

Coaches Training – U8 Basic

- This basic training program is based from United States Youth Player Development Model
- HYSA highly recommends that U8 coaches complete the F-license training. Cost for training is reimbursed by HYSA.

(1) U8 Objectives

- Learn basic movement skills in soccer with heavy emphasis on fun and games
- Creating a fun environment that ignites a passion for the game

“If it isn’t fun, it’s not soccer” ~**Tony DiCicco** (coach of 1994 U.S. Women’s Olympic Gold Medal Team, current coach of the Boston Breakers)

(2) Characteristics of the U8 Player

It is very important to understand the kids you are working with.

- Like to show skills – need approval
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a bicycle)
- Lack sense of pace – go flat out, chasing the ball until they drop
- Still in motion – twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements
- Into running, jumping, climbing and rolling
- Attention span is a bit longer than the U6 age group
- Developing playmates
- Starting to get into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important)
- Very sensitive – dislike personal failure in front of peers, ridicule from coach in front of the group is very destructive
- Inclined more toward small group activities

(3) Role of the U8 Coach

At the U8 level the primary role of the coach is that of a Facilitator of the soccer experience. Your job is to create an environment of play that allows “the game to be the teacher”.

- Choose the activities based upon learning objectives and FUN
- Occasionally demonstrating skills
- Gauge and mark the size of the activity area
- Introducing paired activities to the mostly individual activities
- Balancing groups/teams by skill level to get a desired affect
- Manipulating the duration of activities
- Calling out one or two of the key coaching points on how to execute a ball skill

- Praising loudly and positively when a player does a skill correctly
- Encouraging players to try new things with the ball throughout the season
- Transitioning from one activity to another
- Ensuring adequate water breaks

(4) Key Skill to Develop at the U8 Level

Skill priorities are building upon the following U6 skills:

- Dribble with all parts of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch
- Dribble while keeping their head up
- Dribbling to “open space”

With the following new U8 skills:

- Ball lifting
- Juggling
- Block tackling
- Receiving ground balls with the inside and sole of the foot
- Shooting with the inside of the foot
- Toe passing and shooting
- Dribbling while changing direction
- Introduction of the push pass

Introduction to tactics:

- Back and Forward lines
- 1v1 attacks
- Choosing to dribble or pass

(5) Coaching Points and Methodologies

“The game is the Greatest Teacher”. Children learn through playing. By trial and error players learn what works and what doesn’t work.

Kids know how to play without adult instruction, so let them play without too much coaching intrusion.

Rule of thumb: “No laps, no lines, no lectures”

- Laps are not fun, the kids will get plenty of exercise through the activities and games
- Lines require kids to wait. Waiting is not fun and it takes time away from touching the ball.
- Children don’t like to be lectured, you’ll lose them.

The kids' attention span is very limited, so games need to be simple and instructions short and to the point, no more than 15 seconds.

The large majority of children learn by doing. Recommended method of coaching:

- Brief description
- Provide clear and simple demonstration
- Get them playing
- Give personal attention to those who are having trouble while the others are engaged in the activity

Children need repetition, it is not necessary to come up with new activities for every practice. Repeat activities at practices that the kids like.

Young players require a lot of encouragement and praise, they are NOT receptive or resilient to negative feedback.

Take a knee when speaking with the kids so you are at their eye level. Stand up and talk with players when you need to show authority and regain control.

(6) Practice Guidelines

LENGTH: 60 minutes

- 40 minutes of activities and small sided games (i.e. 1v1, 1v2, 2v2)
- 20 minutes of scrimmage (3v3 or 4v4)

ACTIVITIES

- Incorporate 1-2 skills objectives
- Activities should last 6-8 minutes each
- Fit in 3 to 4 activities per practice

WATER BREAKS

- Every 15 minutes

(7) Game Guidelines

FORMAT: 4 vs. 4, no goalies

FIELD: Small field with U8 goals at each end

GAME FORMAT

- Rotate the kids equally. Everyone should have equal time on the field.
- Winning is not the objective, fun and skill development is the objective
- Do not direct kids from sidelines, let them play and make their own decisions
- Rotate positions evenly. No matter their preference or your preference, everyone should play offense and defense equally.

(8) Dealing with Challenging Situations

AGGRESSION

Aggressive behavior may endanger others and must be treated seriously. It is the duty of the coach to provide a safe environment for all the players. An aggressive child should never be allowed to repeatedly endanger others. That being said, the aggressive player should be provided the opportunity to play.

If a player demonstrates overly aggressive behavior:

1. Immediately talk to him/her and make sure they understand the behavior is inappropriate
2. Provide a clear guideline to the player, such as “if you do that again, you will have to sit out of practice”
3. Once the player reaches the condition you set, immediately take the player off the field. Important that you take the action you promised, empty threats will not deter overly aggressive behavior.
 - Briefly and clearly explain why you took them off the field
 - Show him/her where to sit (facing away from field and without a ball)
 - Extremely important to make sure the player is in your view at all times
4. After a short time (1 to 2 minutes), walk over to the player and ask him/her to tell you why they were taken off the field. If he/she tells you and agrees to discontinue the aggressive behavior, allow the player back on the field to play.
 - If player is stubborn and will not tell you why they were removed from the field, give them some more time to cool off.
 - Try again after a short time. Don't allow player back on the field until he/she communicates an understanding and commitment to stop the behavior.
5. If the behavior continues, repeat the steps.
6. If the behavior does not improve:
 - inform the U8 coordinator so that HYSA is aware of the issue
 - talk to the player's parents and enlist their help and guidance

HYPERACTIVITY

Be careful when evaluating hyperactivity, it may simply be the result of instructing (talking) too long and not allowing the kids to play enough and utilize their abundant energy.

If a player's hyperactivity is not bothering or distracting the other players, you don't need to do anything. If it becomes a distraction to other players, try to use the player's energy as opposed to curbing or fighting it:

- Give the hyperactive child tasks to do like setting up or cleaning up the practice cones
- Ask the player to show you what he/she can do with the ball, i.e. keep them busy during downtimes

WITHDRAWN BEHAVIOR

Children who avoid social play and aren't connecting with the other players often simply need a "safe bridge" into group play.

- Try having a coach partner with them at first and then try working them into the player group
- Try partnering them with a player they are friends with or a "friendly" player that may be able to draw them into group play

If the child is extremely hesitant, don't force them into the group. They may simply need a little more time to adjust. Be flexible and allow the child to enter play even if it is in the middle of an activity.

Providing abundant praise and reassurances to withdrawn players often helps with transitioning them into group activity.

(9) Recommended Activities

Weekly practice plans with detailed activities will be provided by email. It is also recommended you visit the coach's corner on the HYSA website for other age appropriate soccer activities: <http://www.hollistonsoccer.org/coaches/coaches-corner/>.