

# Practice Plan Manual



A Complete Practice Manual  
for the Beginner to  
Advanced Coach  
U8

# U-8

## ***Introduction***

The goals of this group are now starting to build on the framework which has been laid out. Since there is a familiarity with the ball while dribbling at this point, movement, controlling and stopping the ball is now implemented into the mix. This allows the athlete more freedom while in possession of the ball. When focusing on passing and shooting, the laces and movement are now being employed. The ability to control the ball, keep it close and have a good first touch are now habitual. Therefore, receiving with the inside and outside of the foot, as well as juggling, are now added to start work on the necessary foot skills. Finally, tactics of the game should be introduced within this period, focusing on positions on the field, offensive and defensive strategies.

## ***Characteristics***

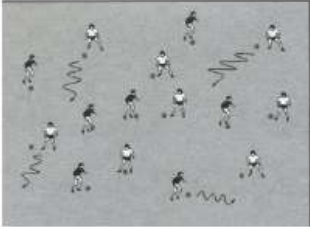
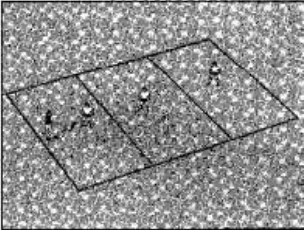
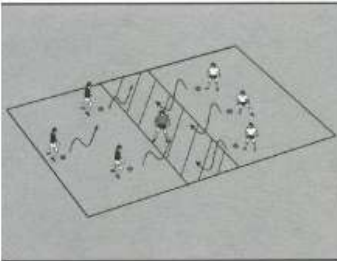
- Coordination improvements, with some imbalances still
- Like to move
- Improved Attention span, however still short-lived
- More compliant with the coach
- Work well in small groups
- More independent, requires less individual attention
- Enjoys tumbling, running and jumping activities
- Sensitive to criticism
- Improved co-ordination
- Learning how to solve problems independently
- Reacts positively to success and the approval that accompanies it

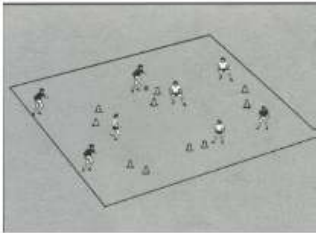
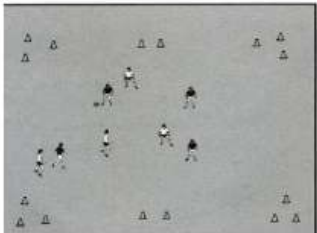
"Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great."  
-Mark Twain



# Practice Plan

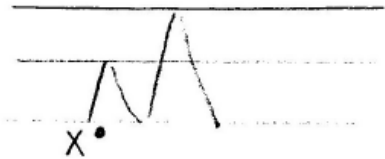
Age Group: U-8	Theme: Dribbling
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Activity	Coaching Points
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up)</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>16 players dribble around area with ball</li> <li>Upon command players: use right foot only, use left foot only, use inside of both feet, use outside of both feet, combine all the above</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep head up</li> <li>Maintain close control of ball</li> </ul>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity</b> Gladiator Challenge (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split the area into 3 areas</li> <li>Place a defender in each area</li> <li>Every player attempts to dribble through each area without being tackled</li> <li>Defenders must hop</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dribbler changes direction by using the inside and outside of the foot</li> <li>Bend legs to move from side to side quicker</li> <li>Keep the ball close while moving</li> </ul>
<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Activity</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Players are organized with a ball each. Players are instructed to dribble within their designated area. On the coaches command players switch areas by travelling across the empty zone.</li> <li>A defender is placed in the empty zone who attempts to kick balls away as they cross the zone</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the ball moving</li> <li>Change zones by moving quick into space</li> <li>Accelerate into space</li> <li>Attack free space</li> </ul>

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Dribbling
<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Players are separated into two teams. Score by dribbling through the goals</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out to create space</li> <li>Speed up to attack space available</li> <li>Slow down when close to goal to ensure a 'score'</li> </ul>
<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game)</b> (20mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dark's vs. White's</li> <li>Players can either score in the goal for 1 point or dribble and stop the ball in the corner for 2 points</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When to dribble when to pass</li> <li>Attack space</li> <li>Change of pace</li> <li>More points awarded for successfully stopping ball in corner areas</li> </ul>

