with freedom, confidence and enjoyment in a developmentally rich environment to truly reach their potential.”

Scott Snyder
AYSO Player Development Specialist

Stewardship: “The conducting, supervising, or managing of something; especially: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care” (2017 Merriam-Webster).

APPLICATION ON THE FIELD

Referees and coaches are to be Stewards of the Game and work together to ensure that player safety, at the physical and emotional level, is the number one priority on the field. All 7 members of the team (3 referees and 4 coaches) are equal participants and are there for the sole purpose of discussing how to ensure a safe and protective environment for the players to play. The Center Referee shall initiate a brief meeting between referees and coaches before the AYSO match to collectively:

- Identify any potential issues that may impact the ability of players to safely have fun; such as the field, sideline areas, field equipment, players’ equipment, the physical and emotional states of participants, and other game related concerns.
- Review and follow a simple process that encourages communication and collaboration when there is a concern or issue with players/participants.

REFEREES

Referees, as Stewards of the Game, are responsible for keeping the game safe, fair, and fun. Referees should support and work with coaches to manage the behavior of players and spectators.

COACHES

Coaches must keep their sideline participation to being: Positive, Instructive and Encouraging at all times. Coaches must ensure respect and support for referees by players, parents, and all other spectators.

PARENTS

Parents are expected to respect coaches and referees, and model positive sporting behavior; and at the same time, maintain realistic expectations.

KIDS ZONE®

KEEP IT FRIENDLY

KEEP IN MIND



Sideline critics who scream instructions at players or criticize referees or coaches slow down the learning process and make it less fun for everyone. Consider every time you prepare to kick the ball you receive numerous screams of direction? Scary, confusing and annoying!

In AYSO, fans (yes, including parents) are asked to be cheerleaders, **not critics or sideline coaches!** Kids Zone® is a unique program that includes a Parent Pledge that moms and dads sign to commit to *positive, encouraging* behavior when they're watching the matches. It also includes signs, buttons and other match-day reminders.

Soccer is a *player's* game! Players learn the game by trying new things, making mistakes and trying again.

Negative, even violent, behavior of players, coaches and parents involved in youth sports has become almost epidemic in this country. Kids Zone® is a proactive effort to counteract this trend and involves the following elements:

To help execute this program, four basic elements are involved (and available from the AYSO Store):

1. **Kids Zone® Button.** Worn by program supporters at matches and serves as a reminder of the importance of positive sideline behavior.
2. **The Sign.** A large sideline poster lists positive behavior standards and can be posted at the entrance of participating fields. Parents and spectators who will abide by these standards are welcome.
3. **The Pledge.** AYSO requests all parents to sign a pledge that holds them to the Kids Zone® standards.
4. **The Video.** A 12 minute documentary introduces AYSO's principles and its Kids Zone® action plan to new participants. Viewers will also watch a parent intervene to change another parent's negative behavior. In order to make this program work, everyone must help!

KEEP IN MIND



Help create a safe and encouraging environment for you and your team by implementing Kids Zone®.

To learn more or visit ayso.org/kidszone



THE COLORFUL WORLD OF 6U

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST A LIFETIME

As a 6U coach, your job is of great importance as you introduce our young athletes to AYSO and our wonderful game. Therefore, it is prudent to get straight to the answers; straight to the single most important coaching method and approach to your success and the success of your players:

LET THEM PLAY!

That's right! If you take one thing from this entire manual, please take these three words.

To be in the running for 6U Coach of the Year, all you need to do is organize a safe environment, introduce the activity or game, step back and let them play! At this age (in fact most ages), the game itself is the best teacher.

6U is a time for freedom and EXPLORATION! The platform we create for this precious age group should encourage the players to explore, experiment, participate with (and without) the ball, and fall in love with the game.

However, appreciating that you are likely also on your own soccer pathway, we will **overview** fundamental elements of the game, coaching methodology and information that is important to create a solid foundation for you to build upon; and also provide some insight to what comes next in 8U and beyond.

KEEP IN MIND

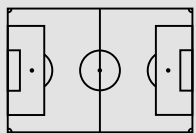


At this age (in fact most ages), the game itself is the best teacher.



COACHING METHODOLOGY

FROM THE **FIELD**

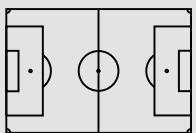


“Success should be measured by the demonstrated & documented improvement of each individual (not results). The role of a youth trainer is to improve the skills & habits of each & every footballer in his or her charge. Ironically, if the club does improve each player, the team results improve.”

Johan Cruyff

DEVELOPMENT OVER WINNING

FROM THE **FIELD**



“Development over winning. Being faithful to it, being really faithful to it every single day. Are the players, are the kids the most important thing? That’s what I worry about. That’s what I talk about. That’s my only goal: making the players and of course, the coaches who teach them, all of us, better!”

Claudio Reyna, Former U.S. Soccer Youth Technical Director

Let’s remove any myth related to AYSO, “We play to win!” The purpose of a match is to win! However, the manner in which we obtain the victory becomes a question of development versus winning.

Is there any real development taking place when our players simply punt the ball 30 yards each time they receive it and hope it bounces near a teammate on way to goal? There isn’t! Yet, this is how many teams at all ages win matches and measure their success. At AYSO, we feel, it is time to challenge that methodology on the quest for victory.

Prioritizing development over winning does NOT reduce competition (which is instrumental to a player’s development). However, a competitive environment does not necessarily need to be entirely league table-dependent.

Make your players better by encouraging them to play with purpose, intent, creativity...skill. Give them quality instruction to develop their skills, the freedom to express themselves (and make mistakes) and the platform to improve...by playing. To echo the comments of the famous Dutch master Johan Cruyff, “Ironically, if the club does improve each player, the team results improve.”

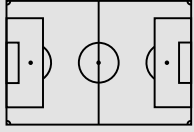
As coaches, it is our responsibility to respect our individual player’s development and skill acquisition on our quest for team victory. Please consider this on your coaching journey.

KEEP IN MIND



A healthy competitive environment for our players should focus on performance as well as outcome (favoring and recognizing ball skills, intent, effort, creativity, etc., as factors of success, not simply the score). Consider the emotional roller coaster of quantifying success only to when you win the game or score a goal (aspects that are not 100% within any player’s control)? How would we like to be judged as adults in that type of scenario?

FROM THE **FIELD**

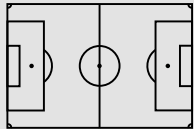


“In matches the coaches should keep out of the way. He/she is an important figure, of course, but is more likely to lose a match than win it. Matches are won by players.”

Romario, Brazilian Legend

CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCCER (VS. OTHER U.S. SPORTS)

FROM THE **FIELD**



“AYSO emphasizes all the positives of soccer: the enjoyment that kids get from the sport, understanding how to play on a team and be a good teammate, and developing skills in a fun environment.”

Julie Foudy, AYSO Hall of Fame, 1991 & 1999 World Cup Champion, 1996 & 2004 Olympic Gold Medalist

It is important to recognize some key differences between soccer and other American sports, as this impacts how the game should be played, viewed and coached. In comparison, soccer is:

- Free-flowing (fewer stoppages).
- Low-scoring (more often).
- Requires eye-foot coordination (versus eye-hand in baseball, basketball, football).
- Has no physical size requirement.
- Equal opportunity sport (girls are equally as talented and have comparable opportunities to boys).
- **PLAYER-based** (as game flows, *players* make the decisions and PLAY the game, less coach involvement).

PREPARATION AND ORGANIZATION

PREPARATION

Always prepare a written Training Plan! Consider what you wish to work on and what activities you can use to achieve your goal. A written plan ensures smooth transitions, less down time and a more economical use of precious time.

Take a few minutes just before your session to review your plan and the coaching points you want to make. Consider saving your plans as a coaching library for future seasons/sessions or to share with other coaches in your Region.

APPEARANCE

Appropriate attire is expected when conducting your coaching session. Wearing soccer apparel and footwear go a long way to comforting your players that you know what you are doing related to your role as their “soccer coach.”

Sunglasses are discouraged (unless you require a medical prescription), as the players cannot see your eyes. Even with a prescription, remove your sunglasses when in direct communication with your players.

ORGANIZATION

Ideally, set up your area in advance of players and parents arriving. **Upon their arrival, they should see a planned and organized environment, which will immediately set the tone for the session as well as provide confidence for the parents.** In organizing your coaching area:

- Make sure the area is safe (playing surface, physical considerations, sprinklers, etc.).
- Plan for a smooth transition from one exercise to another.
- Minimize the number of cones that you have to pick up or reset.
- Have a place for equipment and breaks.



EQUIPMENT

Below is a basic list of the minimum equipment you should have as part of your coaching kit:

- AYSO Player Registration Forms – which include the Emergency Authorization.
- Basic first-aid kit*.
- **(Players should bring water to every activity).**
- 12 cones (preferably multi-colored).
- **5** scrimmage vests (preferably 2 sets of different colors).
- Extra soccer balls (players should bring a ball to *every* activity).
- Pump.
- Extra pair of shin guards (players must wear shin guards at *every* activity).
- Pop-up goals (preferred).
- Whistle.
- Charged cell phone (in case of emergency).
- Training plan.

*Be familiar with your first aid kit contents so that you know what you have **and where it is** if needed.

AGE APPROPRIATE UNDERSTANDING AND APPLICATION

The following chart generalizes age characteristics of children ages 5 through 8 years of age. (Note: All children are unique and often chronological age can conflict with developmental age; therefore, individual application should always be considered.)

KEEP IN
MIND



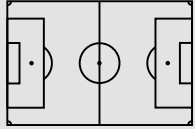
Our players are *not* mini-adults; therefore, our training sessions must be adapted to life through *their* eyes, *their* interests and most important, *their* capabilities.

AGE APPROPRIATE CHARACTERISTICS

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 6U | <p>6U is a time for freedom and EXPLORATION! Let them Play!</p> <p>Training should be based on fun games, adventures, story telling and colorful landscapes. Talk in their terms and language.</p> <p>Animate! Paint vivid pictures! Demonstrate! Keep sessions moving or boredom will quickly creep in.</p> |
| 7U | <p>Fundamental motor skills (balance, walking, running, jumping, etc.) should be highlighted and combined with ball control.</p> <p>Players must maximize their contact with the ball and most activities should be individual (ball per player). Players need to develop ball familiarity and PLAY!</p> <p>Players at this age are egocentric and for the first time have to build relationships with other players. Give different responsibilities to players in order to develop a sense of team (cone helpers, break captains, time keepers, etc.).</p> |
| 8U | <p>Let any tactical insight be developed through small-sided matches and activities.</p> <p>8U is a time for DISCOVERY! Let them Play!</p> <p>Prioritize FUN and INSPIRE your players!</p> |

COACHING MOMENTS (SECONDS)

FROM THE FIELD



“Football is simple; trainers (coaches) shouldn’t make it so complicated.”

Johan Cruyff, Dutch Soccer Legend

I HEAR...

I SEE...

I DO...

PRESENTING INSTRUCTION OR POINTS

Avoid lengthy speeches! Keep instructions for activities as simple and quick as possible and limited to one point at a time. Where possible, explain in images and provide visual analogies (much easier for kids to grasp). Coaching points or instructions should be:

- Concise (broken down, simple, small pieces of information).
- Accurate.
- Relevant (to a coaching principle or objective).
- **Demonstrated** (whenever possible)!

LET THEM PLAY AND THE GAME TEACH!

When addressing your players, make sure *they* are not directly facing the sun.

I FORGET

I REMEMBER

I UNDERSTAND

KEEP IN MIND



Avoid lengthy speeches! Keep instructions for activities as simple and quick as possible.

COMPLETE SYSTEM OF DELIVERY

Say, Show, Do and Review

An effective complete teaching method for any age group:

1. **SAY:** Explain skill or technique (keep it brief especially with younger players).
2. **SHOW:** Effectively demonstrate skill or technique.
3. **DO:** Have players perform skill or technique.
4. **REVIEW:** *Observe*, *Correct* and *Confirm* proper technique.

Observe (silently). Instead of trying to correct immediately, let them play uninterrupted for a time (they will learn from mistakes) and take notes (preferably written), focusing on *one* effort they can improve.

Correct what you saw in terms of the player’s execution, and then provide them with attainable modifications to correct one or two deficits by once again demonstrating.

Confirm accomplishments once success is achieved! Say it out loud, so everyone can hear.

KEEP IN MIND



Positive Coaching! Regardless of your personal approach or delivery, **Positive Instruction and Encouragement (P.I.E.)** should *always* be used to instruct and motivate your players. They will respond better to you and it will help keep AYSO a developmentally rich and positive environment.

COACHING YOUR OWN CHILD

A large percentage of you will be lacing up sneakers to coach your own children and this section outlines some perspective and tips to maximize the opportunity...for you, and more importantly for your child (and the rest of the family).

But I've Never Coached Or Played Soccer Before!

- It's okay if you never played soccer or don't know much about it! However, by reading this manual and progressing through the AYSO National Coaching Program, you *will* gather valuable tools to succeed.
- No pressure! Do not misinterpret the role you're supposed to play. Go out to enjoy!
- Change your adult perspective and **view the game through your child's eyes.**
- If you can create a safe, fun and developmental environment for your child and team, **encourage self-expression and mistakes (learning)**, you are already in the running for Coach of the Year.
- Fun, exercise and the chance to play soccer is what it's all about, particularly at the younger ages.



KEEP IN MIND



In the blink of an eye, they are grown up and beyond our daily reach. Therefore, what an incredible opportunity to spend time in "their" world as "their" coach!

What's My Role As Coach?

