

# Crash Course for coaching U5 and U6 Soccer

There are many different things that go into coaching this age group, but sometimes books and pamphlets can be overwhelming and somewhat difficult to understand. For the sake of simplicity, this sheet will tell you what you need to know to coach a team in our U5 and U6 program.

## 5 Rules to Live By

1. You don't need to know much about soccer. Pick a game kids love and incorporate a soccer ball. Tag, gather the cones, red rover, animal sounds, body parts, freeze, get the coach, etc. These all become "soccer games" when you simply add a ball.
2. Don't worry about passing, positions on the field, or proper technique. Demonstrate the correct way to perform a skill and then praise them highly when they actually do it, but don't waste practice time with repetitive technique drills. Pick "coaching moments" when you can make a point that helps the whole team.
3. Kids want their own ball and don't want to share it. When you call your team, tell the parents their child NEEDS to bring a ball to practice. Every child should have a ball at their feet constantly during practice. Avoid drills that use lines and always keep the kids busy, their attention spans are short or nonexistent!
4. Emphasize players spreading out and not taking the ball from their own teammate. This is the one coaching point you should be making 100 times a game and constantly when you scrimmage during practice. (Every time you get possession of the ball!) Be patient and keep stressing these two points and you'll be amazed at the results.
5. Always play with the kids. If you're having fun, so are they.

The bottom line is get to know the kids, pretend like you are a kid, and you'll have a great time. I enjoy watching these games because it often looks like an amoeba is following the ball around the field. One important note is to remember to have good sportsmanship. If your team is crushing the other team, then make adjustments to help level the playing field. Remember the shoe could always be on the other foot!

## Practice Games

Gather the cones- spread cones out across the field, kids have to gather them (while dribbling their ball), and then bring them back to you one cone at a time.

Freeze tag- players dribble while you try to tag them. If you tag them, they sit on their ball until a teammate "unfreezes" them.

Body parts or animal sounds – these are a variation of the same game. Kids dribble and you call out an animal and they must imitate the animal. Or you call out a body part and they must touch it to the ball.

Kick the coach- the kids will love this (and so will you). They have to dribble and try to shoot the ball and hit you while you are running around. It forces them to pick their head up and look around while dribbling, and also to shoot while the ball is moving.

Red Rover- Kids line up and you say "red rover, red rover, come on over" and they try to dribble to the other side of the field, while you try to knock their ball away. Similar to Sharks and Minnows, but you don't have to worry about the kids being afraid of sharks.

Gates- Another old standby. Set up gates around the field and say go, and the kids try to dribble through them. Scatter the gates so there is no pattern and the kids decide where to go for themselves. Yell "stop" and ask them how many gates they have gone through. (They will usually lie in their answer, but that is half the fun!) You can also say the gates are goals, and have the parents be "goalies" for the kids.

Hot Potato – Divide the kids into two teams and put all the balls out in the middle. Make a halfway line and each team doesn't want any balls on their half when you yell stop.

You can also play this game by telling the kids to try and gather all the balls on their half. Don't do this at the same practice you play "hot potato" or the kids will get confused.

Scimmages, relay races, and keep away are also good for this age. Just use your imagination and have fun.

# RULES and INFO

Field: 30x20 with 3 yd center circle.

Ball: Size 3

Players: 6 (sometimes 7) per team, only three at a time on the field. NO Goalkeepers. Each child on a team will receive an equal amount of playing time during the game/season. A player should not play the entire game unless there are only three players present.

Fouls: Coaches will officiate all games. All fouls result in a free kick with the opponent at least five yards away. If a player is repeatedly committing fouls, his coach should remove him from the game and explain to the child (and his or her parents) why their behavior is not acceptable in the game.

Duration of games: Games consist of four 8 minute quarters with a two minute break between quarters and a five minute half time break. Clock runs continuously, and the team listed first on the schedule is responsible for providing a time keeper. Designate a parent on the sideline as your official timekeeper, and they can also let you know the four minute mark for substitutions each quarter as well.

Substitutions: Can be made on any dead ball, but it is highly recommended that substitutions be made at the four minute mark of each quarter. If all six team members are in attendance simply “switch” squads. If you have seven kids, I recommend a different kid be a “rover” each game, meaning that child plays from the 2 minute until 6 minute mark of each quarter. (This way the kid they come in for only misses two minutes of playing time for the whole game). Make sure they are subbing for a different kid each time they enter the game.

Throw-ins: The ball is placed on the sideline nearest the point where it went out of bounds. The opposing team should be at least five yards away from the thrower. Encourage throwers to keep both feet on the ground and use two hands to bring the ball directly over their head. There is no penalty for an incorrect throw, simply offer positive reinforcement for a correct one.

Goal kicks: A goal kick is awarded when the ball is last touched over the end line by an offensive player. The kick is taken from the goal line and the opposing team should be on the other side of the center line.

Corner Kicks: A corner kick is awarded when the defending team last touches the ball before it goes out of bounds over the goal line. Opposing players should be at least five yards away on a corner kick.

Kick offs: Will be taken from the center circle at the start of each quarter and after a goal is scored. The opposing team should be at least ten yards away from the center line.