

# Englewood Youth Soccer Association



## Soccer Sprouts Program

# **Coaches Manual**

## **3-4 year-olds**

Thank you for agreeing to be a coach in the EYSA Soccer Sprouts program. As an EYSA coach, you will introduce a group of young people to the game of soccer. We ask you to not only teach your players the basic skills and rules of the game, but also make learning the game a joyful experience for them. You see, we want them to play soccer not only for this season, but also for many years to come, and we want you to have fun teaching soccer because we'd like you to help us again next season.

### **Our Mission**

Englewood Youth Soccer Association will provide emerging soccer players with premier training and competition in a safe, supportive manner while demanding the highest standards of sportsmanship, fair play, and player development.

### **Your Duties as a Coach**

- Teach the skills and tactics of soccer to the best of your ability.
- Help your players learn both the rules of the game and good sportsmanship.
- Help your players to become fit and to value fitness for a lifetime.
- Help young people develop character.
- Ensure the safety of your players.
- Help each child develop a sense of self-worth.
- Make it fun.

## Working with 3-4 Year-Olds

Behaviors of Development	Activities to Promote Development
<p><b>Motor/Physical Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lots of energy</li> <li>• Enjoys running, jumping, galloping, dancing</li> <li>• Enjoys throwing balls, beanbags, etc.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Motor/Physical Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide activities with lots of physical movement such as running, skipping, jumping</li> <li>• Provide activities and games that involve throwing and kicking the ball to a partner, at a cone or goal, or through a hoop</li> </ul>
<p><b>Social/Emotional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parallel play develops into cooperative play</li> <li>• Friendships develop, and many develop a special friend who they seek for play</li> <li>• Shows pride in achievements</li> </ul>	<p><b>Social/Emotional Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperative skills, rules, and games</li> <li>• Opportunities to pair or group with friends</li> <li>• Provide praise</li> </ul>
<p><b>Cognitive Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imaginative</li> <li>• Appreciation for uniqueness and diversity in other children</li> </ul>	<p><b>Cognitive Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can recognize signs and signals</li> <li>• Have children make up their own game (for example, pretend you are a bird while kicking the ball)</li> <li>• Can understand and appreciate each other's individuality</li> </ul>

# **Practice Session Plans**

## **Week One**

### **Warm-Up (5 minutes)**

1. Players free kick or dribble the ball using no more than half of the field. Parents help to keep the ball in range and encourage their child.
2. Players dribble or kick at targets (cones or parents) spread out around half of the field.

### **Fitness Component (5 minutes)**

#### **GENERAL FITNESS**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice. In this first practice your fitness topic will be more general, but in future practices you will often discuss more specific concepts and issues such as safety, flexibility, healthy habits, and more.

1. Gather children about 10 to 15 feet away from a goal or cone.
2. Say “Everyone jump 10 times. Our muscles help us jump. When you use your muscles a long time without getting too tired, it improves your endurance, which means you can run longer without getting tired. Now run really fast to the goal and back.”
3. Wait for them to return.
4. Say “Running strengthens your heart and lungs. Now touch your toes; try to keep your fingers there while I count. Stretching makes you flexible, like a rubber band. When we play soccer, our bodies run, kick, and move. It makes our bodies stronger and improves our fitness, which means we can run and play longer and faster. Having good physical fitness is important for soccer and for being healthy. At every practice we will talk about fitness.”

## Week One cont.

### Skills/Drills (20 minutes)

**Dribbling** –Teach dribbling as a series of “little kicks” meant to control the ball. Discuss which parts of the foot (inside/outside) you use to dribble. Tell players that we don’t kick the ball with the tip of our toe. Model the correct way to use the inside/outside of the foot with small kicks. Have parents stand about 15-20 feet away from their player, and have the players dribbling the ball with the inside of their foot to their parent. Have the players dribble around their parent and back to the starting point. Next have players dribble to their parent with the outside of their foot. Have players dribble around their parent and back to the start.

**Accuracy Game – Bowling for Cones** – Set up 3 cones like bowling alley pins. Place players 10 feet away. Have them kick the ball at the cones seeing how many they can knock down. Have parents ready to reset cones for next player.

