



Coaching Crash Course U7 / U8

Thank you for volunteering to coach with Bentonville Parks and Recreation Soccer! The coach is the single most important influence in creating a great soccer experience and developing a player's love for the game.

Your time and energy are an invaluable part of this program and we could not do this without you. We hope that your season will not only be fun but also very rewarding!

Our goal at Bentonville Parks and Recreation Soccer is to develop a love of the game by bringing the best soccer experiences to players through participation, skill development, sportsmanship, and fun!

Whether you are a first year coach or a 20-year veteran, each season provides new and exciting experiences for you. Making a difference in the life of a child is one of the most gratifying things anyone can do. We want all of our coaches and players to walk away from our program better than when they walked in.

We will be here every step of the way to make sure that your team receives as much support as possible. The below curriculum guide will help you run practices and understand game play. Please be sure to read the entire curriculum and let the league director know if you have any questions.

5 Rules to Live By for U7 / U8 Soccer

1. **SHOW** players correct technique and give them a chance to demonstrate immediately. Players at this age can accept instruction and be held accountable for it in a positive manner. Correct mistakes by reminding them what you have worked on in practice. A demonstration is worth a 1,000 words!
2. **ALWAYS** emphasize proper technique. The longer a player performs something incorrectly, the slower they will develop and the less fun they will have. This is the age group where bad habits form, so try to help the players avoid these. By the end of the season, your players should know the proper technique to pass, shoot and receive the ball correctly.
3. **ORGANIZE** - Your practices should be organized into a small-sided game warm-up, then instruction on your focus topic for the day, and then a scrimmage emphasizing your topic focus.
4. **FOCUS** on passing, receiving, and basic positions along with dribbling and shooting that players have learned from previous seasons. The 2 positions to coach are offenders and defenders. Also, emphasize teamwork and how it is just as good to assist in a goal as it is to score one.

5. **HAVE FUN!** These players are 6, 7, and 8 years old who above all want to have fun. Learn to balance instruction and fun. Pick games that kids love and incorporate a soccer ball. Freeze tag, coach “Simon” says, cats and dogs, animal sounds, red light green light, etc. It’s good to play these games without a ball first and then let the games become soccer games when you add a ball. Be sure to avoid lines. Each player should have a ball at his or her feet as much as possible. Always play with the kids. If you are having fun, so are they!

The bottom line is if you get to know the kids and pretend to be a kid, you will have a great time and so will they! This age group is a fun combination of the light-heartedness of the U5/U6 players and the coachability of the older kids.

One important thing to remember is to have good sportsmanship. If your team is crushing the other team, then please make adjustments to help level the playing field. Remember the shoe could always be on the other foot!

Rules of the Game U7 / U8

Ball Size: 3

Players: 8 (sometimes 9) per team- 4v4 on field. No goalkeepers. Each child on a team will receive an equal amount of playing time during each game. A player should not play the entire game unless there are only 4 players present.

Fouls: Coaches will officiate all games. Coaches are strongly encouraged to call all fouls committed by their own team. All fouls result in an indirect free kick with the opponent at least five yards away. All free kicks are indirect (meaning another player must touch the ball after it is kicked before a goal can be scored). If a player is consistently fouling or being dangerous, the coach needs to remove the player from the game and explain why their behavior is not acceptable.

Duration of Games: Games consist for four 10-minute quarters with two-minute breaks between quarters and a five-minute break at half time. Clock runs continuously during each quarter without stopping. Designate a parent to be the timekeeper. They can let you know the 5-minute mark for substitutions each quarter as well.

Substitutions: Substitutions can be made on any dead ball, but it is highly recommended that subs be made at the 5-minute mark of each quarter. If all 8 team members attend, simply switch squads. If you have nine kids, assign a kid to be a “rover” each game, meaning that child plays from the 2-minute until the 8-minute mark of each quarter. 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. Give each player opportunities to use the proper technique when throwing in. If improper technique is used, please stop the game and re-throw. The importance is on learning the technique. The ball cannot be thrown directly into the goal for a score.