# Practice Plan

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Dribbling
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Activity	Coaching Points
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) (10mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have players line up on the end line with a ball</li> <li>All players begin dribbling across the field while the coaches back is towards them</li> <li>The instant coach turns around, all players must have the ball stopped under their foot or they are out</li> <li>First player to reach the coach without being caught wins</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short touches with the ball to stay in control</li> <li>Control of the ball while moving at a slow pace</li> <li>Keep the ball close to be able to stop quickly</li> </ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All players should be inside the 18 yard box with a ball</li> <li>Have 2 people who are "it" who are trying to steal your ball away by kicking it out of the box</li> <li>The only way to avoid being tagged is to stop the ball under your foot</li> <li>They cannot kick the ball from under your foot</li> <li>Player may only hold ball stopped under foot for 3 seconds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep the ball close to your feet</li> <li>Keep your head up to see opponents</li> <li>Stopping the ball under your foot</li> <li>Movement</li> </ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Activity Suicides (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start at the touch line with the ball</li> <li>Have cones set up about every 10 yards</li> <li>Have players run to the first line, turn around and run back to touch the line, then turn and run to the second line and turn and run back, etc.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure players are keeping the ball close while they are running</li> <li>When preparing for the turn ball should be under the body</li> </ul>

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Dribbling
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<b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity</b> <i>(15mins)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming familiar with other techniques of dribbling</li> <li>• Try to ensure comfort while learning techniques</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All players should have a ball starting on the end line</li> <li>• All players begin to dribble normally</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is to dribble sideways rolling the ball under your foot (first right, then left)</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> phase is to dribble running backwards as to pull the ball using both feet</li> </ul>	
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game)</b> <i>(15mins)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The ball must be stopped under their foot</li> <li>▪ Short, small dribbles are easiest to control</li> <li>▪ Keep the ball close while moving with pace</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up two nets</li> <li>• Teams must work the ball up the field by dribbling and passing to their teammates</li> <li>• In order to score, a player must dribble the ball through the net and stop the ball under their foot</li> </ul>	

# Practice Plan

Age Group: U-8

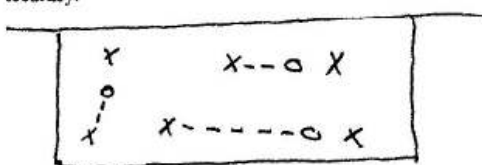
Theme: Passing / Shooting

## Activity

## Coaching Points

### 1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) (10mins)

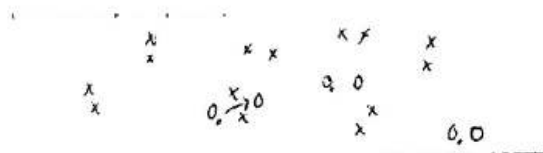
- Get the players into the 18-yard box. Give them a random amount of balls and get them to pass the balls around the box to one another. They must ask their teammate their name before passing.
- They can go outside of the 18-yard box only after they have passed to every teammate at least once.
- The players will pick one partner, will probably be the last person they pass to in the 18-yard box, (odd numbers can group into three's) and then have them jog around the field passing the ball.
- Stretch! .....



You will need a few soccer balls, depending on the number of players you have. Make sure the kids are moving at all times. Keep them saying names – learning new names and leaving no one out. Be sure to use this time to demonstrate the proper technique for passing such as where to contact the ball and how to get the most accuracy.

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Activity (15mins)

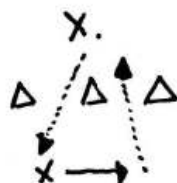
- Set up goals around an area. The cones need to be one yard apart
- Split players into pairs
- Object of game is to pass through the goals with your partner. Try to get as many "goals" as you can in a specific time limit



- Helps improve passing accuracy and passing during movement
- Players must keep their head up
- Encourage communication

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Activity (15mins)

- Players pair up with 3 cones
- Lay out cones between the players
- Players pass the ball between the cones
- Attempt to not hit the cones

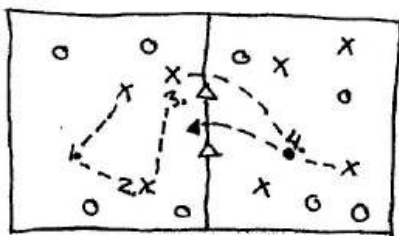


- Accuracy of passes
- Movement after receive pass
- Good first touch to position yourself for pass
- Ball kept on the ground

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Passing / Shooting
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#### 4<sup>th</sup> Activity (20mins)

- Split the players into two teams.
- Outline a mini field and emphasize the center line. In the middle of the center line, put 2 pylons about 1 to 2 feet apart. This is the goal.
- The players have equal number of team members on both sides on the field. This means that there are players from both teams on each side, but they must stay on their own side.
- The ball starts on one side and the players try and get 3 consecutive passes before passing across the center line to one of their team mates on the other side who then tries to shoot. Once a team has scored, the other team gets the ball.