- Maintain realistic expectations! It's a game, a sport, a pastime. As you are likely aware, the odds are against your child making the pros; therefore, make sure your own adult expectations do not stray too far from those of your child.
- Soccer, perhaps more than any other sport, requires little teaching at the early ages. **The game itself is genuinely the best teacher.** In fact, the role of the coach in the first stages is simply to give children the opportunity to discover the game's joys in a safe and nurturing environment.
- Generally speaking, through 10U let them play. At 12U we can expand their technical development and reading of the game.
- What you're really doing is very similar to taking your child and his or her friends to the playground. You're supervising soccer playtime while allowing the children to explore the fun on their own terms.
- Once you comprehend the expectations, you'll find all aspects of the role less daunting, including the dynamics of coaching your own child.

Coach or Parent?

- When you first start coaching you may be introducing your child to a new experience other than the game: sharing the attention of mom or dad with a larger number of *other* children (while at the same time, you are trying not to show favoritism).

- The Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) recommends you explain to your child, “I always love you and you are special to me. But when I’m coaching you, I need to be fair and treat you like all the other players. And you need to respond to me as your coach, not your dad. Do you think you can do that?”

Am I Doing Okay?

- Avoid being harder on your own child than the other players because you’re worried about perceptions of favoritism. No matter what you say or how you say it, your comments can often register as a personal attack because they come from dad or mom.
- Don’t be afraid to praise your child and acknowledge her strengths and accomplishments at every opportunity. As well as your child they are also a player on the team!
- A good test on how to treat your child on the soccer team is to constantly ask yourself if your reactions to his play or behavior are the same as they are to his teammates.
- Another peril of coaching your own children is to leave your coaching hat on when the session/match is over. Limit your post-session soccer discussions once the whistle blows.
- Once the topic of food is raised, it’s probably time to return to your full-time role!

KEEP IN
MIND



SAVOR EVERY MOMENT!

It will pass all too quickly!

The (Long) Car Ride Home

Please be very mindful of the car ride home, where we often feel compelled to discuss performance, results, and other parental observations made from the comfort of our folding chairs. We suggest you refrain from discussing the practice or game unless the child brings it up. If the topic does arise, be proactive in responding with unconditional support, growth, and positivity. “You looked like you were having fun out there!”

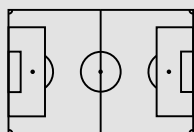
- “I loved how you hustled and supported your teammates.”
- “What was your favorite moment of the game?”
- “That was a tough one, but I’m proud of how you kept going.”
- “I’m proud of you just for being out there.”
- “I love you and I love watching you play, no matter the score.”
- “Win or lose, you’re always my favorite player.”
- “Where shall we eat?”

Trust me, your child knows exactly how they did!



AGE APPROPRIATE (PLAYER) DEVELOPMENT

FROM THE **FIELD**



“Learning to be a soccer athlete, there are progressive stages and if you don’t get the early stages right, *in sequence*, then you are fighting an uphill battle in developing an athlete.”

Dave Chesler, U.S. Soccer Director of Coach Education

THE SCIENCE OF AGE APPROPRIATE TRAINING

“To provide youth soccer programs *that enrich children’s lives.*”

This vision can *only* be achieved if we continually ask ourselves if the activity, method or decision will truly enrich the player’s life. To achieve this goal, our training sessions *must* be adapted to the player’s specific age and stage of development.

Technical, tactical, physical and psychosocial training components should be woven throughout each session; however, *at all-times* with deep respect to the player’s specific age *and* stage of development. At AYSO, we prioritize these important aspects as follows:

Psychosocial

Respect, motivation, confidence, cooperation, competitiveness, etc., and how these emotions and feelings impact a player’s development. Also, includes a player’s ability to reason, learn and solve problems. **At AYSO, we develop the *whole* person!**

Physical

A player’s physical attributes: speed, agility, endurance, strength and power, etc. **At AYSO, we promote a healthy lifestyle through soccer!**

Technical

A player’s ability to master ball skills, i.e., ball control, shooting, passing, etc. **At AYSO, we prioritize skill development and ball mastery.**

Tactical (NOT a priority at this age!)

A player’s capacity to use their skill and ability *within* a game environment, i.e., creating space in midfield, possession and transition, creating width, etc. **At AYSO, we educate our players on playing as part of (and within) a team dynamic.**

KEY DEVELOPMENTAL COMPONENTS IN AYSO 6U TRAINING

A TIME FOR EXPLORATION...

PSYCHOSOCIAL

- May fear the unknown.
- Experience rapid and unpredictable mood changes.
- Need attention, encouragement and praise.
- See world only from their perspective.
- Likely have difficulty sharing (hence the need for a ball per player).
- May verbalize team, but do not understand group play.
- Get bored easy and do not like to repeat.
- Lack judgment regarding their own safety and abilities.
- Enjoy stories, and questions.

PHYSICAL

- *Motor skills are continuing to develop: can run, start, stop, jump, and skip.
- Have lots of energy, although in bursts; tire quickly; recover quickly.
- Can't sit still for long.

*Be respectful of this fact! Often we expect players to perform a technical action they do not have the physical literacy to execute (yet).

TECHNICAL

- Instep kick
- Dribbling

TACTICAL

Attacking Objectives
Score

Attacking Principles
Penetration

Defending Objectives
Prevent Scoring

Defending Principles
Pressure



ELEMENTS OF SOCCER

OBJECTIVES OF THE GAME

| ATTACKING OBJECTIVES | | | DEFENDING OBJECTIVES | | |
|--|---------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| SCORE | Maintain Possession | Advance Ball | Prevent Scoring | Regain Possession | Delay Opponents |
| BASED ON A PLAYER'S RELATIVE POSITION TO: | | | | | |
| The Ball | Teammates | Opponents | | Location on Field | Time in Game |

OBJECTIVES VARY DEPENDING ON PLAYER AGE AND STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT:

ATTACKING OBJECTIVES (BY AGE)

| | 6U | 8U | 10U | 12U |
|-----------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| Score | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Keep Possession | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Advance Ball | | | ✓ | ✓ |

DEFENDING OBJECTIVES (BY AGE)

| | 6U | 8U | 10U | 12U |
|-------------------|----|----|-----|-----|
| Prevent Scoring | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Regain Possession | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Delay Opponents | | | ✓ | ✓ |

PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

The Principles of Play are used to **achieve** the Objectives of the Game.

There are ten **Principles of Play** utilized in soccer — five **attacking** and five **defending** principles, each introduced at a specific age and stage of development. **6U Principles of Play are highlighted in the chart below:**

| For each attacking principle, there is a defending principle to counter it. | |
|--|---|
| ATTACKING | countered by DEFENDING |
| <p>Penetration 6U v Advancing the ball past opposing players by dribbling, passing and shooting.</p> | <p>Pressure (delay) 6U v Pressuring opponents in possession by giving immediate chase, denying their options, i.e., dribbling, passing, shooting, etc., or delaying the opponents in order to regain possession.</p> |
| <p>Support Supporting teammates by creating safe options for the player with the ball.</p> | <p>Cover Supporting the player(s) challenging the ball in case they are beaten. Limits options for 1st attacker.</p> |
| <p>Mobility Players interchanging positions (filling in for one another as needed) and moving off the ball. Unbalancing defense, creating numerical advantages and thereby attacking/scoring opportunities.</p> | <p>Balance Reading the attack and providing an equal or greater number of defenders than attackers at the point of attack, while simultaneously covering the vital area near the goal.</p> |
| <p>Width Kin of mobility. Attacking on a broad front (players spread out) stretches and isolates the defense and creates space for players to advance.</p> | <p>Compactness Compressing or restricting the space the attacking team has by “shepherding” them into a confined area making it easier to defend and regain possession of the ball.</p> |
| <p>Creativity Creating opportunities for advancement, possession and scoring by utilizing individual skills such as feints and fakes.</p> | <p>Control/restraint (composure) Staying calm, disciplined and organized in the face of an attack by maintaining proper defensive techniques and positioning.</p> |

The attacking principles ultimately lead us to achieving our attacking objectives – **to score and maintain possession!**

The defending principles ultimately lead us to achieving our defending objectives – **to prevent scoring and regain possession!**

KEEP IN MIND



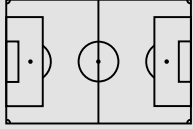
6U Principles of Play are highlighted below:

PENETRATION- Advancing the ball past opposing players by dribbling, passing and shooting.

PRESSURE (delay)- Slowing down the attack by closing gaps and denying space for the other team to work in. Once the attack is slowed, your team can attempt to take the ball back.

POSITIONS

FROM THE **FIELD**



“The Dutch change positions quicker than you can make a cup of coffee.”

Paolo Rossi, Italian Soccer Legend

At AYSO we do not formally introduce position-specific coaching until 12U. There is no harm familiarizing your players with the basic responsibility of each position at 8U, but this does NOT mean you have players rooted to one spot covering their positions, while the game develops...without them!

All players should be encouraged to defend and attack! Or in the case of our 6U, players, wherever the ball is...and that’s just fine!

Soccer has four basic positions: goalkeepers (not introduced until 10U), defenders, midfielders, and strikers whose general responsibilities are outlined below:

| Position | Own Team with Ball | Other Team with Ball |
|--|--|---|
| Goalkeepers (Not Introduced Until 10U) | Begin the Attack | Stop Scoring Attempt |
| Defenders | Maintain Possession Advance the Ball | Stop Scoring Attempt Regain Possession |
| Midfielders | Advance the Ball Maintain Possession | Delay Attack Regain Possession |
| Strikers | Score Advance the Ball Maintain Possession | Regain Possession Delay Attack |

KEEP IN MIND

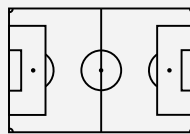


All players should be encouraged to defend and attack! Or in the case of our 6U players, wherever the ball is... and that’s just fine!

QUALITY TRAINING



FROM THE **FIELD**



“The coach has to establish a playing environment where everyone is eager to train and perform at their best. Each player should understand what they should bring to each session, i.e., set of standards or expectations. Once everyone on the team understands their role, learning (and fun) develop naturally.”

John Kerr, Head Men’s Coach,
Duke University

DURATION AND FREQUENCY OF TRAINING SESSIONS

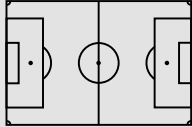
It is widely accepted that it takes 10,000 hours of *deep* practice to learn a new skill. However, the real lesson of the 10,000 hours rule is *not* about the quantity; it’s about the *quality* of the practice and the environment in which it takes place.

AYSO National Coaching Program Training Duration & Frequency Recommendations

| Age Group | Frequency | Duration |
|-----------|---|------------|
| 6U | One Activity Session/ Jamboree per Week (<i>includes</i> 25 min. game) | 60 mins |
| 8U | Once Per Week, <i>Plus</i> Game | 60 mins |
| 10U | Twice Per Week, <i>Plus</i> Game | 60-90 mins |
| 12U | Twice Per Week, <i>Plus</i> Game | 60-90 mins |

SMALL-SIDED MATCHES

FROM THE **FIELD**



“The need for parents to see their children play in 11-on-11 tournaments from a young age instead of insisting on more small-sided [matches] and practices to develop technical skills produces great athletes but limited soccer players. Parents need to become a little less shortsighted.”

Carli Lloyd, U.S. Women’s National Team referencing the youth soccer culture for her team’s technical shortcomings

Youth players need to practice in a match-like environment, which provides *numerous* opportunities to practice and **repeat a skill**; not one *possible* chance every few minutes (like full-sided play can often present). Therefore, the concentrated ebb and flow of small-sided matches create the optimal learning environment for young players to develop.

There are unlimited benefits of small-sided matches:

- Children learn more when the ratio of coach to player is reduced.
- Maximize ball contact, involvement, and mistakes (markers for improvement).
- Increase scoring opportunities.
- Maximize attacking and defending play.
- Maximize transitions and decision-making situations.
- Present more coaching opportunities (observation and analysis).
- Excitement and fun!

To cultivate the numerous benefits of small-sided matches and maximize Player Development, AYSO has carefully balanced the number of players on the field and the number of players on the roster by age group.

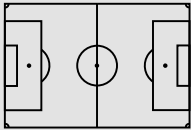
AYSO National Coaching Program In-Season Play Recommendations

| Age Division | Players per team on field | Suggested Team Size | Maximum no. of team members | Suggested Minimum no. of team members |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 19U | 11-a-side | 18 | 22 | 12 |
| 16U | 11-a-side | 18 | 22 | 12 |
| 14U | 11-a-side | 18 | 22 | 12 |
| 12U | 9-a-side | 12 | 18 | 10 |
| 10U | 7-a-side | 10 | 14 | 8 |

8U and 6U teams should follow suggested guidelines of 4 players per team on the field (no goalkeepers) during play. However, that number can be adjusted up or down to support the needs of the program.