Goal Kicks: A goal kick is awarded when the ball is last touched by an offensive player and goes over the end line by the goal. The kick is taken from the corner of the goal box and the opposing team must be on the other side of the centerline when the kick is taken.

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. The ball is placed in the closest corner and opposing players should be at least five yards away when the corner kick is taken.

Kick-offs: Will be taken from the center circle at the start of the game and after a goal is scored. The opposing team should be at least ten yards away from the centerline or outside of the circle.

Coaching Topics U7 / U8

Introduce the topic, demonstrate (or have one of your players demonstrate) the proper technique, and then let your players demonstrate individually the technique to you and make corrections when needed. Use Guided Discovery whenever possible. A coach benefits his team far more effectively by raising good questions that players find solutions to verse providing all the answers.

1. Passing – Choose game activities that limit lines and have players pass the ball using the inside of the foot technique. Have players switch feet so they use both left and right. You can lengthen or tighten space as needed based on accuracy.
2. Receiving (or Trapping) the Ball – Choose game activities that limit lines and emphasize the players technique who is receiving the ball. Players should use the inside of the foot and attempt to “absorb” the ball as it hits their foot with their first touch and then set up their next touch. Use both feet.
3. Shooting – The easiest way to remember this technique is “toe down” and “hit with the laces”. The opposite foot (than the one you are kicking with) is the plant foot and determines where the ball will go. Players should focus on where (accuracy) and how they kick it, not how hard. The power will come as they get older and stronger. Use both feet. NO Toe Pokes!
4. Dribbling – Players should practice dribbling with the inside and outside of both feet. Encourage little kicks, small touches and control of the ball. Use fun games with competition to practice the technique where players have a ball at their feet at all times when working on dribbling.

Tactics

Tactics make up an important part of U7 and U8 soccer. Tactics are decisions made by players. Kids can easily get bogged down with lots of concepts, so keep it simple. Coach these 3 things:

1. Kick the ball wide (towards the sideline) when on defense
2. Kick the ball across the front of the goal (center) when attacking
3. When your teammate has the ball, don't run at them, instead go to an area where your teammate can kick the ball to you.

Practice Breakdown U7 / U8

Each practice should have a focus. Pick one focus and concentrate your practice on it. Then use the scrimmage at the end to evaluate if the focus was learned.

Making your practice activities a competition is a great way to motivate, challenge and encourage your players to do their best and have fun!

Focus:

U7/U8 – Receiving, Passing and Basic Positions, along with Dribbling and Shooting

Each practice should consist of the Play-Practice-Play Model (PPP).

“PPP” **Coaching Technique** – Play-Practice-Play is to allow players to experience the game and game-like situations as much as possible. This approach differs from traditional practice that have players standing in lines, running laps and participating in drills that do not resemble the game of soccer. When players arrive to practice, players engage in small-sided games (2v2, 3v3, 4v4) with the primary focus on having fun! To learn more, please visit:

<https://www.ussoccer.com/stories/2018/02/five-things-to-know-about-playpracticeplay>

#1 - Play - Warm Up - 10 Minutes

Each practice should begin with a warm up. A warm up should consist of players playing 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 etc. No need to have the team run laps or sprints; let the game activities you choose provide players physical fitness conditioning. Divide your field into small grids with goals made with cones and get players playing soccer as soon as they arrive to practice. Get their feet on a ball and playing right away!

#2 - Practice - Focused Skill Games - 20 Minutes

Practices should have a clear focus. One skill at a time should be the focus. Pick fun game activities that allow players to focus on the technique of your choosing and help develop the basic skill but also let the kids have a lot of fun. Add competition to your activities when you can to add fun!

#3 - Play - Scrimmage- 20 Minutes

Each practice should end with a scrimmage. Most teams are scheduled on a field with another team. Those two teams should scrimmage each other for the end of the practice. If your team is scheduled on a field alone, scrimmage your team against each other. Treat these scrimmages like a real game (subs, breaks, etc.) but do take the time to address rules or technique with your players. Stop the game and go over a rule if, for example, players keep playing the ball after it goes out of bounds. During the scrimmage, evaluate your coaching to see if the technique you practiced is being used in the scrimmage.