



Objective: The objective for all coaches and administrators in the GUSA Recreation Program is to provide an opportunity for players to enjoy the game while learning in a safe environment that promotes fun, sportsmanship, and growth in the game.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U4: Plant the Seed: The root of soccer is based solely on movement education, with the ball. Balance, coordination, and movements with a ball at their feet is the main focus at this stage. Activities should be FUN and focused on developing motor skills while incorporating a ball. If they can control their body, they can control the ball.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U5: Direction: Players should become oriented on the goal they are attacking and the goal they are defending. Changing the direction of the ball as it heads towards their own goal is difficult for many at this stage. Adhering to the concept of boundaries of the field is challenging at this age. Skill Intro: Many players will be playing for the first time and have never dribbled, passed, or shot. An emphasis on dribbling and becoming comfortable with the ball at the player's feet should be emphasized.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U6: Skill Intro: While reinforcing and continued introduction of dribbling techniques is paramount, the idea of passing and shooting should be introduced. Decisions: Players should be encouraged to make a decision regarding whether to dribble or shoot the ball based on where they are on the field. Players should be encouraged in games to make any decision other than 'just kicking it'.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U7: Directional Decision Making: In this age group, the game has 2 goals to attack, and 2 to defend. Players should be encouraged to get their head up when asking for the ball and make a decision regarding which goal to attack. Recognition of Space: The U7 field is much wider than the field at U6. "Opening Up" and "Spreading Out" while the player's team is in possession of the ball should be a point of emphasis.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U8: Playing with Goalkeepers: Goalkeepers and a larger goal are introduced at U8. Incorporating goalkeepers in drills during practices should be a regular occurrence.

Age Group Specific Coaching Points U9 and Above: Playing 'Real' Soccer: As more players are added and the field gets bigger, coaching points from the younger ages are still very

important. The majority of practice time should still be spent developing skills. Players should also get time in each session to play free of instruction allowing them to enjoy the game on their own terms.

Game Day Management

Pre-game

- Coaches arrive 30 minutes prior to kickoff (when possible)
- **Have conversation with opposing coach regarding best possible matchups** (stronger lineups vs stronger lineups; weaker lineups vs weaker lineups, etc.)
- 10-20 minutes of actual warm-up [10 minutes for U-4-5, 15 minutes for U6-8, 20 minutes for U-9+]
- Introduce dynamic stretching to promote good habits
- Starting line-up
- Team huddle
- Final instruction/reminders – cheer!

Game

- Start game, sit down and enjoy the game
- Finding a balance between over-coaching and silent “non-existent” coach
- Be sure all players get equal playing time
- Be sure players get to play in different positions
- U7 and above, in the event of an unbalanced game/blow-out, look for different ideas to even out the game, examples are:
 - Make adjustments to team (play key players in different positions)
 - Set a passing number before going to goal
 - Put a touch restriction (i.e. No more than 3-4 touches with the ball)
 - Everyone must touch the ball before scoring
 - Score with weaker foot
 - Communicate to rec@greensborounited.org that game was mismatched

Halftime

- Relax and hydrate
- Get on their level; be sure all players are looking at the coach (no distractions behind the coach– including the sun).
- Be sure that information is positive, emotions are under control and voice is at a controlled level.
Sandwich approach of information: (+ - +) positive-improvement-positive

- U-6/U-9 – simple information, if anything at all
U-10+ – simple to complex (general to specific) with information, address basic principles rather than specific mistakes
- Limit the amount of time speaking to your team (think about age of players and how long they can listen to the information)
Substitutions

Post-game

- Shake hands (Coach must be a good role model by shaking the hands of referees, opposing coach and players)
- Stay positive regardless of the match outcome
- Snacks/drinks
- Reminder about next training session
- Be very brief after game and save discussions for the next training session
Occasionally address the parents in a post-game discussion

Links

- http://www.washingtonyouthsoccer.org/coaches/coaching_tools/age_appropriate_training_sessions/
- <http://www.ncsoccer.org/lessonstraining>
- <http://www.coachingsoccer101.com/drills.htm>
- <http://www.freeyouthsoccerdrills.com/free-soccer-drills.html>