For this, you will need multiple pylons to outline the field and net. Try and get pylons that are a different color for the net if you can. Play it just like a real game so that the emphasis will be on accuracy and control. Be sure to demonstrate so that they will have a clear understanding and point out errors as the game progresses.

#### 5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) (20mins)

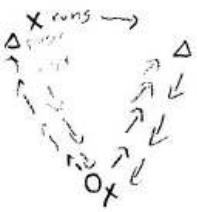
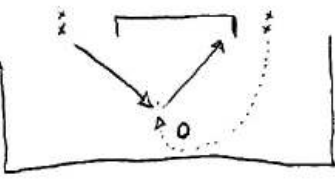
- Split players into two teams. One team has pinnies, others shirts
- Set up field like normal, but instead of goals, there are pylons
- Object of the game is to pass the ball and hit a pylon. The defending team cannot stand within 3 yards of the pylon
- To get more people involved, add more soccer balls

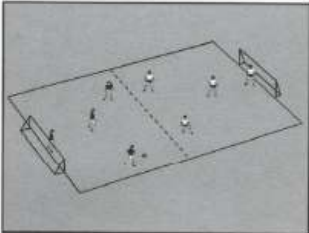
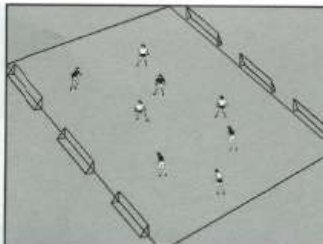


- Continue progressing from previous skills
- Proper technique in passing, accuracy, passing with defensive pressure
- With more soccer balls, increase attention level of players

# Practice Plan

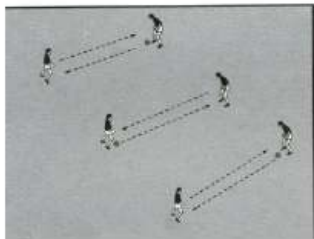
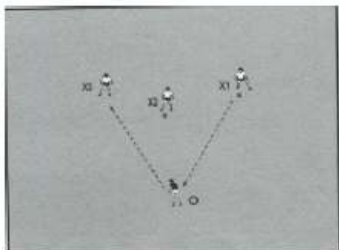
Age Group: U-8	Theme: Passing / Shooting
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Activity	Coaching Points
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) Duck, Duck, Goose (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drill is used to practice communication.</li> <li>Player will go around the circle saying everyone's name and when you get to someone you don't know, that person will be the goose and you will run against</li> <li>Instead of sitting all players will be in a circle practicing quick feet (tapping on top of the ball – stationary)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help players learn names</li> <li>Keeps players moving and involved</li> <li>Practices limited ball skills</li> </ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split into partners, and get 2 cones per partnership</li> <li>One partner will be stationary and the other partner at the cone will be receiving the passes.</li> <li>To move between the cones the player must shuffle step rather than just sprinting in between.</li> <li>Passer plays the ball to the cone, receives it then plays it to the other cone</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage movement in passing rather than stationary</li> <li>Keep your head up</li> <li>On your toes</li> </ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 lines will line up on both sides of the net</li> <li>One line will distribute the pass to the top of the box</li> <li>The player receiving will run around the cone to receive the pass and shoot on net</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be ready to receive the pass</li> <li>Strong, accurate passes</li> <li>Good first touch and powerful shot with the laces</li> </ul>

