

Wellsboro Area Youth Soccer

U8 Curriculum

As with the U6 player, U8 continues to be an exploratory stage. This may be the first exposure a child has to the game. As with younger ages, this age child does not have the same capacity as an adult to analyze the environment. Children at this age continue to explore and have an egocentric conception of the world but have increased interest in group activities. Still, empathy and the capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others are very low. Essentially, they are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. In order to help build their own experience, many exercises will continue to be individual in nature (ex. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be limited. The focus should be on becoming comfortable with the ball while moving in the playing space and playing fun games. Training sessions will continue to be treated more as physical education than specifically as soccer training. - US Soccer Curriculum

Psychological:

Objectives: The player will...

- work cooperatively with a partner (pairs).
- share.
- demonstrate sportsmanship and fair play.
- demonstrate increased confidence and creativity with the ball.

Physical:

Objectives: The player will...

- refine basic motor skills without the ball (running, jumping, turning, spinning, skipping, etc.).
- improve eye-foot/eye-hand coordination.
- begin the use of warm-up and cool-down.

Technique:

Objectives: *The player will...*

- use basic ball control exercises ([juggling](#) toe taps, foundations, stopping the ball with the sole of the foot and [3 basic turns](#)).
- move with the ball at the feet (dribbling), with different parts of the foot. [Dribbling with different surfaces of the foot](#) - encourage players to keep the head up and scan the field at all times.
- change directions using pullbacks, turns, and cuts.
- receive ground balls with the inside of the foot- [Receiving ground balls](#) , [First touch away from pressure](#).
- be able to complete a push pass inside of the foot over short distance - (10 yards) [Push pass](#).
- demonstrate a "block tackle" - [Block tackle](#).
- striking to shoot ground balls with inside and instep of the foot using a "soccer hop" and "load" motion. - [The Soccer Hop](#)
- know when to use a throw-in and goal kick.
- perform a legal throw-in (2 hands, 2 feet, over and behind head).
- know the meaning of a volley and half volley kick and demonstrate such kick by dropping the ball from hands.

Tactics:

Objectives: *The player will...*

- recognize open and closed space on a soccer field.
- demonstrate 1v1 attacking (courage to dribble toward goal and defender).
- demonstrate 1v1 defending (seek to get the ball back).
- recognize options with the ball (dribble, pass, shoot), "kicking is not soccer".

Training Sessions:

Objective:

- 1-2 practice days plus one game/week
- 60-75 minute practices
- activities that include a ball for each player for a majority of the practice time
- multiple, useful touches on the ball for each player at each practice

Principles:

- Be sure the training area is appropriate and safe.
- Activities should be developmentally appropriate and relevant to the game of soccer. (See EPYSA U8 season practice plan below)
- Be clear, concise, with accurate information.
- Practice session activities should build from simple to complex.
- Encourage player decision making on the field.

Structure:

- [Setting up the practice area](#)
- Each practice session has four main ingredients:
 1. Warm-up - Elevating body temperature (use the ball)
 2. Individual Activity - technique improvement (each with a ball)
 3. Small Group Activity - improve technique and understanding with small numbers
 4. Large Group Activity - application of technique and decision making in the game
- Preparation: All coaches should have a plan coming into the practice session.
[EPYSA U8 season practice plan](#)
 - 30% of time spent on the physical component
 - 35% of time spent on technique
 - 35% of time spent playing the game
- During the Session: Do not stop the activity too often. Players must learn to find solutions without constant coaching. Give clear and accurate coaching points and quickly restart the practice.
- Evaluation: Take a few minutes after the session to review and note what worked well and what needs improvement.

The Game:

Objective: By the end of the season the player should be capable of:

1. Running and stopping with the ball.
2. Moving forward when attacking and retreating when defending.
3. Using basic quick movements with and without the ball.
4. Moving to provide balance on the field in relation to the ball and teammates.

Key: *New terminology for the age group

Terminology

Dribbling - Controlling and moving the ball with the feet.

Goal line - The shorter boundary lines marking the end of the field. The full goal line is in the field of play.

Touchline - The longer boundary line marking the side of the field. The full touch line is in the field of play.