BUILDING YOUR 6U SESSION

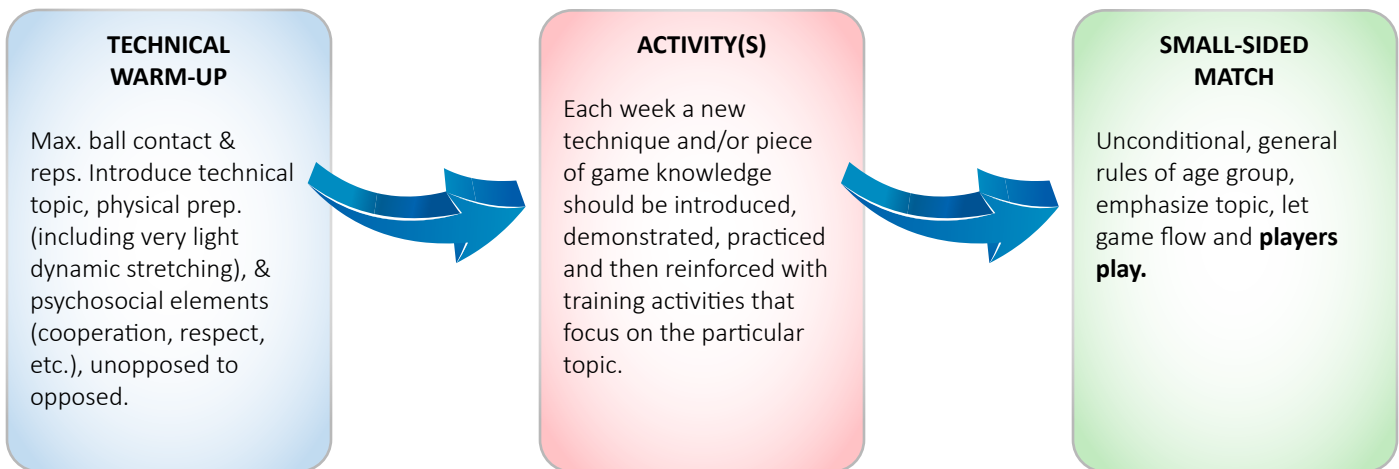
FROM THE **FIELD**



“We (the U.S.) are producing players who are over-coached and predictable as opposed to players who can caress the ball and make you sit up and take notice. Coaches need to be secure with themselves and not allow winning games to validate their importance in the lives of their players.”

Sonny Askew, former professional player and current youth coach, Baltimore, MD

Generally speaking, your 6U Activity Day should progress as follows:



LAPS, LINES AND LECTURES

Communicated often, but still a prominent factor in most training sessions, the 3L's are commonly regarded as detrimental to player development:

Laps: You **don't run laps** of the field during a soccer match and you can easily obtain the same cardiovascular benefit by running **with** the ball in a dynamic activity.

Lines: Do your best to **eliminate activities that involve players standing in long lines and waiting** on their turn to play. We need to maximize time players have **with** the ball to avoid boredom and keep them engaged (two or three **active** groups are always better than one long inactive group). Remember circles are also lines.

Lectures: Children come to soccer to participate and be active not to sit and be lectured for long periods of time (either positively or negatively). **Keep your communication positive, brief and to the point.**

Eliminating **Laps, Lines, and Lectures** from your sessions will provide a healthier learning and developmental environment for your players.

WATER BREAKS

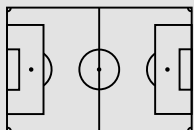
Proper hydration is vital to all children, but especially vital to young athletes; therefore, we need to make sure our training sessions provide adequate opportunity for rehydration. Some **general** guidelines:

- Players should hydrate themselves **throughout the day** not just prior to or during training (to allow for proper absorption into their system).
- Two to three hours prior to participation, players should drink approx. 16 fl. oz. (2 cups) to 20 fl. oz. (2.5 cups).
- Ten to 20 minutes prior to activity the players should drink approx. 7 fl. oz. (0.875 cups) to 10 fl. oz. (1.25 cups) of fluids.
- Break approximately every 10-15 minutes (**or as often as needed pending weather and age of players**).
- Fluids can be water or sports drinks.
- Rehydration should occur after the activity and ideally be completed within 2 hours.
- Rehydration should contain water to restore hydration status, carbohydrates to replenish glycogen stores and electrolytes to speed hydration.



6U TECHNIQUES

FROM THE **FIELD**



“Teach skill every day! Create training environments where players are challenged and can use those skills in making quick decisions of how, why, and where to use them. Ask players to work on their own self improvement.”

*George Kuntz, AYSO Technical Director,
Head Coach, Men’s Soccer, UC Irvine, CA*

DRIBBLING

Dribbling is using the feet to maintain possession of the ball, on the ground, under control, while moving to achieve Penetration. The two primary reasons to use dribbling skill are:

- Move the ball into a better position on the field.
- Retain possession of the ball.

The most important element of dribbling is developing a “feel” or “touch” for the ball with the feet...BOTH OF THEM. The key is then to keep the ball close by touching it softly.



General Coaching Points:

- Knees slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Arms relaxed and used for balance and protection.
- Touch the ball softly using all major surfaces of the foot.
- Keep the ball close and under control.
- Touch the ball every step or so (ball should never be more than one step away).
- Head up as much as possible (to see the field as well as ball by utilizing peripheral vision).

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/tech1](https://www.aysou.org/video/tech1)

Common Errors & Corrections

| Error | Correction |
|--|--|
| Ball is played too far ahead & player loses control of the ball. | Move slower and touch ball slower. |
| Player dribbles the ball into trouble or out of play. | Move slower, touch ball softer, look up. |
| Player re-positions entire body behind ball before touching. | Use motion of foot to direct ball instead of re-positioning. |

Stopping the Ball:

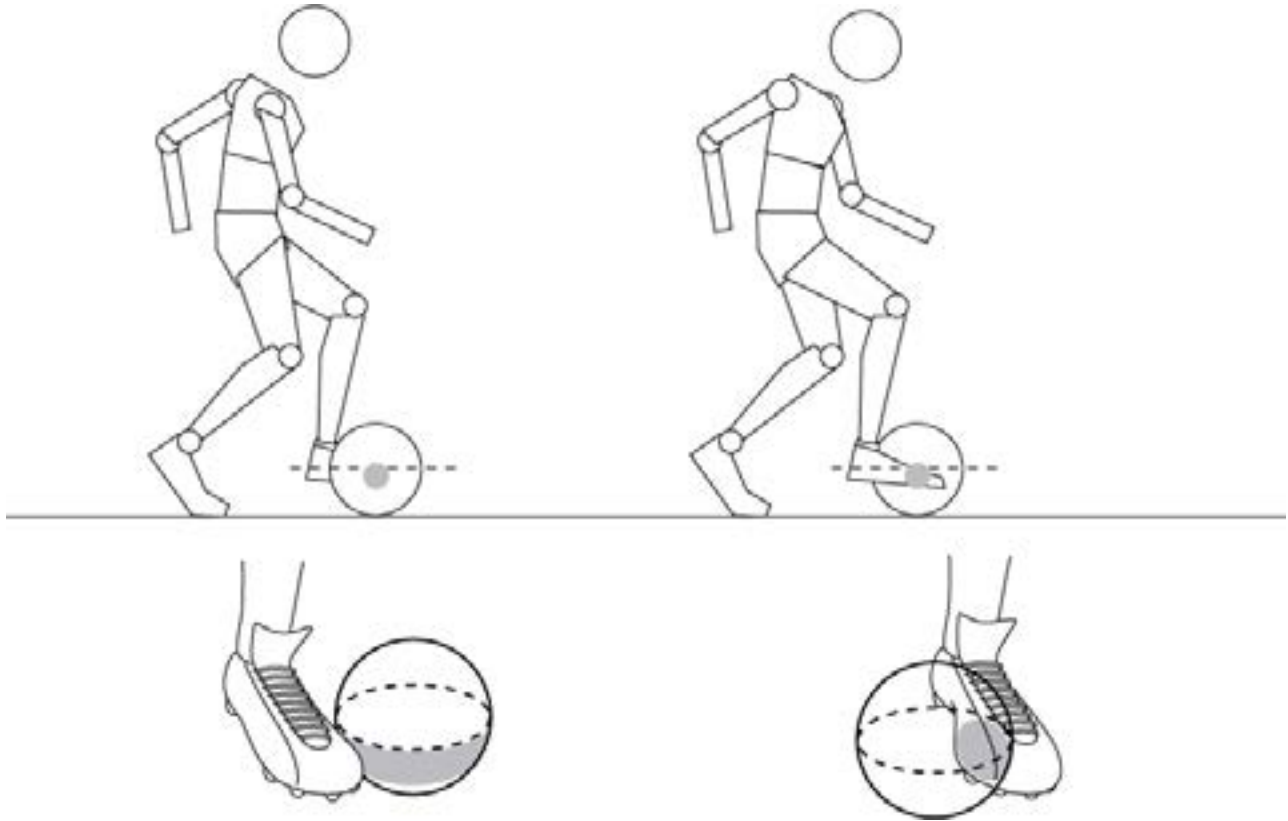
6U players should be able to stop the ball by putting their foot on top of it.

- Balance on planted foot (foot on ground), while keeping playing foot (foot on the ball) firmly on top of the ball.
- Step past the ball with plant foot before stepping on it, keeping in mind the speed at which the ball is rolling.

Turning with the Ball:

Learning to change direction while dribbling is critical in soccer and should also be introduced at this level.

- Use motion of foot to direct the ball.
- Accelerate after changing direction.



INSTEP KICK (LACES)

The instep kick is used to kick the ball and, as players get older, for long passes and shots on goal (as seen on right).

Instructions:

Prepare Plant Leg (Supporting, Non-Kicking Foot)

- Place support foot next to the ball pointed in general direction of target (distance from ball will depend on height of the player).
- Bend knee slightly.
- All weight should be on plant foot.
- Use arms out to sides for balance.

Prepare Striking (Kicking) Leg

- Bend knee (cock lower leg).
- Withdraw leg straight back at hip.
- Lock ankle back and down, toes pointed down.

Striking Movement

- Body should be over the ball, moving forward.
- Keep eyes on ball.
- Set plant knee over ball (eye-knee-ball in line).
- Move thigh of striking leg forward (whip action).
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target.
- Pull leg straight through while maintaining balance.
- Lower body as leg rises.
- Keep ankle locked, follow through and lift knee.
- Step out of the kick.

General Coaching Points:

- Body should be over the ball (forward).
- Eyes on ball.
- Support foot next to ball pointed in general direction of target.
- Lock ankle back and down, toes pointed down.
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target.

Practice:

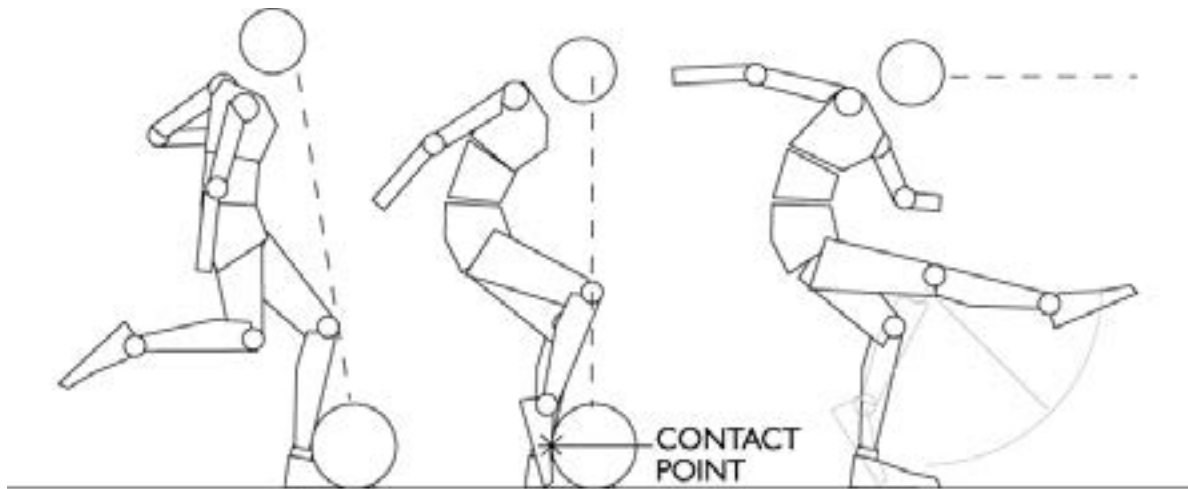
- Planting their foot in the proper place.
- Swinging their leg and foot straight back and forth, ensuring proper body and leg movement.
- Have each player stand with plant foot in proper position and strike lightly until they begin to hit the ball solidly (properly).



To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/tech2](https://www.aysou.video/tech2)

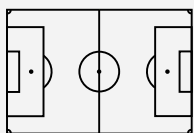
Common Errors & Corrections

| Error | Correction |
|---|---|
| Planted foot is too far in front, behind or away from ball and/or not pointed in general direction of target. | Review proper technique with player(s). |
| Knee(s) are locked, not bent. | Review proper technique with player(s). |
| Ankle is not locked and toes are not pointed. | Lock ankle, point toes. |
| Ball is stabbed or jabbed. | Encourage player to follow through. |
| Leg is swung across the body instead of toward the target. | Encourage player to withdraw leg straight back and follow through straight toward target. |



6U TRAINING ACTIVITIES

FROM THE **FIELD**



“Players should have the freedom to express themselves, be creative, take risks and make mistakes! Learning from trial and error is a key to all development and it is crucial that the environment we create (as coaches) promotes this freedom.”

AYSO Player Development Team

This section will provide you with Age Appropriate training activities (*options*) recommended to help your 6U players develop their skills. The activities are grouped according to the skill that they will most effectively help to teach. Despite all of the coaching techniques that can be utilized, nothing will ever teach 6U players more effectively than just letting them play.

KEEP IN MIND



The game itself
is the best
teacher!

Be creative with the names of the games and modify them to suit **your** players. Use your own creativity and personality; paint in vivid images to effectively communicate with your players in a language **they** can relate to. If an activity is **not** working as intended, modify (increase/decrease) the Speed, Space, and Opposition to maximize success. Let the players work through the adaptations to find success. Remember, all players are different (often regardless of age), so **adapt accordingly to the needs of your specific group.**

Have fun!