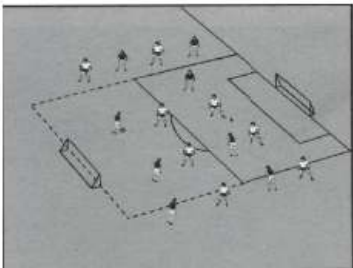
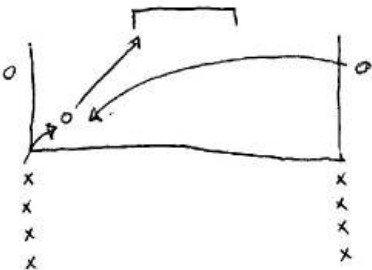
Age Group: U-8	Theme: Passing / Shooting
<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In groups of 8 players are organized into 4 vs 4 in opposite halves</li> <li>• Players shoot as soon as possible when in possession</li> <li>• Cannot enter opponents side of half</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non kicking foot slightly behind ball</li> <li>• Arms out at balance</li> <li>• Pass to create gaps between defenders on opposing side</li> <li>• Accurate shots with laces</li> <li>• Communication</li> </ul>
<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game)</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dark's vs. White's</li> <li>• 3 goals to score at each end</li> <li>• 2 points for the middle, 1 either side</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shoot when ever possible</li> <li>▪ Laces / side foot</li> <li>▪ Accuracy / Power</li> </ul>

# Practice Plan

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Receiving / Control
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Activity	Coaching Points
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) (10mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Groups of 2-3 with a ball</li> <li>Spread out on field</li> <li>Start by dropping ball to feet and kicking it back up to your hands (this gives you the feel for how your foot should be placed when the ball hits it from the air)</li> <li>Add knees, chest, and head</li> <li>See how many times you can juggle with one bounce between each touch</li> <li>Add a partner and see how many times you can juggle between each other before the ball hits the ground</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using your foot to keep the ball in control and in front of you</li> <li>Contact point on foot</li> <li>Take your time to ensure proper control and to avoid frustration</li> </ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in pairs</li> <li>Side foot to partner standing opposite</li> <li>Pass the ball to each other using the inside of the foot</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do not let it hit the shin guards</li> <li>Make the 'controlling' partner move from side to side</li> <li>Go meet the ball (don't wait for it)</li> <li>Arms out for balance &amp; stay on toes for quick movement</li> </ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 balls between 4. X1 &amp; X2 with balls</li> <li>X1 passes the ball to O</li> <li>O has to control and pass back to X without ball (X3)</li> <li>Variations of service: ball rolled, passed, thrown under arm</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ready to receive ball</li> <li>Receive and pass in 1 movement</li> <li>2 seconds to receive and pass</li> </ul>

Age Group: U-8	Theme: Receiving / Control
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<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In groups of 8, organize players into 2 middle / 2 outside</li> <li>Dark's must keep possession by passing to any outside player</li> <li>To score, players in the middle pass to own 'outside' players</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Control ball away from opposition</li> <li>Relax surface area on impact</li> <li>Attempt ½ turn position throughout</li> </ul>
<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game)</b> (15mins)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get into four lines (2 at the top of the 18 yard box and 2 on either side of the 18 yard box)</li> <li>Kick the balls from the sides of the box into the player running in from the opposite line at the top of the box</li> <li>Player tries to receive the ball with body, and have it drop in front to set up for a shot on goal</li> <li>If necessary, coach with a strong kick can do the passing while players focus on trapping</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Anticipate ball placement so you can be under and square to the ball</li> <li>Control down to your feet</li> <li>Cushion the ball</li> </ul>

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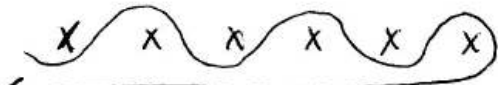
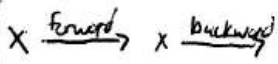
Age Group: U-6

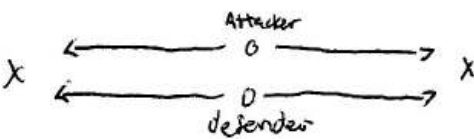
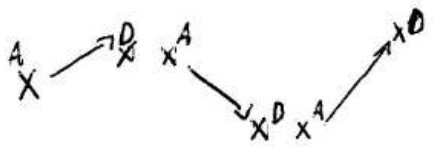
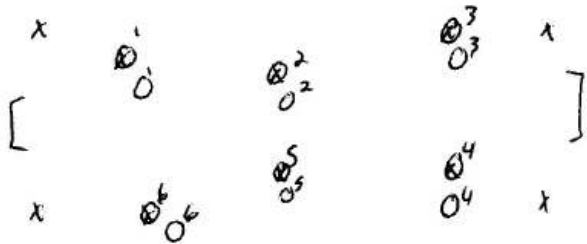
Theme: Defending

