



Player Development Age Group Guidelines

Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual *and* physical activity. Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others. In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development as highlight, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups.

U9 - U10 Development Guidelines

The importance of the coach is developing with the player's age. The players are now entering an age where they are the main motivation to attend soccer practice. The players are now able to listen and concentrate for longer periods of time and receptive to longer practices. As they become either more dominant or hide within a group the level of competition increases in some players and they strive to challenge themselves against each other. Tactically, players are also now able to grasp larger-sided soccer games and start to learn the importance of playing **off** the ball as an individual and also for the team becoming more effective in attack and defense.

We are still in the golden ages of the player's development and there is still a huge emphasis and learning opportunity to take place with the players core motor skills complemented with development of technical ability. Players are now going through some changes physically and there will become more dominant players within a group.

Ideal Conditions for Development:

- 7v7 with goalkeeper
- 60x40 yard max field dimension
- Size 4 soccer ball

Practice Structure:

Within our practices we can use the different methods of practice design (as described in the Generic Coaching Guidelines). To allow and ensure for a flowing and progressive practice within the younger age-groups it is important that we;

- ***Avoid the use of 'line drills'***. Practice technical development with **maximum ball contact**. With all players performing desired technique within a desired practice area
- ***Be patient and demo***. Younger players especially need to have all learning needs catered for. . It is vital that we can cater for each players individual learning needs. Using tools and methods to cater for ***kinesthetic*** (performing tasks)/***auditory*** (clear and concise information)/***visual*** (demonstrations of tasks) learners.

- **Progressive and avoiding boredom.** Players will keep engaged in a practice fully for an average of 4 minutes. Continuously add new challenges to practice.
- **Group management** is important to be fully effective as a coach. If you are practicing in pairs it is a good idea for coaches to determine the pair. Challenge the more physically developed players and lesser players respectively.

Practice Guidelines and Content:

- **Outcomes we want to achieve** need to be set out so that we can inform the players prior to the session happening, to give clear learning objectives
- **The structure of the** session should be varied week to week. Try to start with a scrimmage some weeks and a group-lead structured warm-up other weeks.
- **Creative repetition of technique** is an excellent method to use. Players will learn from repeating technical challenges. As our practice will encourage the *creative* development of players it is really important for repetition to take place for learning to happen
- **Guided discovery** is similar to fact finding, but we actually provide the players with a problem to solve. This will ensure ALL players within the group are catered for and challenged.
- **Maximum ball contact** during the fundamental stages of development is vital. Give players as much of this as you can, through fun games and challenges, this is what players want!
- **Multi-directional practice** is a great tool to develop tactics through technical development. Challenge players technically by providing targets and zones to reach in different areas of the field to reach. Soccer is a game of un-limited decisions if we can challenge players to be comfortable in all directions it will be evident in their **long-term** development.
- **Challenge every player!** It is important to feed every players motivation to practice and you can do this by constant challenges to your players. Through individual technical challenges to the level of competition. players may be in an overloaded situation (in or out of favor) 1v1 2v2 2v1 3v1 ect putting players in situations will increase their soccer brain capacity
- **Physical development** will affect the player's ability to perform more challenging techniques such as longer passing. The speed in which they can perform techniques will improve as they become more accustomed to their bodies and have a sense of speed in soccer.
- **Growth spurts** in players will now start to appear. It is really important that we allow for this and that we understand it will have a **short-term** effect on their development
- **Developing tactical** awareness through exposing the players to different games where they have a team in balance and out of balance i.e. 2v2 or a 4v2.
- **Goal setting** for players is an inspiration to practice. They need physical targets to achieve i.e. scoring a goal, number of consecutive passes.
- **Small sided game practice** is still of huge benefit. even though the game size is 8v8 to be fully effective in the support of technical development the players still need the **maximum** opportunity to practice.

Development Criteria of a U9-U10 player:

Technical	Tactical
<p>Ball Mastery - Encourage the use of both feet and discover how to use ALL parts of feet</p> <p>Dribbling - Develop moves in a 1v1 situation</p> <p>Turning - Develop turning technique, using body and speed of turns</p> <p>Passing - Players can now develop longer ranged passes, curved and lofted passes</p> <p>Receiving - Aerial and ground control of ball</p> <p>Shooting - Accuracy and control of power and flight of ball can be developed. Using a variety of shooting techniques.</p>	<p>Attacking -</p> <p>Expose players to 1v1, 2v2, 2v1 and 3v1 practice in a keep away or target game</p> <p>Start to develop support play</p> <p>Decision making will develop of the timing of pass and decision of what passing technique to use</p> <p>Defending -</p> <p>Players will want to win the ball back quickly</p> <p>Understanding how to pressure the ball</p> <p>Working as a pair to defend with pressure and cover</p>
Physical	Psychological
<p>Boys and girls will start to develop at different rates</p> <p>Physically mature individuals demonstrate stronger motor skills</p> <p>Coordination may be at certain levels due to growth spurts (we must allow for this and not use it against the player)</p> <p>Playing too much will make players prone to overuse injury</p> <p>Continue to support body systems with regular rest and rehydration time.</p>	<p>Intrinsically motivated to play the game</p> <p>Players can be given more responsibilities out of practice i.e. bringing own water bottle, gear ect.</p> <p>Players will start to understand the tactical concepts of the game more</p> <p>Peer pressure within a group will become more evident</p> <p>Players have an increased attention span and will absorb the information you give, even though they may not appear to</p> <p>Players will still seek support and positive reinforcement</p>

Typical U9/U10 Training Session

When designing a training sessions for this age it is important that they do not exceed approximately 75 minutes. Keeping the training sessions shorter will keep the players engaged. Here is the basic progression for a typical session:

- Warm-Up (Approx. 15 Minutes) - The warm-up should include partner and small group activities. This is also the time to introduce some dynamic stretching.
- Main Activities (Approx. 25 Minutes) - Work in small group activities. Add more directional games to targets or zones.
- Final Game (Approx. 25 Minutes) - The final game should be 7v7 including goalkeepers. Every session should end with the players having the opportunity to play the game. This is why they are there! If needed, you can play bigger numbers or play with multiple fields so that all the players can participate.
- Cool Down (Approx. 10 Minutes) - Have the players involved in a low impact game to help the muscles recover. Incorporate a little static stretching. Here are a few things to consider when you are designing a training session:
 - Are the activities fun?
 - Are the activities organized?
 - Are the players involved in the activities?
 - Are creativity and decision making being used?
 - Are the spaces used appropriate?
 - Is the coach's feedback appropriate?
 - Is the coach guiding or controlling the players?
 - Are there implications for the game?