**Red Light/Green Light – Freeze Game** – Have all the players stand with balls on the goal line. Have them start to dribble the ball towards center field. When you blow the whistle, they freeze. Make sure all players have control of their ball and stop (help from parent may be necessary). If they lose control, they go back to the goal line.

### Game Play (15 minutes)

**Kicking at Cones** – The players should be placed in a circle, approximately 20 feet wide. Place 6 cones inside the circle in various positions. Give the players three balls and tell them that they must kick the balls and knock the cones down. Parents can assist by returning the balls that get kicked out of the circle. You could time them and try to improve the amount of time to knock down all the cones. This will teach kicking accuracy and receiving a pass.

# **Practice Session Plans**

## **Week Two**

### **Warm-Up (5 minutes)**

1. Have players practice close dribbling. Tell players, "Keep the ball close when you run" as they practice.
2. Tell the players that you will occasionally blow the whistle during practice. When you blow the whistle, they should stop and put a foot on the ball to show they have it under control.
3. Practice blowing the whistle while the players dribble, to have the players stop and control the ball.

### **Fitness Component (5 minutes)**

#### **CARDIO**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

1. Say, "Everyone hold one hand up and make a fist. Squeeze your fist tightly, and then let go. Keep tightening and letting go."
2. Children continue for 10 counts.
3. Say, "Your heart is a special muscle that tightens and relaxes just like your fist is doing. Your heart is about the size of your fist. Let's put our fists over our chests. Every time it tightens, or beats, your heart pumps blood all over."
4. Children continue for 10 counts.
5. Say, "When you run during soccer, your heart beats faster. The heartbeat slows down when you slow down. Let's run with high knees for 15 counts while we count together. Stop and feel your heart beat by putting your hand over your chest."
6. Model for players. Say, "Running strengthens your heart and lungs and improves your fitness."

## **Week Two cont.**

### **Skills/Drills (20 minutes)**

**Kicking/Targets – Egg Hunt** – Players line up on one goal line. Parents each scatter 2-3 balls (eggs) on the field. Release players to get eggs into the opposite goal (basket). Key is to have more balls than kids. When all the balls are in the goal, set it up and do it again.

**Red Light/Green Light – Freeze Game** – Have all the players stand with balls on the goal line. Have parent stand at center field, each holding a hoop on the ground. Have players start to dribble the ball towards their parent. When you blow the whistle, they freeze. Make sure all players have control of their ball and stop. Dribble the ball with small kicks to their parent and kick it through the hoop. Have players keep trying until they all get their balls through the hoop.

### **Game Play (15 minutes)**

#### **Relays/Kicking**

1. Line the players up on the baseline. Have parents stand at center field. When the coach blows the whistle, have players race to their parent and back to the baseline.
2. Line the players up on the baseline again. This time, each player must have a ball. Have parents stand at center field. When the coach blows the whistle, have players race while dribbling their ball to their parent. Wait until all players have reached their parent. Blow the whistle again and have players race while dribbling back to the baseline.
3. Now organize players in two single file lines. Place 4 cones in a line directly in front of them. Cones should be approximately 10' apart. The first player in each line should attempt to dribble the ball around the cones and dribble back to the line. Parents should help keep the ball near the players.
4. After each player has had a turn, start a relay against each other. Large team practices can use three or four lines. Try to maximize the amount of time the players will touch the ball.

# Practice Session Plans

## Week Three

### Warm-Up (5 minutes)

#### **Soccer Shapes**

Make sure each player has a ball. Using different parts of the body (foot, elbow, head, etc.) players make shapes with the ball as ordered by the coach. (i.e. “using your right foot on the ball, make a circle”).

### Fitness Component (5 minutes)

#### **MUSCLE STRENGTH/ENDURANCE**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

1. Say, "Everyone find your own space, so you don't bump your neighbor. You are going to run in your own spot for 30 seconds, then stop. Ready? Go!"
2. Time children and verbally count down from 30 to let them know the time remaining. Stop them at the end of the time.
3. Say, "What part of the body did we just use the most when we ran?"
4. Encourage their responses.
5. Say, "When we play soccer, which part of your body do you use the most?"
6. Wait for their responses.
7. Say, "Muscles in our body help us move our legs. Playing soccer will help our leg muscles get stronger and grow bigger."