Total Time: 1 hour 5 min

## Activity

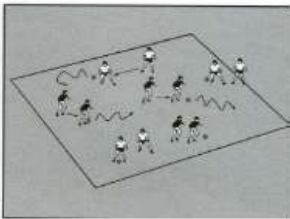

## Coaching Points

<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up)</b> <i>Name: Relays(15mins)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up 6 cones</li> <li>- Have the kids shuffle forward through the cones</li> <li>- Once they reach the end, come back running backwards, alongside of the cones</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Stretch- lead the team through various stretches both upper and lower body.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Help the kids warm up</li> <li>▪ Also helps the kids familiarize themselves with proper footwork on shuffling</li> <li>▪ Help the kids familiarize themselves with running backwards</li> <li>▪ They need to stay low to the ground to be more stable.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity</b> <i>Name: Jockeying (10mins)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have the kids get into pairs</li> <li>- One of the partners stands on the sideline while the other stands in front, facing each other, so that one of the partners has their back to the field.</li> <li>- The kids begin to run, however the object is that the partner with his back to the field jockeys with their partner.</li> <li>- The partner running forward does run past</li> <li>- Partners switch roles at the other side line</li> <li>- Progression: Add a ball to the person running forward</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Again, help the kids familiarize themselves with running backwards, only this time to jockey with a defender</li> <li>▪ It is very important to stay low to the ground</li> <li>▪ It is very important to shuffle properly so that you are never square to the attacker.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3rd Activity</b> <i>Name: Fred's Side Shuffle (10mins)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pair up and between each pair put 2 cones 5 m apart.</li> <li>- One attack, one defend (player)</li> <li>- Attack will try to lose the defender by shuffling side to side</li> <li>- Attacker attempts to get to any of the 2 pylons, while the defender attempts to follow movements of the attacker</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Help the defenders learn to watch the movements of the player and get out of habits of ball watching</li> <li>▪ Learn side to side jockeying, without lounging at the ball</li> <li>▪ Staying low and stable</li> </ul>

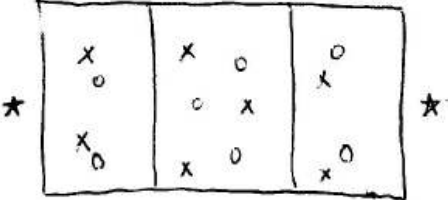
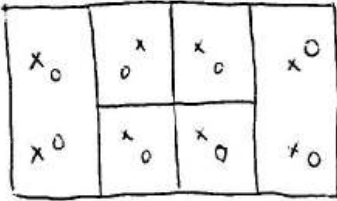
<p>- Progression: Add a ball for the attacker</p> 	
<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity</b> Name: <i>One vs. One (10mins)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Have the kids get into pairs and set up lines 20 m apart from each other</li> <li>- One attacks with the ball and the other defends</li> <li>- The attacker objective is to go to the other line</li> <li>- Attackers go forward, side to side but don't beat the defender</li> <li>- Progression: Attacker tries to beat the defender</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ First the defender learns to dummy defend (without a ball) both focusing on backwards shuffling and side to side following the attacker, not the ball</li> <li>▪ Build confidence in jockeying and staying with an opponent</li> <li>▪ With progression to continue jockeying and have composure to not lounge at ball.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game)</b> Name: <i>Modified Game (15mins)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Split teams into 2 groups</li> <li>- Each player picks a partner on opposing team</li> <li>- You must only defend that player and not tackle any others</li> <li>- Play full field game</li> </ul>  <p>o Cool Down (5 mins): Have the kids pick up all the cones and other equipment as a jog.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This works on all learned defending (jockeying) techniques in a game situation</li> <li>▪ Focus on man marking and not chasing the ball</li> <li>▪ Also helps familiarize attackers losing the defender</li> </ul>