**Block Tackle - The most basic "tackle" in soccer. It is made head on, weight over the ball, using the inside of the foot. It is important to keep the tackling foot low, the ankle firm & the leg stiff.*

**Goal Kick - A goal kick shall be awarded to the defending team when the entire ball crosses the goal line having last been touched or played by the attacking team. A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick.*

"Soccer Hop" - When the player hops on to their plant foot while at the same time loading their shooting leg - as opposed to just contacting the ball while in the running motion.

**Throw-in - A throw-in shall be awarded to a team when the ball is last touched by a member of the opposing team before the entire ball passes over the touchline. A player throws the ball using both hands. The ball must be delivered from behind and over the head in one continuous movement, while both feet are on the ground on or behind the touchline and the player must be facing the field. A goal may not be scored directly from a throw-in.*

**Volley Kick - Kicking the ball straight out of the air (the ball does not bounce first.). A "half volley" is when the ball is kicked out of the air after bouncing first.*

Key: *** New game for the age group

Dribbling Games

1. Red Light - Green Light

As in the game we played in our youth, one player is "IT". He stands at one end of the field with his/her back to the others and calls out red light, green light one, two, three and then turns around. The players meanwhile have been dribbling toward him/her and must stop, with their foot on top of the ball, when the player turns around. Anyone moving must go back to the beginning to try again.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close and under control

2. North - South - East and West

Players dribble where the coach tells them to, i.e. a direction as suggested in the title.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close and under control, keep head up.

3. Big Bad Bear

Each player with a ball in designated space. The coach is the "big bad bear" and moves about trying to get the ball from the players. If a ball is knocked away, the player quickly recovers the ball and rejoins the game.

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close and under control, keep head up, look for open space away from the coach who is trying to get the ball.

4. Draw

Partners face each other. Place one soccer ball between the two players. The objective of the game is to "draw" the ball back using the sole of the foot. The command to "Draw" is given by the coach. The fun part is that the coach tells a story in which he uses the word "draw" to signal the player movement.

For example: "Willy and his sister were working on cleaning their rooms. Willy said, 'Where should I put these socks?' And his sister replied, 'In your **Drawer**.'" Make up really silly stories.

You can add progression to this activity by having the players jog in place, have the players only use the non-dominant foot, have the players move up a ladder if they win and down if they lose the round and see who can get to the top first

Coaching Points: using the sole of the foot to pull the ball away from the opponent

5. Pac Man

In this game players are moving in any direction in a designated space. All players except one has a ball. The player without a ball is the "ghost" and tries to knock the other player's soccer ball out-of-bounds. Any player who loses his ball becomes the "ghost".

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close and under control, keep head up, look for open space away from the "ghost" who is trying to get the ball.

6. Sharks and Minnows

Set up a rectangular grid with cones. One player is in the center and is the "shark". Everyone else is along an end line with a ball. The objective is to get to the other end, in control of the ball. Don't let the players just kick it and run after it. The "shark" has to knock the ball out of bounds. Whoever's ball goes out becomes a "shark" and assists in getting the remainder of the players. The last player in becomes the next "shark".

Coaching Points: Keep the ball close and under control, keep head up, get past the opponent

7. Dribble Across The Square ***

Make a square about ten steps wide. Players are positioned so that all sides of the square are occupied by a player with the ball facing the center of the square.



The objective is to dribble across the square, turn at the opposite line and return to starting position. Continue for the designated number of "laps".

Coaching Points: head up, avoid oncoming player, turns

Passing Games

1. Quick Tag ***

One ball for the group. One player is the defender but does not try to win the ball. Rather, she tries to tag the player who has the ball at his feet. If successful, the tagged player becomes the new tagger. 5 successful passes equals one point ("goal")

Freeze Tag ***

Freeze tag is played in a rectangular grid. One person (or two if you like) is (are) IT. All players must dribble and stay in control of their ball. If the IT player tags them they are frozen. If they lose it out of bounds they must also freeze in place.

Teammates of the frozen players can unfreeze them by passing their ball between legs and then continuing to dribble the ball once it passes through their legs. Change the IT often.

References:

Arkansas State Soccer Association

Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Association (EPYSA)

NFHS Soccer Rules Book

National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA)

Perry, George. January/February 2008. Fun For The Little Ones. Soccer Journal.

Success in Soccer. March 2006. "Playful Training

US Soccer Federation Curriculum (USSF)

US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Assistant Coach Series