### Skills/Drills (20 minutes)

#### **DRIBBLING**

The first skill needed to play soccer is dribbling, which is moving and controlling the ball using only the feet. Players can use dribbling to move the ball down the field for a pass or shot, to keep the ball from the opposing team, or to change direction.



## Week Three cont.

### **DRIBBLING CONT.**

Players must be able to use both the insides and outsides of their feet to dribble. To dribble with the inside of the foot, the player turns the foot out, then pushes the ball forward while moving. To dribble with the outside of the foot, the player must turn the foot in, then push the ball slightly forward or to the side.

Players may have trouble dribbling at first. Have them start by walking and dribbling. Once they can do that, ask them to speed up their dribbling pace. Insist that they look up as they dribble and not down at the ball. If they always look down, they are likely to have the ball stolen by an opponent or may not see a teammate who is open for a pass. Encourage players to use either foot to dribble--this will make it easier for them to protect the ball from opponents. Have parents retrieve the ball if it gets away from the player.

As your players improve, have them dribble against an opponent, like a parent. Being marked (guarded) by a defender will require them to vary their speed, change direction and shield the ball. Have them prepare for defensive pressure by practicing speeding up and slowing down as they dribble and by dribbling around obstacles or cones.

### **Here are some keys to dribbling:**

- Push the ball softly in the desired direction if you are dribbling close to defenders.
- Look up and watch for other players.
- Keep the ball close to your feet. If it is too far ahead, other players can steal it.
- Shield the ball from opponents.
- Run at a speed at which you can control the ball.
- If you are dribbling fast, push the ball out several feet ahead and sprint to the ball.

## **Week Three cont.**

### **DRIBBLING CONT.**

#### **Error**

Letting the ball get away from the player while dribbling.

#### **Correction**

- Keep the ball underneath the body, close to the feet.
- Nudge the ball gently in different directions, never letting it get more than a stride's length away.
- Determine whether the grass or ball require adjustments. A highly inflated ball or extremely short grass will cause the ball to roll faster and farther.

Conduct relays with two sets of lines. Players must dribble the ball around parents or cones.

### **Game Play (15 minutes)**

#### **Relays/Scrimmage**

Set up four goals using cones. Goals should be approximately 8 feet wide. Pair up the players. Ask parents to be goalies. Players will try to score against the parents. They should be encouraged to pass to each other before trying to score. After approximately 30 seconds they should rotate to another goal and repeat. Keep track of how many goals they score.

# Practice Session Plans

## Week Four

### Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Break groups into 3 or 4 players. Have them pass the ball around the group with either foot.

### Fitness Component (5 minutes)

#### **SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

1. Bring a small piece of cardboard or a clipboard that can be used as a shield. Get one child to demonstrate. Provide a ball and have the child kick the ball at you at a medium effort.
2. Say, "Watch where the ball goes when Julia kicks it."
3. Allow the ball to hit your legs. Then put the board in front of you, between you and the child kicking. Have the child kick again.
4. Say, "Now watch where the ball goes. This board is just like a shin guard that we wear on our legs. Wearing shin guards protects our legs just like the board protected my legs from the ball."
5. Give each player a turn kicking the ball.
6. Say, "Can you think of other ways to be safe that you should remember to do when you play soccer?"

### Skills/Drills (20 minutes)

#### **PASSING**

Passing is another essential skill, as it allows the team to maintain possession of the ball and create scoring opportunities. Passes should be short and crisp; an opposing player is likely to steal long or slow passes. However, players should avoid using passes that are too hard and difficult to control. When passing under pressure, the player should pass, then move into space quickly.

## Week Four cont.

### **PASSING CONT.**

Players should kick short passes with the inside of the foot. Here is the correct technique for short passes:

- Plant the non-kicking foot alongside and near the ball.
- Square up the hips and shoulders to the teammate (parent) for whom you intend the pass, and turn out the kicking foot.
- Swing the kicking foot straight at the center of the ball.
- Follow through by swinging the kicking leg well beyond the point of impact with the ball, in the direction of the teammate (parent) to whom you are passing the ball.