# Practice Plan

Age Group: U-8	Theme: General Tactics
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Activity	Coaching Points
<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) (10mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show everyone where the positions are on the field</li> <li>• Yell out positions (ex. Striker) and have the players run to each position, sit down and stretch while you explain role of the position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting a feel for positions on field</li> <li>• Staying in correct positions</li> <li>• Roles of each position</li> </ul>
<p><b>2<sup>nd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players have a ball between two</li> <li>• The player with the ball dribbles around area</li> <li>• The partner shadows the dribbler</li> <li>• Change roles</li> </ul>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The partner attempts to steal the ball from dribbler</li> <li>• Dribbler attempts to create space to turn on the defender</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bend your knees to help change direction</li> <li>▪ Stay close to your partner</li> </ul>
<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Activity (15mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use mini soccer field</li> <li>• All players start on goal line, each player given a number</li> <li>• Coach calls out number... ex "three"... and rolls the ball into play</li> <li>• Two opposing number 'three' players leave the goal line immediately and compete for possession of ball</li> <li>• Coach keeps the balls by him and rolls another into play if one is kicked out</li> <li>• Duration is 20 seconds</li> <li>• Calling 2 numbers or 3 creates 2 vs. 2, 3 vs. 3, etc.</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Encourage attackers to take on opponents</li> <li>▪ Last defender should never try to take on opposing player</li> <li>▪ Defenders should stay on feet to jockey rather than diving in</li> <li>▪ Defenders run back even when beaten</li> <li>▪ Defender nearest to ball close down space while others show support</li> </ul>

Age Group: U-8	Theme: General Tactics
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<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Activity (15mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split field into 3 sections</li> <li>The 2 end sections contain 2 players from each team and the middle section contains 3 players from each team</li> <li>Coaches stand one at each end</li> <li>The objective is for the players to move the ball through each section of the grid beginning with defenders, to midfielders, to strikers and then to coach</li> <li>Players cannot leave their respective areas</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that players are maintaining proper positioning</li> <li>General tactic to move the ball from the back, through the midfielders, then to the strikers</li> <li>Defenders should always be goal side of the attackers</li> </ul>
<p><b>5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) (15mins)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Split field (40 x 40 yards) into grids as shown in diagram below</li> <li>Game situation: 2 defenders and 2 attackers from each team are assigned to end zones, middle four zones contain one player from each team.</li> <li>Players cannot leave their grid</li> <li>Creates 1 vs. 1 attacking and defending and 2 vs. 2 attacking and defending</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Maintains proper positioning</li> <li>Movement in respective area to create space to receive pass from team mates</li> <li>Emphasize strong defensive battles among players</li> </ul>

# U-8

## ***Conclusion***

New found abilities make this age group very exciting to coach. Learning the complexities of the game is gradually being introduced to this group. When moving to the Under 10 group, the U8 athletes should have the basic skills outlined including, control, movement and stopping while dribbling, the use of laces, movement and communication when passing and shooting; receiving and controlling the ball with the inside and outside of the foot as well as the basics needed for juggling and finally general tactics of the game.

When moving to the next group we now are employing personal and team strategies. Turning, fakes and one on ones will be demonstrated in dribbling, offensive skills such as 2 on 1's, crossing and switching the field introduced, receiving the ball with parts of the body other than the foot, as well as volleying. Finally, give and go's, overlaps and strategies for keeping possession will be established.



## KIDS AND HYDRATION: *Selecting Beverages for Active Kids*



When your child opens the refrigerator door or surveys the supermarket shelf to grab a drink to tote to soccer practice or for an afternoon of rollerblading or biking, what choices does he/she have?

The beverages that parents put in the fridge matter, especially when rehydrating active children. By the time most active children become thirsty, they have lost important fluids and electrolytes (sodium and potassium), and may already be dehydrated. So it's important to think about the most suitable beverages for active children before they drink.

### **How Much Do You Know About H<sub>2</sub>O?**

Water is an OK beverage, especially when nothing else is available. However, water has its limitations. It does not provide energy, which may be needed if a child is running and playing all day. Children will also stop drinking water before their fluid needs are met. Often this is because water lacks the taste appeal of a lightly flavoured beverage. If given a choice, kids will drink much more of a flavoured beverage than of a glass of water. As a result, recent studies have shown that if given water, kids may not drink enough to prevent dehydration.

### **Know The Score About Sports Drinks**

A properly formulated sports drink is a good choice for active children – whether it's for big brother after a soccer game or for little sister after playing in the yard all day – because it supplies energy and electrolytes that encourage them to drink by "turning on" their thirst. Recently published research by Oded Bar-Or, M.D., a Professor of Pediatrics at McMaster University, indicates that during exercise, children stayed better hydrated when they drank a sports drink compared to drinking plain or flavoured water.