HUNTERS AND HUNTED

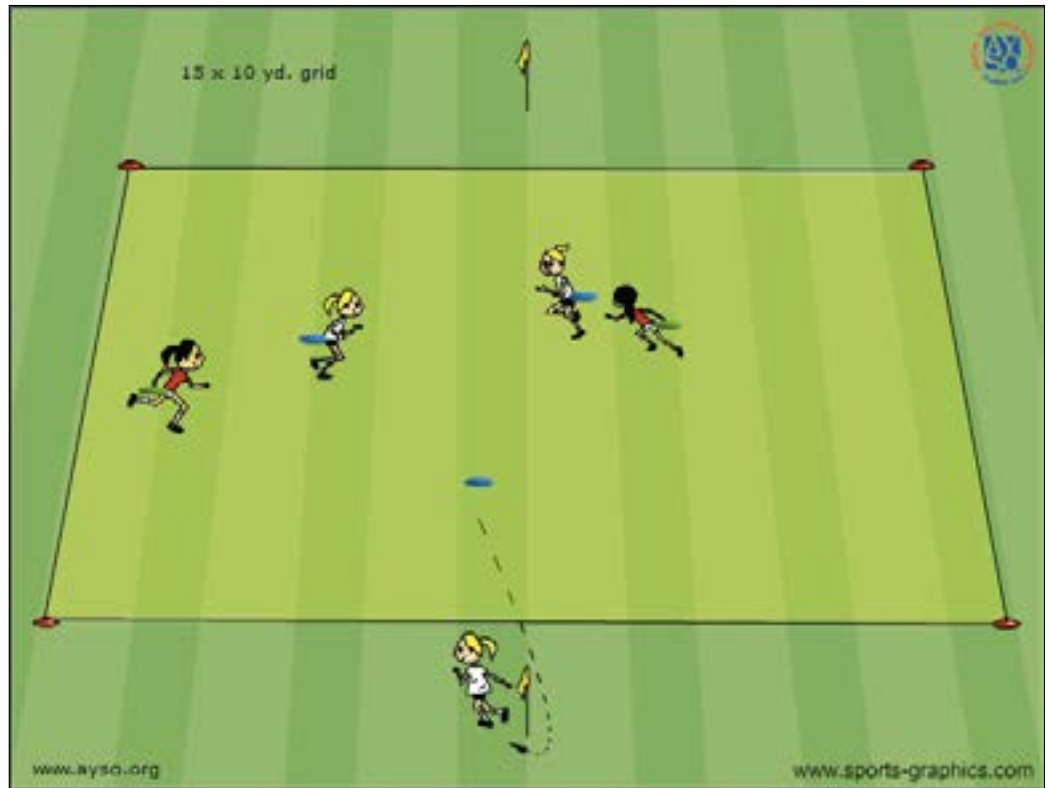
TECHNIQUE:

Physical Coordination
(Dribbling)

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 15 x 10 grid (woods), two flags (trees) 5 yards outside grid on either sideline, two teams (hunters and hunted), 2 sets of scrimmage vests (tails).

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/hunted](https://www.aysou.org/video/hunted)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Players tuck tails into back of shorts and line up on opposite sidelines.
- On coach command, hunters chase hunted and try to grab tails.
- If hunter catches hunted, they throw the tail to the ground and chase another player.
- If caught, the player runs outside grid, around the flag (tree), back into the grid (woods) to retrieve their tail and join in again.
- Play for one minute, then break for 30 seconds. Continue a few rounds.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Players dribble a ball.

COACHING POINTS

- Physical coordination.
- Follow directions and movement education.
- Creativity.

HUNTERS AND RABBITS

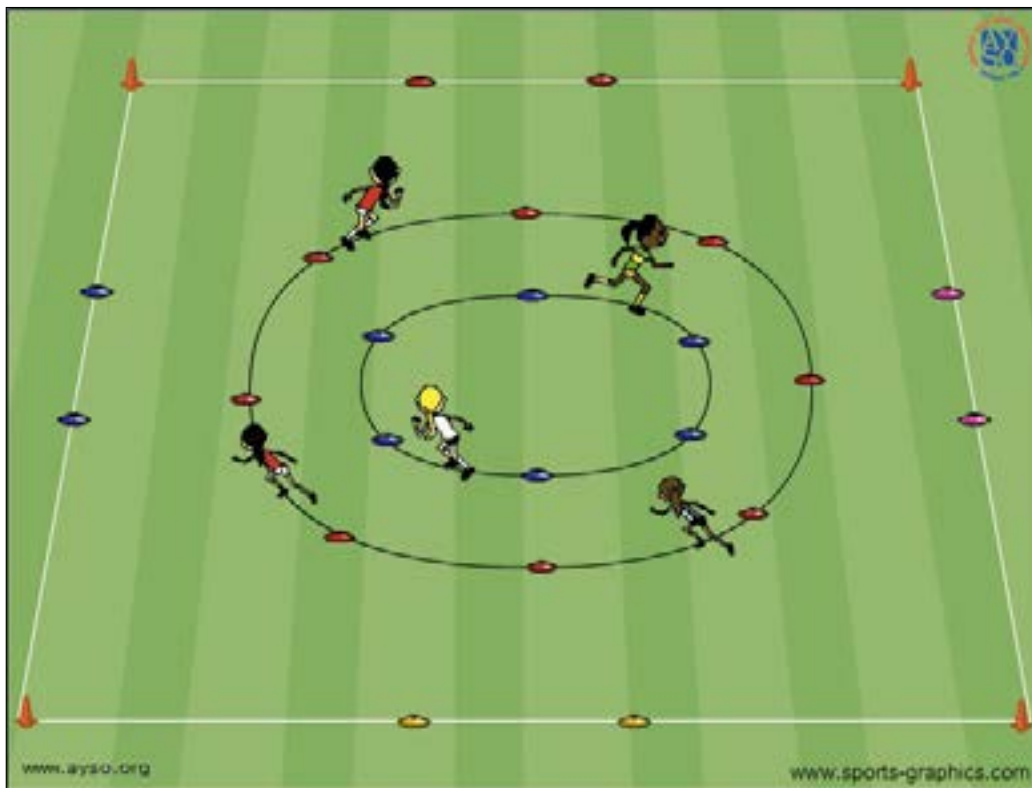
TECHNIQUE:

Physical Coordination

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 15 x 20 grid. Inside, mark a small circle in the middle of a larger one (like a bullseye). On the outer grid, mark four small gates of different colors (or names).

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/rabbits](https://www.aysou.org/video/rabbits)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Place some players in the middle circle (hunters) and some players in the outer circle (rabbits).
- Rabbits run clockwise around their circle, hunters run clockwise around theirs.
- The coach calls out the color (name) of a gate and the rabbits need to make it through that gate before the hunters tag them.
- If they are tagged by a hunter, they switch roles.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Vary the running style around the circle, i.e., heel kicks, high thighs, side steps, etc.
- Players start in sitting or lying position.
- Players with ball, i.e., bounce in hands, toe taps, etc., *until* coach calls the gate, then they drop ball and run.
- Players can dribble their ball to start; leave it and run; or take it with them.

COACHING POINTS

- Physical coordination.
- Follow directions and movement education.

FETCH FIDO

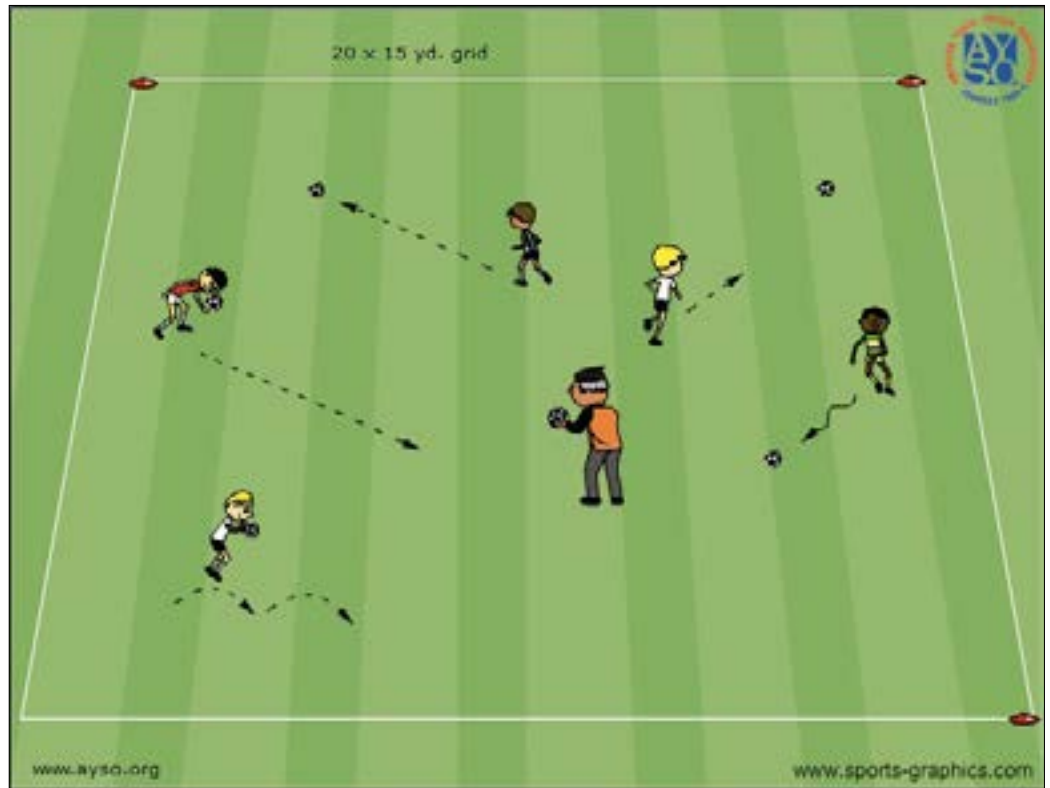
TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling (Physical Coordination)

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 15 x 20 grid, one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/fido](https://www.aysou.org/video/fido)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Each player takes the name of their favorite dog, i.e., Fido (pet or favorite animal).
- Players hold their ball in hands and one at a time hand their ball to the coach.
- The coach then tosses the ball away from the group in any direction within grid (dog park).
- The coach then instructs the players to bring the ball back in a variety of ways, being sure to incorporate numerous body movements. (Instruction to the players should not be too specific to encourage problem solving and creativity in the way they accomplish the task.)
- Players bring their ball back to the coach as instructed as quickly as possible.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Bring it back as fast as you can (do not specify how).
- Dribble the ball back.
- Bring it back using elbows only.
- Bring it back using head and right hand only.
- Bring it back using knees only.
- Bring it back using hand + elbow + knee.
- Bring it back hopping.
- Same challenges but performed in pairs.
- As the players are retrieving the ball, the coach changes location so they must look up to find the coach as they work with the ball.

COACHING POINTS

- Physical coordination.
- Simple decision making.
- Follow directions and movement education.
- Creativity.

WELCOME TO SOCCER CITY

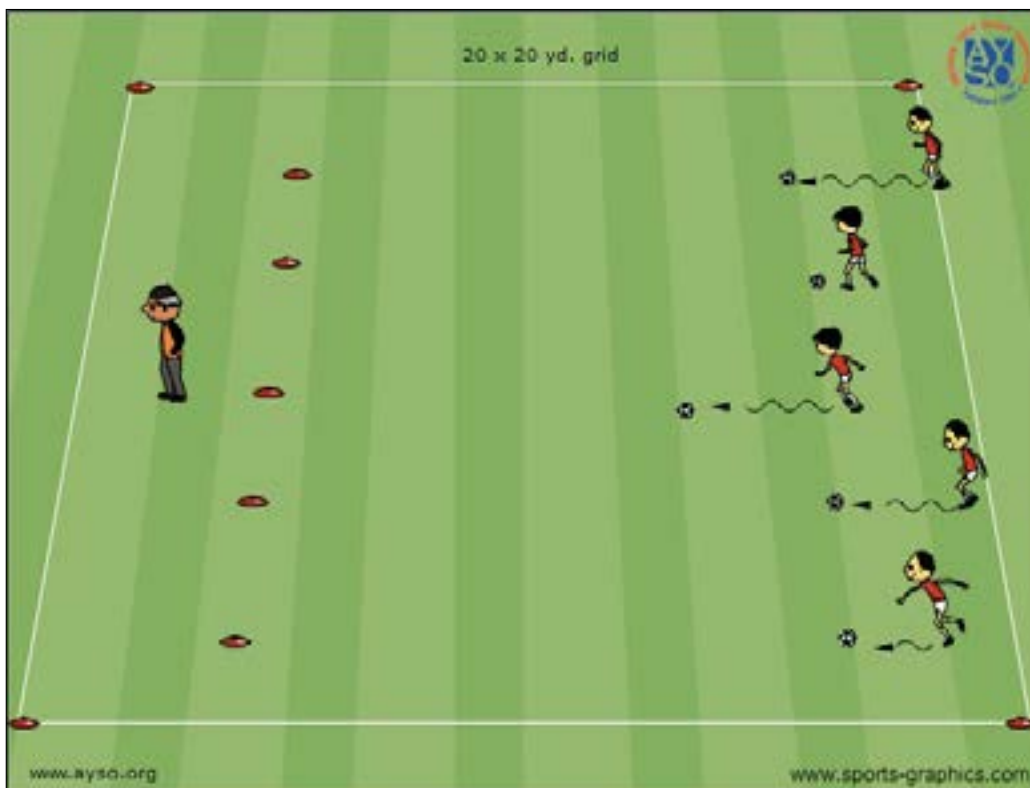
TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 20 x 20 grid, one cone per player approx. 15 yards away and one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
aysou.video/welcomecity



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Invite the players into a magical Soccer City, where the ball provides power. Before gaining entry, players must first get to the gates.
- Coach stands on one end line with back to the players who are spread along the opposite end line. A cone per player is placed behind you.
- Start players in straight line dribbling end line to end line.
- Start with two instructions: Green light=Go! Red light=Stop! (by placing foot on top of ball).
- Upon shout of “Green light” the players must dribble toward the opposite end line.
- Before the coach turns around he yells “One, Two, Three, Red Light” and then turns around. At that point each player must have stopped the ball with the sole of their foot. Any player seen moving is sent back to the end line to start again. The coach turns his back again. Repeat. The first player to pick up a cone (key to the city) wins.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot; outside of foot, inside of foot dribbling.