Sometimes a game situation will call for a player to make a long pass to a teammate across the field. The best way to make a long pass is to loft the ball through the air using the top of the foot. This is the correct technique for lofting passes:

- Plant the non-kicking foot slightly behind and to the side of the ball.
- Point the toes of the kicking foot down and kick the ball with the shoelace area. Kick under the ball.
- Watch the kicking foot contact the bottom half of the ball and lift it off the ground.

Players should learn to use the outside of the foot to pass to the side, but this technique may be uncomfortable and difficult for them to perform. They also may have difficulty passing with the top of the foot or shoelace area (also called a power pass), as they tend to use their toes instead. Because of these problems, you may want to have young players master the short passes before they learn these other types of passes.

## Week Four cont.

### **PASSING CONT.**

#### **Error Detection and Correction for Passing**

##### **Error**

- Lack of accuracy

##### **Correction**

- Plant the non-kicking foot beside the ball with the toes pointed toward the teammate who will receive the pass.
- Square your shoulders and hips to the receiver.
- Keep the kicking foot firm throughout the kicking motion.
- Follow through with the kicking foot.

##### **Skill Practice**

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to move to support a teammate with the ball.
- Practice moving to support a teammate with the ball.

##### **Description**

**Pair with a Parent**--Tell players and their parent to practice getting the ball from one end of the field to the other without running with the ball. Ask, "How do you do it?" They should answer "Pass and move forward." After they practice passing the ball and score at the other end, they come back.

##### **Game Play (15 minutes)**

##### **Small-Sided Scrimmage**

Set up four goals, similar to the previous week. However, instead of parent goalies, this will be a 2 on 2 scrimmage. Parents need to assist. 2 players will play defense and 2 players will play offense. After several minutes of play, they should switch from offense to defense.

# Practice Session Plans

## Week Five

### Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Break groups into 3 or 4 players. Have them pass the ball around the group with either foot.

### Fitness Component (5 minutes)

#### **HEALTHY HABITS**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

1. Say, "When your body doesn't eat healthy foods and get enough sleep, it moves slowly. Let's pretend we have no energy to move because we didn't eat enough healthy foods or get enough sleep."
2. Begin to move slowly and encourage children to follow. Move extremely slowly.
3. Say, "Everyone stop. Now I am going to fill your bodies up with healthy foods."
4. Act out giving them foods.
5. Say, "Pretend we're sleeping. When I say 'Wake up!' you can move faster because you have enough energy and enough rest. Wake up and move faster. Stop! What are some other healthy habits you have learned?" Examples: daily exercise, brushing teeth, eat all your grow food, etc.

### Skills/Drills (20 minutes)

#### **PASSING/RECEIVING**

Have players partner up with their parent, one ball per pair.

First have them pass the ball back and forth while standing about 3 yards apart. They will look hopeless.

## Week Five cont.

### **PASSING/RECEIVING CONT.**

Stop them and ask what part of foot to use for short accurate passes on the ground (Answer is inside of foot, show them what you mean; that part of the foot between the heel and ball of foot.) Have them resume. Point out that a pass is no good if it can't be received by their teammate. Ask what that means (Answer on ground, within reach, not too hard, not too soft, when it is expected, for example it does no good to pass to a teammate's back, or to one picking dandelions.)

Stop them and ask them how to receive the ball (Answer: cushion the ball so it slows and is left in front of you so you can step forward to pass it. Don't let them stop the ball under their foot, or so close that the ball is stuck between their feet and must be moved before it can be kicked. Tell them the ball should be keep moving. Now you will also have to tell them to back up after they pass the ball or else they will end up too close together.

In soccer, receiving and controlling a passed ball is called receiving. A player can receive the ball with just about any part of the body--the foot, the thigh, or the chest. Here are some key components in receiving:

- Get in front of the ball.
- Watch the ball.
- Cushion the ball.
- Keep the ball near the body.