The reason: children voluntarily drank more of the sports drink, which contained carbohydrate and sodium. Ruth Carey, R.D., sports nutritionist and youth soccer coach, adds, "I've spent a lot of time on the sidelines of soccer games and parents, knowing my sports nutrition background, often ask my opinion on what kids should drink before, during and after activity. I tell them water is fine, but that I prefer to give my kids a flavoured sports drink like Gatorade because they drink more and stay better hydrated."

Somewhat surprising, sports drinks only contain half the sugar and calories of many other beverage choices, including fruit juices and regular soft drinks. Sports drinks also have less sodium than a glass of milk or a slice of bread.

### **The Juicy Story**

Fruit juices are typically fine for children after the playing is over. They contain important vitamins. However, juice isn't always the best choice when rehydrating an active child before or during activity. The high sugar content in juice can slow fluid absorption and increase the chance of a stomachache. No kid wants to be side-lined because of a stomachache in the middle of his soccer game.

### **Carbonation: Forget the Fizz**

Carbonated soft drinks, which are also high in sugar, are not appropriate during or after prolonged activity. The "fizz" in a carbonated beverage may cause a "burning" sensation in the mouth and may prevent your child from chugging enough fluids. Research shows that even a small amount of carbonation can also upset the stomach and cause a bloated feeling during exercise.

### **To keep kids cooled & fueled, follow these helpful tips:**

- To help protect your children from the heat and dehydration, encourage them to drink fluids before, during and after sports and activities.
- Whether it's extremely hot or not, have your children drink on a schedule (approximately every 15 to 20 minutes during physical activity), because dehydration begins before they're thirsty.
- Make drinking fun by giving your child a squeeze bottle filled with a chilled beverage. To keep beverages chilled for game day or other outside activity: freeze half of the fluid in the squeeze bottle the day before the game, then add the rest of the fluid on game day.

# FUELING THE YOUNG ATHLETE



Hockey, gymnastics, and soccer are but a few of the endless structured sport options for active children and adolescents. Participation in recreational or competitive sports at a young age helps develop skills, confidence, good health, and fitness, as well as helping to reduce chances of obesity and obesity-related health concerns.

Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for physical growth and development. While sport is healthful in so many ways, it's vital that young athletes consume enough dietary fuel for these extra energy demands. Furthermore, the timing of meals and/or snacks can be a challenge when active children are trying to schedule schooling, homework, plus physical training and competitive sessions. In addition, active children may be at greater risk than adults for exercise-induced dehydration. With careful planning athletic youngsters can learn to incorporate sound nutrition to meet these unique dietary demands. (Check out "Nutrition For Child And Adolescent Athletes", Sport Science Exchange #77 Volume 13 (2000), Number 2 from the Gatorade Sports Science Institute for more information).

A young athlete should strive towards consuming:

- Sufficient food energy (i.e. Calories) to support exercise needs, physical growth and development
- A high carbohydrate diet, since carbohydrate is the primary fuel source for all sports
- Ample protein to build and repair body tissues as well as support physical growth and development
- A moderate to low-fat diet to ensure readily available Calories from carbohydrates and lean proteins
- Loads of liquids required for all bodily functions and to prevent hyperthermia
- A varied diet to provide all essential vitamin and mineral needs
- Frequent meals and snacks to sustain optimal energy levels (Check out Gatorade Sports Science Institute "Research Proves It – A High Carbohydrate Diet is Essential" for more information.)

## AMPLE ENERGY

Active children may need 500 to 1500 or more Calories more each day than their inactive peers. One way to meet this extra energy demand is to eat three meals and three or four snacks each day. And in some cases active youngsters may even need to divide their meals before and after training, rather than enjoying a complete "traditional" meal; as is often the case with early morning swimmers and after school gymnasts. However, throughout the course of the day the equivalent of three nutritionally balanced meals, along with three or four healthy snacks should be consumed.

Packing portable nutritious snacks and fluids into the training bag should be a habitual practice of every young athlete to maximize training and competition sessions. Occasional tracking of an athlete's diet is an effective way to assess their overall eating habits and shortcomings. (Check out Gatorade Sports Science Institute "Recovery Nutrition for High School Athletes" for more information).