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.

SOCCER CITY

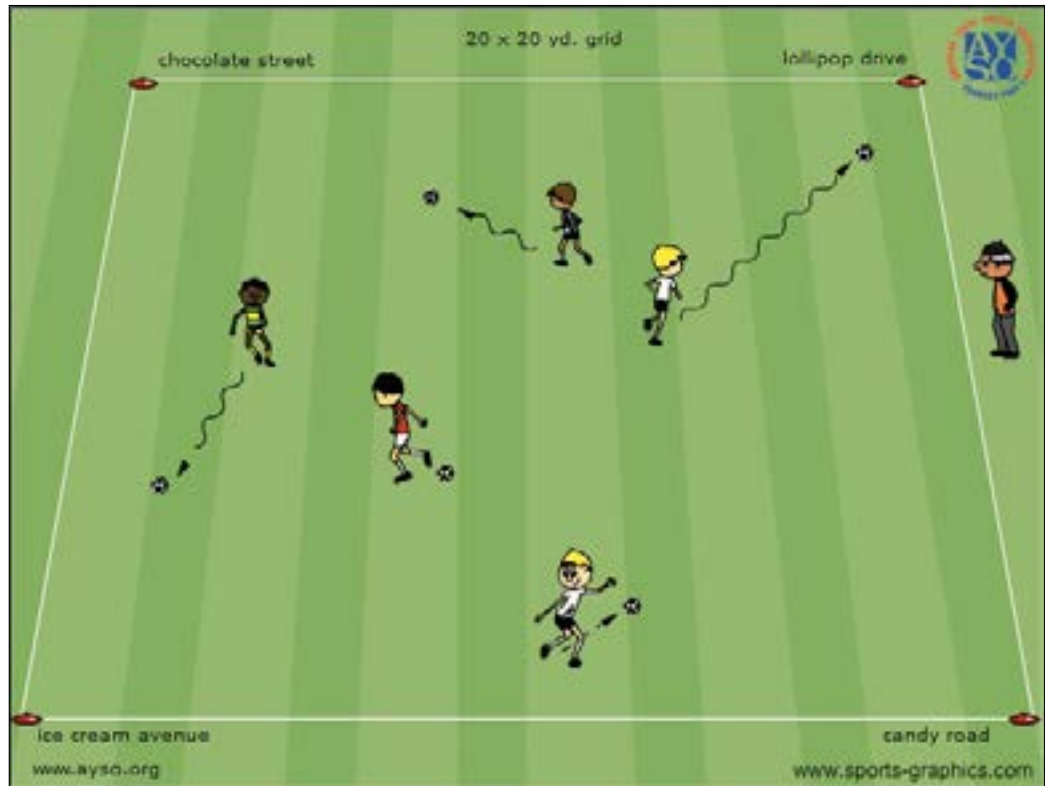
TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 20 x 20 grid, one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
aysou.video/city



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Now the players are through the gates and inside Soccer City, players must abide by the city rules.
- Players explore Soccer City by driving in various directions throughout the city limits.
- Introduce three speeds (and sounds) to drive at: bike speed=slow; truck speed=medium; sports car=fast. Players should react to these speeds upon specific command.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot; outside of foot, inside of foot dribbling.
- Introduce engine revving: tap ball back and forth with inside of feet (tick-tock).
- Introduce Bye-Bye (drag back turn): Player stops ball by planting standing foot next to ball, placing kicking foot on top of ball, dragging ball back across body and changing direction. Encourage use of drag back turn, i.e., stopping ball from going out of Soccer City.
- Introduce special destinations (one per corner): ice cream avenue, candy road, chocolate street, lollipop drive. Upon your command, players must change their direction and drive to that location (at different speeds).

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.
- Change direction and move into space.

CAR THIEF

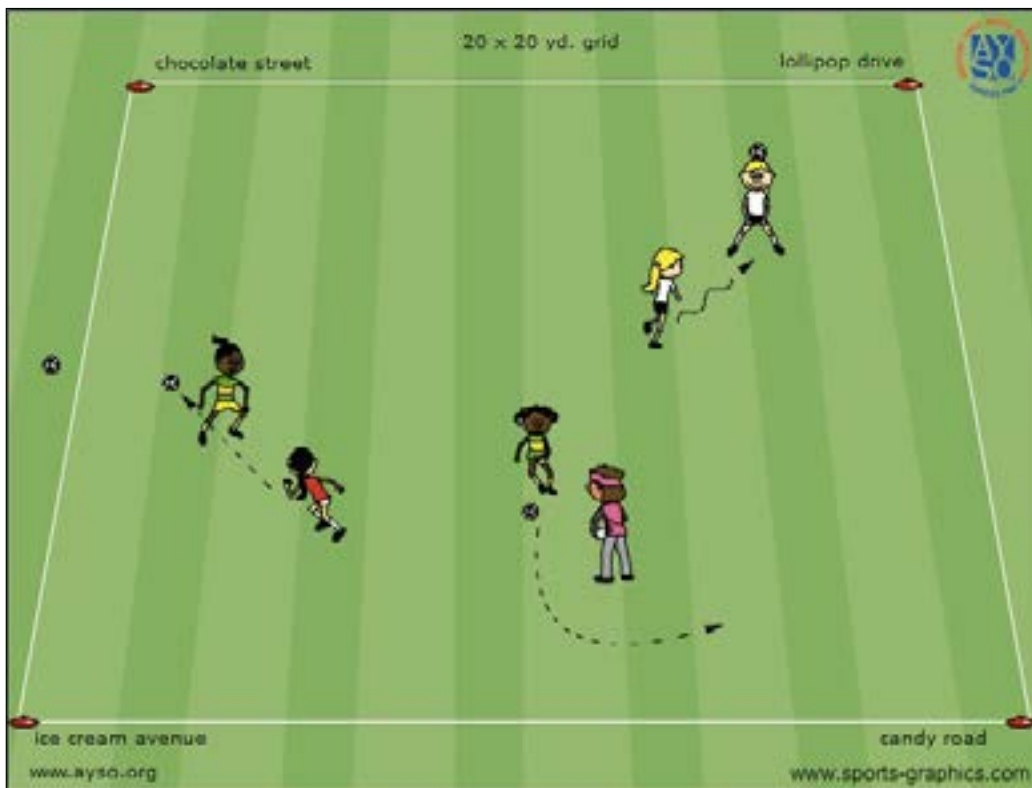
TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 20 x 20 grid, one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/thief](https://www.aysou.org/video/thief)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Car thieves have been spotted in Soccer City.
- Players should explore Soccer City by driving in various directions.
- Introduce three speeds (and sounds) to drive at: bike speed=slow; truck speed=medium; Sports Car=fast. Players should react to these speeds upon specific command.
- Coach starts as car thief and tries to steal the player's car (by kicking their soccer ball out of Soccer City).
- If a player's ball is kicked out, that player must run to collect their ball, return and place the ball on their head with legs apart (tunnel), until a teammate passes their ball through their tunnel. When unfrozen, they can drop ball and continue dribbling.
- Encourage players to drive/dribble to space away from thief, using different speeds they can select themselves.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot; outside of foot, inside of foot dribbling.
- Once thief catches up to a player, if the player performs a drag back turn (Bye-Bye), the Car Thief freezes for five seconds and lets them go free.
- Let player(s) have chance at being the thief.
- If a player is caught, rather than open their legs to be unfrozen, they become a thief as well.

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.
- Change direction and move into space.

FOUR SEASONS

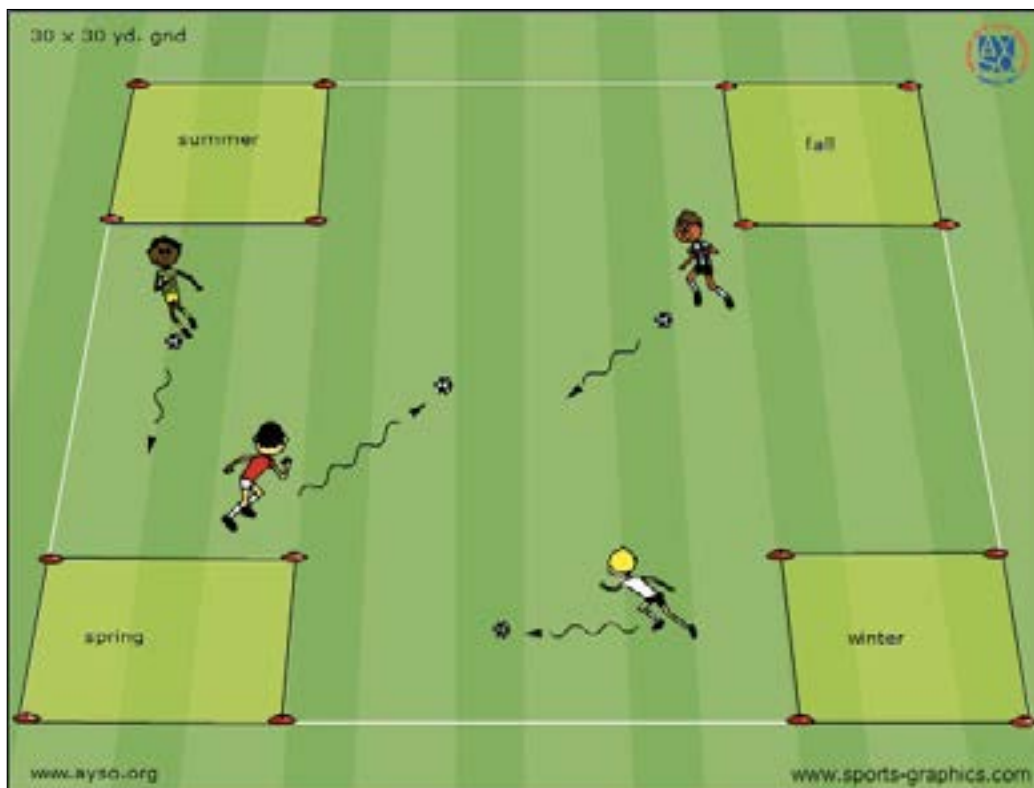
TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 30 x 30 grid, with a five x five yard square in each corner. 12 cones and 1 ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
aysou.video/fourseasons



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Place a player with a ball in each of the corner squares.
- Label each of the small squares spring, summer, fall and winter (or a similar picture for the kids to visualize, i.e., numbers, colors, characters from a movie, etc).
- Each small square will have at least one player who will be randomly dribbling within the grid.
- The coach will shout a “season” and all players will dribble as fast as they can to that square.
- The player who was playing in the square that was called must dribble to any one of the three squares that are now empty. First player to the new square wins.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot; outside of foot, inside of foot dribbling.
- Paint pictures and animate: once players get to the specific grid, they must act out a behavior linked to that name, i.e., for spring they must stretch their arms as high to the sky as possible, for fall, they must droop over like a wilting tree, etc.

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.

CATS AND DOGS

TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 20 x 20 grid, with two lines of six cones approximately five yards apart in middle, one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/cats](https://www.aysou.org/video/cats)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Player one and two stand back to back, level with the middle cones.
- One of the players is the “cat” and the other the “dog.”
- When the coach calls out “dog,” the dog turns and chases the cat to the opposite end line.
- Dogs bark and cats meow!
- Rotate roles.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot; outside of foot, inside of foot dribbling.
- Chasing players to chase without a ball, making the players with the ball dribble faster to get to the end line.
- Players face away, and have to perform a turn, i.e., drag back, prior to running.
- Players face start from sitting or lying down.

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.
- Quick turn and explode away from dog.
- Keep body in between defender and ball to protect it.

JUNGLE PALS

TECHNIQUE:

Dribbling

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 15 x 10 yard field with two small goals, two teams, coach has balls.

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/jungle](https://www.aysou.org/video/jungle)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Players line up on opposite end lines, either side of the goals.
- Players are given the name of a jungle animal (each team has a matching animal).
- Coach sends in a ball and calls a character who enters field to play 1 v 1. Coach distributes ball to one player to start the dribbling (vary next time round, this also prevents 50-50 challenges upon entry).
- Characters score by “dribbling” the ball over the goal line (not shooting) and stopping the ball with the sole of their foot.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Two/three characters per time.
- Add two more goals on sidelines, providing more options to score.
- Introduce fakes and feints (with points for trying a fake).

COACHING POINTS

- Use all major surfaces of both feet.
- Knees slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.
- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close using soft touches.
- Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
- Ball should never be more than a step or two away.
- Change direction and move into space.