At this level, you will be teaching players how to receive with the foot, the thigh, and the chest. To receive the ball on or near the ground with the foot, the player should stand in front of the ball and extend a leg and foot out to meet it. After the ball reaches the player's foot, he or she should pull the leg back to slow the ball and relax the foot when the

## **Week Five cont.**

### **PASSING/RECEIVING CONT.**

ball makes contact. This technique is called cushioning the ball. If a player does not cushion the ball, it will bounce away from the foot and the player will lose control. It will bounce away from the foot and the player will lose control. Receiving with the inside of the foot provides the most surface area and is best for inexperienced players. Eventually, players should learn how to receive with the outside and top of both feet. Note that players receiving with the top of the foot should also use the lower shin and front part of the ankle to cushion the ball.

### **Error Detection and Correction for Receiving With the Foot**

**Error:** Losing control of the ball off the foot.

**Correction:**

- Contact the bottom and side of the ball with the inside of the foot--midway between the heel and toes.
- Cushion the impact of the ball by dropping the foot as the ball contacts it.

A game to play is to give the parents balls and tell the players to take the ball away and try to keep control of it. Players with a ball after 1 minute win. Repeat 2 or 3 times.

### **Game Play (15 minutes)**

#### **3 ON 3 KEEP AWAY**

When doing 3vs3, consider using a neutral player or parent to help the team with the ball. Again, reinforce the need to move to get open. Point out what happens if you hold the ball too long before passing (you get ganged up on). Keep such observations very brief and generally make them in the form of a question (to which you will likely get lots of wrong answers, just say "no, that's not what I'm looking for" or "that's it!" when you get the right answer). Have the neutral player/parent ask the players to get open whenever there is no good



## Week Five cont.

### **GAME PLAY CONT.**

target. The neutral player/parent needs to move to be a good receiving position all the time. Tell the players with the ball to make the longest pass they are capable of to a teammate who is open. (Not the longest kick, but the longest pass to the teammate farthest away from the other team's players; same comments about passes as before, within reach, on ground, not too hard, not too soft).

# Practice Session Plans

## Week Six

### Warm-Up (5 minutes)

Play a shorter version of 3-on-3 keep away. See week 5 game/play.

### Fitness Component (5 minutes)

#### **FLEXIBILITY**

Following the warm-up, gather your players and parents and briefly discuss the fitness concept for that practice.

1. Bring a rubber band to use as a prop.
2. Say, "This rubber band is like our muscles. When I pull it, it stretches; when I let go, it pulls back to its original shape."
3. Demonstrate with the rubber band, stretching it out and back, using a gentle, slow action.
4. Say, "Your muscles work the same way. When you reach and stretch, your muscles are stretching just like the rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the ground with your arms slowly, and then bring your arms back up."
5. Have children repeat three times.
6. Say, "Your leg muscles need to stretch because you use them the most in soccer; stretching makes your leg muscles more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good."

### Skills/Drills (15 minutes)

#### **KICKING TARGETS**

**Egg Hunt** – Players line up on one goal line. Parents each scatter 2-3 balls (eggs) on the field. Release players to get eggs into the opposite goal (basket). Key is to have more balls than kids. When all the balls are in the goal, set it up and do it again.

## **Week Six cont.**

### **SKILLS/DRILLS CONT.**

**Red Light/Green Light – Freeze Game** – Have all the players stand with balls on the goal line. Have parent stand at center field, each holding a hoop on the ground. Have players start to dribble the ball towards their parent. When you blow the whistle, they freeze. Make sure all players have control of their ball and stop. Dribble the ball with small kicks to their parent and kick it through the hoop. Have players keep trying until they all get their balls through the hoop.

### **Game Play (15 minutes)**

#### **SCRIMMAGE**

All the players should be divided in to four teams. Set-up two goals with cones. With two teams at each goal, one team should be defense and one team should be offense. No goalie. Players should try to score on the “half-court” field. After several minutes, teams should switch from offense to defense. Acknowledge teams that use the offense positions and good passing.

End the session with the players scrimmaging the parents. Kids should win.

### **Certificate Presentations (5-10 minutes)**

Pass out certificates and thank the parents and players for a great six-week program.