## HEALTHY CHOICES

Eating well is key to support every athlete's training program, including youth. When striving for personal best sport performances and good health, active children may need encouragement to eat wholesome foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, and whole grains (e.g. brown rice, whole wheat pasta, whole grain breads, etc.).

Involving children in the process of menu planning, food selection, and meal preparation may increase the likelihood that they consume a nutritionally sound and varied diet. Consider the following nutritious menu examples:

BALANCED BREAKFASTS	LOADED LUNCHES	DESIGNER DINNERS	SUPERIOR SNACKS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Scrambled Egg, Toast, Strawberries, Milk</li> <li>✓ Peanut Butter or Cheese, Bagel, Banana, Vegetable Juice</li> <li>✓ Whole Grain Cereal, Milk, Blueberries, &amp; Lean Ham or Turkey Bacon, Water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whole Wheat Pita Sandwich with Turkey &amp; Vegetables, Carrot Sticks, Milk &amp; Granola Bar</li> <li>✓ Multigrain Crackers, Sliced Cheese, Apple, Oatmeal Cookies, Milk or Juice</li> <li>✓ Roast Beef Whole Wheat Sub, Fruit Salad, Yogurt, Fig Cookies, Juice or Water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Whole Wheat Spaghetti with Meat Sauce, Salad, Milk &amp; Fruit Cobbler</li> <li>✓ Roast Chicken, Baked Potato, Steamed Vegetables &amp; Rice Pudding, Milk or Juice</li> <li>✓ Stir-Fry Vegetables with Meat, Poultry or Tofu, Steamed Brown Rice &amp; Angel Food Cake with Fruit, Milk</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Cheese &amp; Crackers</li> <li>✓ Trail Mix</li> <li>✓ Yogurt &amp; Granola</li> <li>✓ Applesauce &amp; Low-Fat Muffin</li> <li>✓ 1/2 to Full Sandwich</li> <li>✓ Banana or Corn Bread</li> <li>✓ Veggies &amp; Dip</li> <li>✓ Homemade Pita Pizzas</li> </ul>

## MONITOR GROWTH

To ensure your active youngster is eating enough Calories (or energy) check their weight once a month or at least every few months. If an active child or adolescent fails to gain weight for several months it's possible that they are using too much energy exercising and have not been eating enough. A consultation with a dietitian and/or physician may also be necessary. (Check out "Nutrition For Child And Adolescent Athletes", Sport Science Exchange #77 Volume 13 (2000), Number 2 from the Gatorade Sports Science Institute for more information).

## FORGETTING FLUIDS?

Consuming sufficient fluids is a common dietary challenge, especially for active children. They have a poor sense of thirst and often need to be reminded to drink. Children also sweat less than adults and therefore can easily over-heat. Sweating is how we cool off. Water is the best thirst quencher, however, many children will drink more when their beverage is flavoured. Regular sips of a sports drink or unsweetened, diluted juice during exercise may ensure young athletes are drinking sufficiently. (Check out Gatorade Sports Science Institute "Kids and Hydration: Selecting Beverages for Active Kids" for more information).

Being active in recreational and competitive sports helps children and teens develop lifelong healthy habits. Good nutrition not only supports physical activity, but it also enhances health and sport performances. Contact the Coaching Association of Canada for more information about how to find a sport dietitian/nutritionist to work with young and "older" athlete(s).

**SNAC** Sport Nutrition Advisory Committee  
Comité consultatif sur la nutrition sportive

Coaching Association of Canada  
(613) 235-5000



# Additional Resources

- **[www.soccercoachinginternational.com](http://www.soccercoachinginternational.com)**
  - need to subscribe for a free membership to get full benefits
- **[www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com)**
- **[www.albertasoccer.com](http://www.albertasoccer.com)**
- **[www.sunnysouthsoccer.com](http://www.sunnysouthsoccer.com)**
- **[www.coachingsoccer101.com](http://www.coachingsoccer101.com)**
- **[www.bcsoccer.net](http://www.bcsoccer.net)**
  - go to coaching clinics on the right hand side
  - then click coaching resources on the left side
- **[www.footy4kids.co.uk](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk)**
  - EXCELLENT Website!!
- **[www.thedavidbeckhamacademy.co.uk/uk/schoolzone/](http://www.thedavidbeckhamacademy.co.uk/uk/schoolzone/)**
  - Coaches can sign up for free for information and tips



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