MAGIC MARBLE

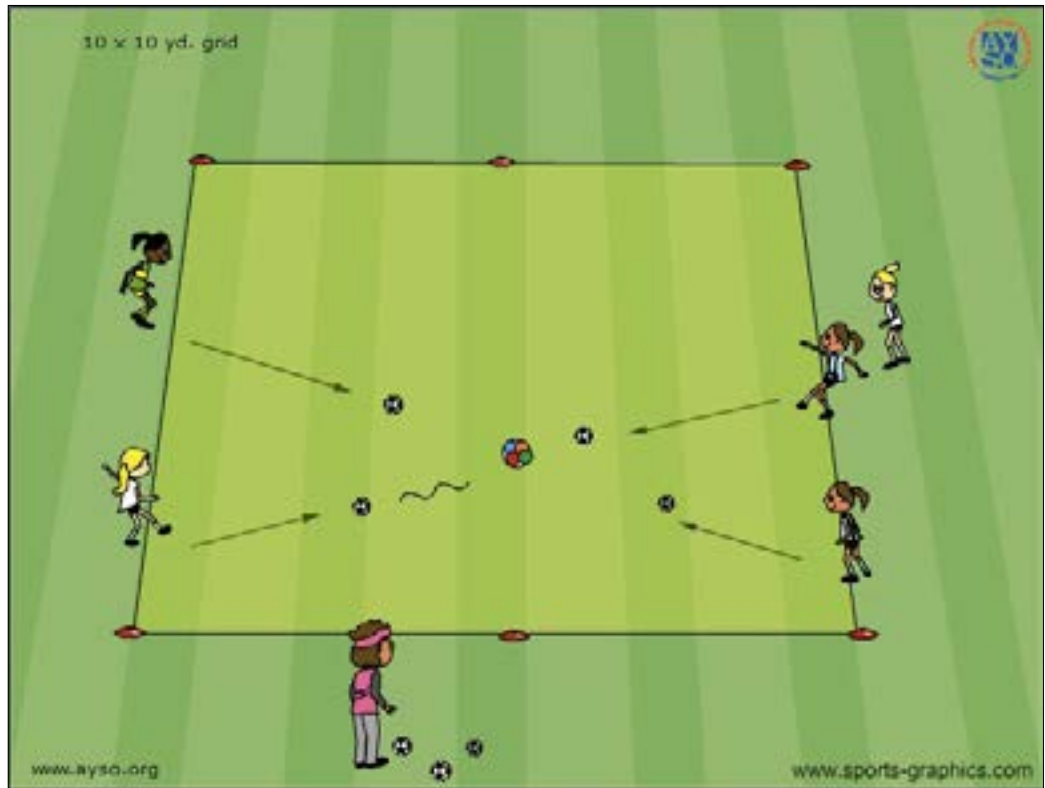
TECHNIQUE:

Instep Kick

Equipment/

Organization: Mark a 10 x 10 grid, one ball per player, one colored ball or beach ball (marble).

To see this activity in action visit:
[aysou.video/marble](https://www.aysou.org/video/marble)



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Two teams line up opposite each other (pending numbers have 2 players pair up).
- Each player has a ball.
- Players pass their ball to strike a central “Magic Marble” which only the coach may touch.
- After passing, players may retrieve any ball, except the “Magic Marble” and continue passing.
- Each team tries to knock the Magic Marble over their opponent’s line.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot kicks.
- Vary distance pending success.
- Chance of Glory: select a player to get a free shot. Move on quickly, rotate player.

COACHING POINTS

- Body should be over the ball (forward).
- Eyes on ball.
- Support foot next to ball pointed in general direction of target.
- Lock ankle back and down, toes pointed down.
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target.

SOCCER GOLF

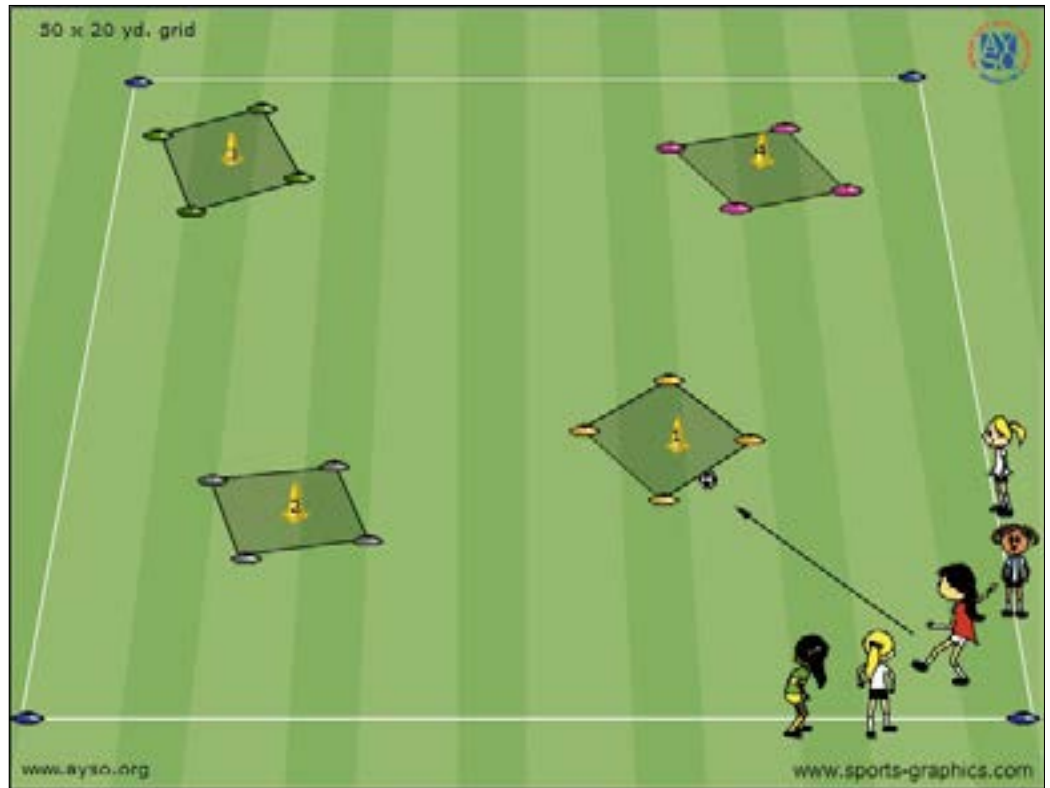
TECHNIQUE:

Instep Kick

Equipment/

Organization: Mark 50 x 20 playing area (course). Set up approx. four holes with four cones (5 x 5 yards) marking each green with a tall cone in center (marks pin). Vary the distances per hole, one ball per player.

To see this activity in action visit:
aysou.video/golf



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Players drive/kick their ball to the hole.
- Ball only needs to stop on green to score.
- Count kicks per player to reach the green.
- Have players count their score to see who gets the lowest “round.”

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot drives/kicks.
- As skill develops, vary the distances of holes and the size of the greens.
- Take two points off for actually hitting the tall cone/pin.
- Stagger player’s tee offs at different holes (with assistant coach or parent help).

COACHING POINTS

- Body should be over the ball (forward).
- Eyes on ball.
- Support foot next to ball pointed in general direction of target.
- Lock ankle back and down, toes pointed down.
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target.
- Prioritize weight of strike.

METEOR STORM

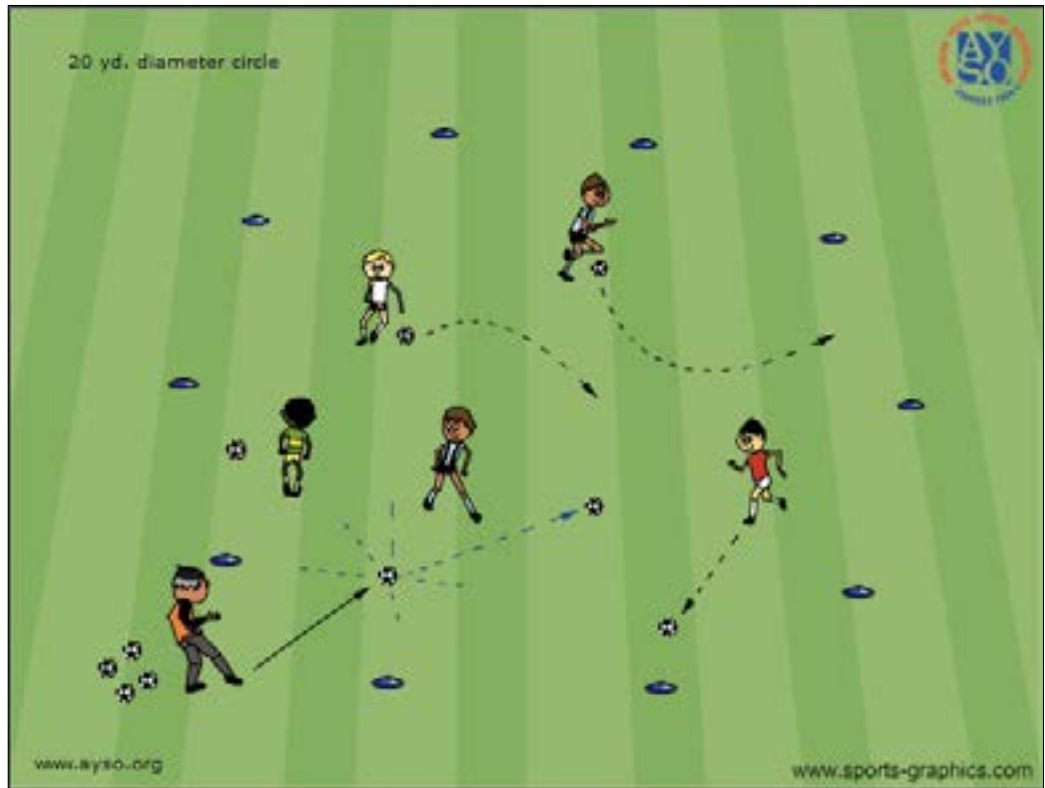
TECHNIQUE:

Instep Kick (Dribbling)

Equipment/

Organization: Set out circle 20 yards in diameter, one ball per player, coach on outside with spare balls.

To see this activity in action visit:
aysou.video/storm



HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

- Players are flying (dribbling) in their space ships through a meteor field.
- Coach, using instep kick, “carefully” passes ball (meteor) into the circle and attempts to hit the player’s ball or legs (below the knee).
- If a player is hit, they join the coach on the outside of the circle and use their ball to hit the remaining players using an instep kick.
- The last player to be hit by a meteor starts the next round.

VARIATIONS/PROGRESSIONS

- Left foot, right foot.
- Vary distance of the meteor shooters.

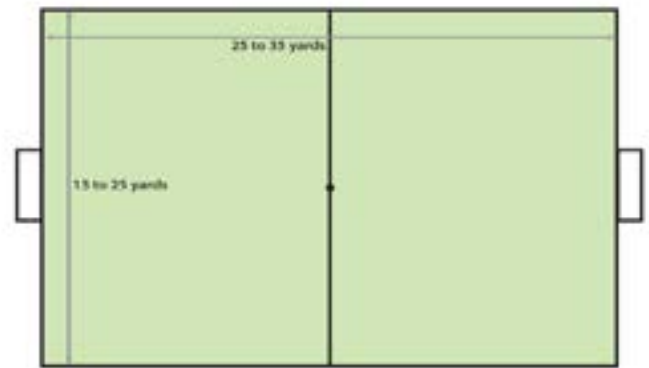
COACHING POINTS

- Body should be over the ball (forward).
- Eyes on ball.
- Support foot next to ball pointed in general direction of target.
- Lock ankle back and down, toes pointed down.
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target.
- Prioritize weight of strike.
- Keep ball low!

6U PROGRAM GUIDELINES

ACTIVITY DAY

At the 6U level, activity day consists of a 60-minute session: 35 minutes of technical development and one game of two 10-minute halves and a five-minute break. However, we recognize there are other formats that can work for this age group.



Field

- **Dimensions:** 25-35 yards long, 15-25 yards wide.
- **Markings:** Distinctive lines can be used but are not required. Field can be marked using 20 disc cones to mark all four sides.
- **Goals:** The maximum size is 4' high x 6' wide.

Ball

- Size 3

Players

- **Numbers:** Four per team on field; no goalkeepers. No roster limit to encourage participation but always consider playing time per child. Everyone Plays!
- **Substitutions:** Approximately midway through each half, at halftime and for injuries.
- **Playing Time:** All players, unless injured, are required to play at least half of every game.
- **Teams:** Separate girls and boys teams should be promoted at all levels of play. Only players should be allowed on the field; with the exception of a coach from each team who will manage the game.

Players' Equipment

- **Footwear:** Soccer shoes are recommended (or similar type athletic shoes). The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.
- **Shinguards:** MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks.
- **Jerseys:** Rolled or tied up sleeves are permitted, provided that the referee approves it is done in a safe manner.

Duration of Game

- Matches should have two equal halves not to exceed 10-minutes each.
- Halftime shall be a minimum of 5 minutes and a maximum of 10 minutes. No added time.

Official

- There is no need for fully qualified referees to manage 6U games. One or both of the coaches should "officiate." The games are intended to be an opportunity for our young players to experience the fun of playing. The barest of minimum rules are needed and should be applied with a generous amount of flexibility. Let the players have the freedom to play with minimum interruption.

THE 6U JAMBOREE

The Jamboree is an alternative method of conducting the standard 6U small-sided program. Following are guidelines for how to put together and run a Jamboree for your region:

Organization

To run a jamboree, the first step is to locate a “Master Coach.” The Master Coach must be a currently registered AYSO Volunteer. It is highly recommended that the Master Coach be an AYSO Advanced Coach and Advanced Coach Instructor. However, in the case where a Region is unable to run a 6U Jamboree because of a lack of an Advanced Coach who is also an Advanced Coach Instructor, it is permissible to use:

- An Advanced Coach who is also a Coach Instructor.
- An Advanced Coach who is not an Instructor.
- An Intermediate Coach who is a Coach Instructor.
- An Intermediate Coach.

