



Coaching Crash Course U12

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 U12 Soccer

1. **SHOW** players correct technique and give them a chance to demonstrate immediately. Players 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. By the end of the season, your players should know the proper technique to pass, shoot, dribble 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 defending and positions. At this age, we do not want to “bunch up”. Work on players staying in positions on the field and playing as a team. 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 10, 11 and 12 years old who above all want to have fun. Learn to balance instruction and fun. Pick game activities that focus on skill development in a “game” like setting. Add competition. Be sure to avoid lines. Each player should have a ball at his or her feet as much as possible.

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 U12

Ball Size: 4

Players: 9 on the field at a time (8 field players and a goalkeeper). 14-15 players on a roster. Each player will receive an equal amount of playing time during each game and should at least play half of a game. No player should play the entire game unless there are only 9 players present. By this age, most players will excel at and want to play certain positions. This is understandable, but should never affect their playing time.

Fouls: Bentonville Parks and Recreation Referees will be provided to officiate games. Please let your players know to always be respectful of the referee. Your individual behavior towards the referee will go a long way in determining you players’ and team parents’ behavior.

Duration of Games: Games consist of two 25-minute halves for U12. Each game will have a five-minute break at half time.

Substitutions: Substitutions can be made on any dead ball (please see the BPR Soccer Rules sheet). Always get the referee’s attention before subbing.

Throw-ins: Players must keep both feet on the ground and use both hands to bring the ball directly overhead to throw-in. Players will get one attempt to get the proper technique correct. If the proper technique is not used, then the incorrect throw results in loss of possession and the opposing team will throw-in.

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 inner goal box and the opposing team must be on the other side of the centerline when the kick is taken. Encourage the player taking the kick to never play the ball up the middle. Always kick to the outside. The ball is in play as soon as it is kicked and does not have to leave the goal box.

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 must be outside of the circle.

Offside: The offside position is defined as being nearer to the opponent's goal line than both the ball and the last defender when the ball is played. Offensive players must either have a defender between him/her and the goalkeeper or have to be behind the ball when the ball is played. When an offensive player is offside, the referee will make the call and the opposing team will get an indirect free kick from the spot where the offensive player touches the ball. You cannot be offside on your own half of the field, on goal kicks, corner kicks or throw-ins.

Goalkeeper: A goalkeeper may punt or throw the ball from anywhere within the penalty box. Encourage goalkeepers to distribute the ball to the outside, not up the middle. A goalkeeper is not allowed to touch the ball with their hands outside of the penalty box (result is a handball – direct free kick) or if the ball is intentionally passed back by a team member. The use of hands on a pass back will result in an indirect free kick for the opposing team from the spot of the infraction. Goalkeepers can use their feet on a pass back and outside of the penalty box.

SKILL LEVELS U12

On your team, you will have players that have played for many years and you will have players who have never played before. One of the challenges of coaching this age is doing your best to make practices and games fun for players on both ends of the talent and experience spectrum. Regardless of how many years they've played, devote some practice time to skill development!

Coaching Topics U12

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.

Focuses:

U12 – Defending and Positions, along with Passing, Receiving, Shooting and Dribbling

1. Defending – The five basic principles of defending are pressure, containment, cover, marking, and goal-side. Players should close down space quickly, contain the attacker with patience (not diving in), keep moving, focus on the ball and win the ball confidently when the attacker makes a mistake.
2. Positions – Players should be introduced to the different positions on the field and given the opportunity to play all of the positions at least once during the season. At this level, most players have a position that they prefer to play. The four basic positions are forward (offender), mid-fielder, defender and goalkeeper.
3. 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.
4. Receiving (or Trapping) the Ball – Choose activities that limit lines and emphasize the players technique when 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.
5. 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!
6. 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 U12 soccer. Tactics are decisions made by players. Players at this level can perform a higher level of tactics in a game, including switching the field, crossing, and splitting defenders. Here are 2 basic things to coach:

1. Kick the ball wide (towards the sideline) when on defense
2. Kick the ball across the front of the goal (center) when attacking

Practice Breakdown U12

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.

U12 Focuses – Defending and Positions, along with Passing, Receiving, Shooting and Dribbling

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

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.