The Regional Coach Administrator should work with the Regional Commissioner to determine the most qualified (and willing) instructor.

The Master Coach is in charge of the field! The purpose of the Master Coach is to guide new players through skills, activities and training games with the help of the parents, which will, in turn, ease the parents into learning how to coach.

Throughout this process, parents of each team will guide their team through the activities and games with the help and supervision of the Master Coach. The Master Coach should introduce and demonstrate each section first, then circulate to help the parents as they help the kids, giving all a positive learning experience.

Teams

Teams of six players on a roster should be formed before the season and have at least two parents per team who are willing to help each weekend. Each player should receive a uniform, since it is fun to get dressed up for “the big game” —and having fun will make the kids want to come back.

(Alternatively, teams may be formed *each* week at the beginning of the session based on how many players arrive, dividing them equally and using scrimmage vests instead of uniforms.)

Session Schedule

Sessions should last one hour. Run as many sessions with as many players as is necessary throughout the day to have all players attend one session. (Example: 100 players = five sessions with 20 players [four teams] per session).

- Group **Warm-Up** and Dynamic Movements (5 minutes).
- Skills and **Training Activities*** (25 minutes).

*Each week a new technique and/or piece of game knowledge should be introduced, demonstrated, practiced and then reinforced with training activities that focus on the particular topic.

- **Water Break** (5 minutes).
- **4 vs. 4 Game** (Two x 10-minute halves).

During the game, one parent from each team should be selected to keep the game going. All other parents should be encouraged to cheer positively **but refrain from coaching (giving directions) from the sideline**, which simply confuses the players. **This is the time for the kids to PLAY.**

6U MATCH KNOWLEDGE

PLAYING THE GAME

The Start of Play

To start the first and second halves and following each goal in all age-group games, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the middle of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal the team scored upon kicks off.

The Kick-off

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least 5 yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent always be 5 yards from the ball, as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

The Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play in all age group games when it completely crosses the touchline (side line) or goal line (end line), either on the ground or in the air. The team that didn't touch it last gets a pass-in or dribble-in. The coach in 6U games will determine when one of these restarts is necessary and should then interfere as little as possible in the restart. It's their game, let them play. The coach can work on technique later.

Method of Scoring

A goal, in all age group games, is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone but, in 6U games, they are not recorded to determine who wins. Everyone wins in 6U games.

Fouls and Other Stoppages

Deliberate fouling should be rare in 6U games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in 6U games. If a player is "not playing well with others" or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or pass-in as appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it, but do not make it a lengthy ceremony. Exercise common sense, stand back and let them play.

Free Kicks

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in 6U games. A player may pick the ball up and start running with it or want to keep it away from the other players, or perhaps there is a pile of kids on the ground kicking at both the ball and each other. Stop play and correct the situation then restart with a free kick for a deserving player. All free kicks in 6U games are indirect free kicks. Opponents must be at least 5 yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks.

No Heading!

Consistent with the US Soccer mandates on heading the ball, heading is banned for all division players 11U (12U for programs without single age divisions) and below in both practices and matches. An indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team if a player age 10 or younger deliberately touches the ball with his/her head during a match. The indirect free kick will be taken from the place where the player touched the ball with his/her head.

Players 10 years old and younger, approved to play up in a division where heading is allowed, are still prohibited from heading the ball. The player, parents and coaches are responsible for ensuring the player does not head the ball in practice or in matches consistent with the standards set by U.S. Soccer.

The Throw-in

Throw-ins are replaced with pass-ins or dribble-ins at 6U. Opponents should be 5 yards from ball.

Hand Ball

A hand ball infraction occurs when a player handles the ball. The "hand" includes the entire arm up to the top of the shoulder. Instinctive, self-protective reactions are not penalized at this young age. Accidental contact (ball striking hand or arm with no intent by the player) is not an offense and should not be penalized.

APPENDIX A:

SAFETY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

SAFE HAVEN INTRODUCTION

Agreeing to a background check is also required for each volunteer. Safe Haven® is both a child AND volunteer protection program.

The child protection aspect is intended to prevent child abuse, promote education and awareness, enforce policies and screen and train volunteers. It includes proactive steps that promote a positive, healthy environment for children. Volunteer protection comes into play as a result of volunteer training, certification and continuing education. The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides certain legal protections for volunteers *who have been trained and certified and act in accordance with a written job description*. Safe Haven includes these three elements, giving volunteers the highest degree of protection available under the law.

To coach in AYSO, you MUST complete this course!

KEEP IN MIND



To ensure the safety of both children and volunteers, each volunteer is required to take a class or online training session called AYSO's Safe Haven® focusing on safety and appropriate behavior with children as well as other on-field issues.

RISK MANAGEMENT BASICS

Covered in detail within our Safe Haven course, below are some general excerpts regarding risk:

Supervision

- One adult for every 8 or fewer children.
- **At least 2 adults present at ALL times.**
- At least 1 adult of the same gender as players.
- Adults should never be alone with a child except their own (including transporting a child in a car).
- Team Coach is responsible for players on team until they are picked up or otherwise leave the area.
- **No child shall be left unsupervised** after a game or training session.
- When necessary to speak privately with a child, select a spot out of earshot but within sight of others.
- The AYSO "Buddy System" requires a minimum of 3 players whenever children are allowed to enter a restroom alone, etc. Necessary for preventing player-on-player abuse.
- Adult supervisors of children must ensure that players are not allowed to abuse other players during AYSO activities.

Physical contact with children should be:

- In response to the need of the child only.
- With the child's permission.
- Respectful of any resistance or hesitation.
- Careful to avoid private parts (hug from the side only).
- In the open, never in private.
- Brief in duration.
- Age and developmentally appropriate.

Social Media!

To help address the growing need to protect children from abuse, which includes the invasion of privacy rights and/or volunteers from misunderstandings and false accusations, the following recommendations are suggested for electronic communications and the use of social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter.

- Maintain transparency in communications with children while protecting children's identity and privacy. It is the responsibility of adults to maintain appropriate boundaries!
- All communications regarding AYSO activities and participation in the program must be directed to parents and guardians including voice messages, e-mails and text messages (it is up to the child's parents to communicate necessary information).
- If, for older players or youth volunteers, parents/guardians allow direct communications with a player or youth volunteers, parents must still be copied on any and all messages.
- Adults should refrain from private, personal, on-going electronic conversations with children.
- It is not advised to provide player access to your personal social media site (i.e., Facebook). Settings should be set to 'Private.'



The lines between personal, private and public are becoming very thin in today's tech-dominant world, please be responsible and fully aware of the challenges!

GENERAL GUIDELINES TO INJURY MANAGEMENT

In dealing with injuries, the coach must be competent and in control of the situation and remain calm to prevent panic. When at all unsure, GET professional help!

DO NOT

- Try to diagnose a serious injury.
- Touch the injury, but rather ask the injured player to move the affected area.
- A serious injury will not allow movement by the injured player and will give the coach a clue to the seriousness of the injury.

DO

- Seek professional help for all but minor injuries.
- Put the child's welfare ahead of the team's needs. AYSO philosophy emphasizes healthy competition in a proper perspective. Playing youngsters with serious injuries is incompatible with our value system.

Is a player ready to return to play?

- Can the player walk without limping?
- Can the player run in a straight line? Or cut from side to side?
- Can the player execute other demands of the game?
- Is the player safe from further injury?
- If the answer is no to any of these, do not return player to the game.

General Care and Treatment of Injuries or Conditions

| Injury | Treatment |
|---|---|
| Blisters | Don't pop blister or cut dead skin away. Cover with Vaseline. Apply blister-specific Band-Aids or moleskin (cut piece out to surround blister, do not place directly on blister). |
| Sprain (Ankle, Knee, Wrist, Elbow) | Pressure wrap, ice for 20 minutes per hour during first 48 hours. Elevate when possible. RICE - Rest Ice Compression Elevation |
| Muscle Strain (Pull) | RICE |
| Contusion (Bruise) | RICE |
| Cramp | Apply light pressure with hand. Stretch muscle with steady pressure. Ensure player is well hydrated. |
| Nose Bleed | Direct pressure (pinch nostrils.) Sit player up. Don't blow nose. |
| Bleeding | See Safe Haven |
| Cut or Abrasions | Stop bleeding with direct pressure. Wash with antiseptic. Close with adhesive strip or butterfly. Cover with dry sterile dressing. |
| "Wind Knocked Out" | Lie on side or back. Encourage slow, relaxed breathing. Try to reduce anxiety. |
| Heat Exhaustion - Player Feels Cool, Clammy and Damp. Pale. | Move to shade. Douse with cool water. Loosen restrictive clothes. Give fluids. |
| Unconsciousness | Check airway, breathing, and pulse. Don't move (risk of spinal injury). Get help! |
| Concussion (Possible With or Without Consciousness) | Look for loss of memory, confusion, headache, dilated pupils, nausea. Do not send player back into game. Refer to CDC's signs & symptoms. If any doubt, get help. |
| Choking - Object Blocking Wind Passage | Use Heimlich Maneuver. Get help! |
| Fracture/Dislocation | Immobilize area. Get help! |
| Heat Stroke - Player Feels Hot, Dry, Dizzy, Shallow Breathing. | Professional help immediately! |
| Hypothermia | Shield from wind and cold, wrap in warm blankets and cover head. Get Help! |

When at all unsure **GET professional help!** In addition to AYSO's Safe Haven course, we strongly suggest first aid class or certification.

APPENDIX B: TEAM MANAGEMENT

ORGANIZING THE TEAM

1. Develop a Team Goal.

“Development over Winning” or “Players having FUN while learning about soccer” are good bases for a team goal. Develop in conjunction with your players and parents.

2. Develop a Coaching Philosophy.

You can base your personal coaching philosophy on your own perspective or the AYSO Coach Pledge (see Appendix C).

3. Conduct a Parents’ Meeting!

- Discuss AYSO’s Vision, Mission and Six Philosophies! Remember, this is what makes AYSO unique!
- Explain your Coaching Philosophy. Your guidelines and expectations (share your coaching experience or lack thereof), and team policies regarding:
 - Equipment brought to practice by each player: water, ball (properly inflated), shin guards, appropriate clothing, footwear, (sunscreen), etc.
 - Attendance at practices and games.
 - Player and parent behavior. You can discuss expectations of players and parents based on the Player and Parent Pledges as well as introduce Kids Zone.
 - Encourage communication regarding any player injuries.
 - Discuss concussion awareness, Safe Haven, etc.
- Discuss the team’s goal(s).
- Introduce small-sided matches and why we play it.
- Educate parents briefly on the *Laws of the Game* specific to this age group. Distributing the ABC’s of AYSO (contact your Regional Commissioner for more info) is a great way to introduce new parents to soccer and AYSO.
- GET HELP – You will need:
 - Assistant Coaches
 - Team Manager for administrative duties such as phone calls, coordinating carpools, etc.
 - Team Parent to develop snack schedule, plan social activities, etc.



ACTIVITY/MATCH DAY MANAGEMENT

Prior to Session

- Remind parents where and what time your team will meet.
- Ask parents to have players arrive approximately 30 minutes prior to kick-off in order to account for late arrivals, warm-up and prepare accordingly.

Before the Session

- Arrive at least ten minutes before your players (to get organized).
- Get the players active and engaged quickly (free play and fun warm up activity).
- Excite them about getting ready to play and to have fun.
- A quick overview of the rules can help this age.

After the Session

- Limit any post match speeches! At the most a very brief review of what went well.
- Ask if anyone is hurt.
- Thank the players for participating, trying hard...and having fun!
- Remind players (and parents) of next session.
- Wish them well for the remainder of their weekend!

APPENDIX C:

PLEDGES

AYSO COACH PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to:

1. Enthusiastically support and practice the AYSO mission to “enrich children’s lives” by embracing our Philosophies of: **Everyone Plays, Open Registration, Balanced Teams, Positive Coaching, Good Sportsmanship and Player Development.**
2. Stay informed about sound principles of coaching and child development.
3. Respect the game and know the Laws.
4. Emphasize to my players that they must abide by the *Laws of the Game* at all times.
5. Develop a true respect for all referees judgments.
6. Develop a team respect for our opponents and each other.
7. Ensure a safe environment for my players.
8. Never yell at or ridicule a player.
9. Always set a good example.
10. Remember that soccer is a game and all games should be fun.
11. Let the players play without constant instructions or commentary from sidelines.
12. Role model good sporting behavior.

AYSO PLAYER PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to:

1. Play for the sake of playing a game, not just to please a parent or coach.
2. Always give my best effort and work as hard for my teammates as I do for myself.
3. Treat all players as I would like to be treated.
4. Be a team player.
5. Be a good sport and support good plays whether they are made by my team or my opponents.
6. Abide by the *Laws of the Game*.
7. Cooperate with my coaches, teammates, opponents and the referee.
- 8. Never argue with or complain about referee calls or decisions.**
9. Control my temper when I feel I have been wronged.
10. Not use offensive or abusive language.
11. Remember that the object of the game is to win, but the goal is to enjoy myself and give my best effort.

AYSO PARENT PLEDGE

In my words and action, I pledge to:

1. Attend and participate in team parent meetings *as* requested.
2. Be on time or early when dropping off or picking up my child for training or a game.
3. Ensure my child is supported and encouraged by family or loved ones at games.
4. Encourage my child to have fun and keep sport in its proper perspective.
5. **Define winning for my child as doing his/her very best and appreciate Development over Winning.**
6. Endeavor to understand the Laws (rules) of soccer and support the efforts of referees.
7. Honor the game and show respect for all involved including coaches, players, opponents, spectators and referees.
8. **Applaud and encourage players from both teams and not yell out instructions** (as this causes confusion to the players and ultimately hinders development).
9. Refrain from making negative comments about the game, coaches, referees or players, especially from the sidelines.
10. Encourage others to refrain from negative or abusive sideline behavior.
11. As parents, keep the game in perspective for our children (as a pastime, sport, fun, exercise).
12. Abide by the tenets of Kids Zone for appropriate sideline behavior and support AYSO's vision to enrich children's lives.

APPENDIX D:

EPIC

EPIC PROGRAM

Integrating the “EPIC” Player into Your Region

An EPIC (Everyone Plays in Our Community) is a player whose physical and/or mental challenges make it difficult to successfully participate on a mainstream soccer team.

What is successful participation? It should be defined by the player’s enjoyment and the safety of all team members.

The player who has only a physical disability is likely to have many of the expectations and capabilities of a non-disabled player and should be coached accordingly. Every effort should be made to integrate these players into mainstream teams, as much as safety allows.

EPIC is an AYSO program designed to provide a quality soccer experience for EPIC players. EPIC teams offer many players with disabilities the least-restrictive and safest environment in which to learn and enjoy the game of soccer. Contact your Regional Commissioner, Regional Coach Administrator, Regional EPIC Administrator or the AYSO National Office to obtain AYSO’s special EPIC training materials and information on how to begin a EPIC program.

APPENDIX E:

AYSO COACHES CORNER, Q&A

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

My team is very strong and often is many goals ahead early. Understanding a blowout doesn't really help anyone, what can I do to contain it within reason?

This is a delicate topic but a very important one. Although we do not have an official policy on this, from a coaching perspective, the challenge is *not* to penalize the winning or scoring team (the purpose of the game after all), but not humiliate or discourage the opposing team who are being easily beaten. A few pointers for consideration:

- Coaches should be proactive *early* in the game if they see an obvious disparity.
- Winning team should *not* be penalized, i.e., reducing players, stopping scoring or sitting better players.
- Losing team should *not* be patronized, i.e., blatant efforts like playing two players down.
- Rather, we should look at some *proactive and challenging coaching conditions* for coaches potentially about to run up a score:
 - Rotate players' positions on winning team (GK plays striker, strikers play GK/defender, etc.)
 - Introduce a specific number of passes to score (again, a reasonable challenge that is less noticeable).
 - Ball needs to be played "wide" before being put into offensive area.
 - Selected players can only shoot using weaker foot.
 - Players must perform a specific turn or move, i.e., step-over before shooting.



In actuality, there is no guaranteed way to lessen a blowout or ensure it doesn't happen; however, a proactive awareness and effort by the winning coach can help lessen the impact. It should also be noted that prioritizing "development over winning" from day one could help the player's perspective.

Why do we have to be trained to coach the kids?

Age Appropriate training and certification benefits *all* members of the organization. Most importantly, **our players** receive Age Appropriate and current coaching methods, which ultimately boosts their soccer (and personal) development, as well as their overall AYSO experience.

Our volunteer coaches are given insight to the modern game; learn about our wonderful organization (what makes AYSO unique); and are introduced to the most innovative and current coaching methodologies and activities. This not only provides great education, but also a comfort level to coaching their selected age group (maximizing their volunteer experience). After all, coaches need to have fun as well!

Coach training provides **our parents** with the comfort of knowing that the individual working with **their** child is Age Appropriately trained and qualified. As well as soccer-specific training, the fact each coach has been trained and certified in our child and volunteer protection course, Safe Haven, further promotes a confidence level for our parents when they hand over their precious ones each week.

Locally, we create a strong reputation for quality programming for our **Regions** to stimulate their volunteer and player base. And finally, **nationally**, requiring age-specific coach training separates ourselves from other youth sports groups in our resolute commitment to Player Development.

In conclusion, coach training is a major component in ensuring our players; parents and coaches enjoy their AYSO experience to the max!

Why “no goalkeepers” until 10U?

Soccer games without goalkeepers provide a better experience for young children for several reasons, which is why not only AYSO but U.S. Youth Soccer and the U.S. Soccer Federation discourage the use of goalkeepers at the 8U level and below.

First of all, the goalkeeper is denied a chance to run around and chase the ball. The boy or girl who must guard the goal is being prevented from doing what he or she signed up for- play soccer!

Depending on the game, the young goalkeeper is in danger of being bored (if the action is on the other end) and getting discouraged if the ball keeps flying into the goal.

In the worst-case scenario, players who are forced to play goalkeeper at the early ages lose their enthusiasm for the sport.

Also, we want young players to shoot at goal as much as possible, because striking the ball is such an important skill for players to master. Young kids are more likely to shoot often when they’re aiming a goalkeeper-free net. With a goalkeeper there, they become apprehensive, looking for the perfect shot that they are not physically mature enough to pull off.

Young kids are not physically prepared to make saves. They may get in front of a tough shot now and again, but they just don’t have the tools for the position’s requirements and are inclined to feel devastated when scored upon.

In fact, not using goalkeepers makes the coach’s job much easier because the coach doesn’t need to cajole players to take turns in goal.

The use of goalkeepers at such young ages also creates a temptation for the coach to make his bigger and more advanced athletes play goalkeeper, because this will greatly increase his team’s chances of winning. In other words, the use of goalkeepers encourages the results-driven approach to coaching that hinders long-term player development and can take the fun out of soccer. The players who are more advanced athletically at the young ages shouldn’t be kept from enjoying field play so that the coach can rack up some wins.

When goalkeepers are used, at the 10U level for example, the goalkeepers should be rotated frequently. Even players who enjoy playing goalkeeper should not be restricted to the position and should get plenty of time playing in the field. Players shouldn’t specialize at any one position until they are well into their teens.

Many of the nation’s best goalkeepers- Hope Solo, Tim Howard, Brad Friedel and AYSO alum Brad Guzan- spent much of their youth as field players. This not only prevented them from burning out on the position, but honed the foot skills goalkeepers need and their ability to read the game, which is crucial to being a good goalkeeper.

Kids don’t juggle in a game, so why is it so important?”

Diego Maradona was once asked why he worked so hard in training perfecting tricks and juggling the ball, to which he answered, “Because I can.”

Tapping the ball in the air over and over means players are learning to hit the sweet spot while developing a good touch. Juggling with feet, thighs and all controlling surfaces trains players to be comfortable with the ball and develops striking and controlling skills.

Juggling helps with foot-eye coordination, and is a great way to work on balance. It also develops the weak foot. A key to developing soccer skills is to play with the ball as much as possible, and juggling can be done anytime, anywhere and on your own.

If you can encourage your players to juggle, you're giving them a way to work on their skills outside of organized practice and games (an important element in development).

Ball mastery gives players a competitive edge and makes tactical understanding easier to comprehend.

Why Does AYSO play “small-sided” matches at 6U, 8U, 10U and 12U?

The most influential soccer organizations in the world all agree that small-sided matches are the best way to develop soccer players. Almost every national soccer program from Brazil, Spain, England and the United States as well as the largest professional clubs including Barcelona, Manchester United and the Los Angeles Galaxy promote small-sided matches as the best tool to develop young players. This is formally confirmed in the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives.

Small-sided matches encourage young players to be engaged in the game at all times. They have more touches on the ball, which helps players build confidence on the ball. It also allows for coaches to spend more time on each player helping them develop their individual skills. It allows the younger players to make less complex decisions as they learn the game. Lastly, it allows for more opportunities for goals and success and excitement for the young players.

APPENDIX F:

GLOSSARY

GLOSSARY

Activity: Drill or exercise.

Balance: Reading the attack and providing an equal or greater number of defenders than attackers at the point of attack, while simultaneously covering the vital area near the goal.

Center: To pass the ball from a wide position on the field into the penalty area, i.e., crossing.

Clear: A throw or kick by the goalkeeper or a kick by the defender in an attempt to get the ball away (clear) from the goal area.

Control/Restraint (Composure): Staying calm, disciplined and organized in the face of an attack by maintaining proper defensive techniques and positioning.

Combination Play: Passing combinations executed by two or more players, i.e., wall pass.

Compactness: Compressing or restricting the space the attacking team has by “shepherding” them into a confined area makes it easier to defend and regain possession of the ball.

Corner kick: Awarded to the opposing team when the defending team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The opposing team must be at least ten yards from the ball when the corner kick is taken in 12U games. Refer to the *Laws of the Game* for further details.

Cover: A player creates a second defensive line in order to provide defensive support of a teammate or teammates.

Delay: Slowing down the attack by closing the gap and denying space to allow the defense to get organized.

Dribble: A way of advancing the ball by a series of short taps with one or both feet.

Dynamic: Moving, i.e., dynamic stretching (during warm up).

Far Post: Side of the goal or goal post farthest from the ball.

Forward: Striker. Primarily an attacking player.

Functional Training: Training the specific demands of a position or a role. This can be for an individual player or for a group (i.e., forwards playing together as a pair in a 4-4-2). Functional training should take place in the area of the field where that scenario would occur in a real game.

Goalkeeper: The last line of defense. The goalkeeper is the only player who can use his hands within the field of play (limited to within the penalty area).

Goal line: Define ends of the field.

Grid: A marked (usually with cones), restricted playing area.

Half-volley: Kicking the ball just as it is rebounding off the ground.

Handball: Illegal act of intentionally touching the ball with the hands or arms.

Heading: A method of scoring, passing, and controlling the ball by making contact with the head. No heading at 12U and below.

Inside of the Foot – Push Pass: This technique is used to advance the ball or to maintain possession by passing to a teammate.

Inside of the Foot – Ball Control: Technique used to control the ball using the inside of the foot in order to maintain possession and prepare for the next move.

Instep Kick: Technique used for long passes and strong shots on goal using the instep of the foot.

Lob: Or chip. A high, soft kick, which lofts the ball over the heads of the opponents or goalkeeper.

Match: Game.

Marking: Guarding an opponent.

Midfielder: A player who is primarily responsible for moving the ball from the defenders to the forwards.

Mobility: Players changing positions (filling in for one another when necessary) and moving off the ball creates numerical advantages and thereby attacking/scoring opportunities.

Near Post: Side of the goal or goal post closest to the ball.

Obstructing: Preventing the opponent from going around a player by standing in the path of movement.

One-Touch Pass: A pass made without controlling (trapping) it first.

Overlap: The attacking play of a defender or midfielder going down the touch-line past his or her own winger.

Penetration: Advancement. Moving the ball and/or players past an opponent in order to get into position to shoot and/or score, and is achieved by shooting, dribbling, and passing.

Pitch: Another name for the field of play.

Pressure: Action of a defender to restrict time and space available to the offensive player.

Physical: A player's physical attributes: speed, agility, endurance, strength and power, etc.

Psychosocial: Respect, motivation, confidence, cooperation, competitiveness, etc., and how these emotions and feelings impact a player's development. Includes a player's ability to reason, learn and solve problems.

Screen / Shielding: Retaining possession and protecting the ball by keeping your body between the ball and opponent.

Set Play: A planned offensive movement to be executed at a free kick or corner kick.

Shoulder-Charge: Legally upsetting an opponent's balance by shoulder-to-shoulder contact.

Sliding Tackle: Attempting to take the ball away from the opponent by sliding on the ground and using the feet or legs to block and hold the ball.

Static: Stretching against muscle and holding for approximately 30 seconds (best suited to cool down).

Striker: A central forward position with a major responsibility for scoring goals.

Support: Supporting teammates by creating safe options for the player with the ball or movement to influence opponent's position to help a teammate receive the ball.

Tackling: Attempting to or taking the ball away from an opponent when both players are playing the ball with their feet.

Tactical: A player's capacity to use their skill and ability within a game environment (competition), i.e., playing out of the back, possession and transition, offense/defensive and quick transition, etc.

Takeover: A 2 vs. 1 combination play in which the two offensive players move toward each other and the ball is transferred from one player to the other.

Technical: A player's ability to master ball skills, i.e., ball control, shooting, etc.

Through Pass: A pass that goes between two players and behind the defense.

Throw-In: Used to restart the game after the entire ball has crossed the touchline, whether on the ground or in the air.

Touch line: Define sides of the field.

Training (team): Practice (individual).

Trap: Controlling a ball by means of the feet, thighs, or chest.

Two-Touches: One touch is used to control the ball and the second touch is used to pass the ball.

Volley: Kicking the ball while it is in flight.

Wall Pass: A pass to a teammate, followed by a return pass on the other side of the opponent. Also called "give-and-go" or "one-two."

Warm-Up: The warm-up activity should physically prepare your players for the session as well as introduce the technical component of your session, i.e., dribbling or ball control, etc.

Width: Attacking on a broad front (players spread out) stretches the defense and creates space for players to advance.

Wing: Area of the field near the touch-line.

Winger: Name given to the right and left outside forwards.

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Scott Snyder, AYSO National

AYSO VISION

is to provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

AYSO MISSION

is to develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs which promote a fun, family environment based on AYSO's Six Philosophies:

AYSO SIX PHILOSOPHIES

- Everyone Plays®
- Balanced Teams
- Open Registration
- Positive Coaching
- Good Sportsmanship
- Player Development



AYSO National Office

19700 S. Vermont Ave., Suite 103, Torrance, CA 90502



everyone plays®