



Recreation Soccer Program

U6 – U10 Curriculum

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TRAINING PRIORITIES

U6 through U10

One of the biggest reasons that players quit playing altogether or are unable to participate in higher levels of the game is that they do not have the technical skills needed to play. The concept of player development is essential to the long-term growth and improvement of the player. Player development demands that “the player is central” to all decisions made regarding training and competition. The coach who believes in player development will ensure that the following objectives are met:

- A. Games and activities are used that players want to participate in because they are enjoyable.
- B. Every player has a ball for training.
- C. Games and activities are designed to maximize the number of touches on the ball by each player.
- D. Training sessions are designed to improve a player’s technical abilities and their tactical application.
- E. Competition is a main ingredient within the practice and helps to motivate and challenge the player.
- F. Educates players to develop an appreciation for the game, teammates, opponents, referees and coaches.

This curriculum is provided as a guideline for JYL coaches of youth players 5-10 years of age. We also have many drills/activities on our web site that will assist you in the goal of providing the best possible experience for the kids and to help players develop.

The intent is to:

- Provide age-appropriate focus for training during the course of the season.
- Provide benchmarks for what your players should achieve or have been exposed to by the end of the season.
- Provide building blocks for development through the years.

It must be understood that players mature at different rates. Age determines to a certain degree what players are physically, mentally and socially capable of on the soccer field. Some players will be capable of more complex skills and thought processes than others as they develop, but it is up to the individual coach to know and understand their players introducing more advanced aspects of the game as it becomes appropriate. It is vital to practice and master the basics in order for players to continue participation at older age groups and to enjoy their experience. Kids want to get better because improving is fun!

JYL/JSC has outlined the following training priorities as the most important topics for each age group to teach their players.

Your success as a coach within JYL is not your win/loss record but if your players have fun, continue to play, and are being instructed in the clubs developmental scheme.

We thank you for your time and energy for the kids!

Role of the Coach

Coaches take on many roles when leading a team. However, youth coaches need to understand their role within the overall player development process. Inexperienced coaches often identify with coaches of older aged teams where the priority and objectives for that age group may be different given the environment and demands. Coaches who understand the player development process and the differences that exist between age and ability characteristics are more likely to positively influence and effect the development of a player.

The role of the youth coach based upon principles of player development is:

A. Serve as a Facilitator.

1. Set up the conditions and environment for learning.
2. Players need to have fun and receive positive feedback.
3. The coach must be enthusiastic.
4. Practice should be conducted in the spirit of enjoyment and learning.
5. Activities need to be geared toward achieving success.

B. As a positive role model.

1. Demonstrate respect for team members, opponents, referees, parents, spectators and opposing coaches.
2. Demonstrate a responsibility to the game itself.

C. Understanding who they are coaching.

1. Recognize that children/players are not defined by chronological age only. They mature and develop at their own pace. There are also growth differences between genders.
2. Treat each person as an individual.
3. Recognize that their needs are different and they participate for different reasons (at any level).

U6-Bumblee Bees

Skill Priorities

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch

In order to fully understand children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U6 children.

Typical Characteristics of U6 Players

- *Focused on themselves* – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel.
- *Unable to see the world from another's perspective* – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic.
- *Everything is in the here and now* – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- *Heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults* – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore.
- *Enjoying playing, not watching* – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing.
- *Limited attention span* (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds.
- *Effort is synonymous with performance* – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm.
- *Active imaginations* – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- *Look for adult approval* – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- *Unable to think abstractly* – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic.
- *Typically have 2 speeds* -- extremely fast and stopped.
- *Usually unaware of game scores* – we should keep it that way.
- *Often like to fall down just because it is fun* – they are just children having fun •.
- *Often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot* – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right.

Some Recommended Games for U6 Players:

1) Tag---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees.

2) Hospital tag---Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body at which they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.

3) Red light/Green light---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light”, players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says “yellow light”, players must dribble very slowly. When coach says “green light”, players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.).

4) Freeze Tag---Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player’s legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion.

5) Planets---Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach’s order and dribble into the planet he calls out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up team so they start at different planet and then have them dribble through the solar system in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system.

6) Kangaroo Jack---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos.

7) Snake---In an appropriate space for the number of participants, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the others. The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands with the players making up the snake. The snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss.

8) Ball Tag---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player’s ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other; have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players.

9) Capture the Balls---Set up three or four “home bases” (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others’ home bases. Coach calls time and count up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again.

10) Moving Goal---2 coaches use a vest or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.

Every practice should include a scrimmage

Modified Game: 3 v 3 (without a goalkeeper)

Field Size: 20 to 30 yds long X 15 to 20 yds wide

Ball: #3

U8-Bantam

Skill Priorities

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Shielding
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique
- Introduce passing

Although U7/U8 children may begin to be far more physically and mentally advanced than U6 children, we must remain patient and not try to force them to develop too quickly. Dribbling still needs to be the primary focus of our efforts, though passing and shooting should be introduced at this age as well. U8 players tend to work best when in pairs and this (coach selected) should be frequently included during practice. Similar to the U6 children, we need to make sure that fun is a central theme in practice. Player development will occur most appropriately and expeditiously if all players are enjoying themselves.

Typical Characteristics of U8 Players:

- *Tend to play well in pairs* – unlike 6 year-olds; these children enjoy playing in pairs. Try to set up the pairs yourself to control the games and manage the personalities
- *Are now able to take another’s perspective* – they now have a sense of how others are feeling
- *Still unable to think abstractly* – still do not have this capability, be patient
- *Heating and cooling system still less efficient than adults* – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- *Still much prefer playing to watching* – keep everyone active during practice and remember, no lines

- *Limited attention span (on average 15-20 seconds for listening, up to 20 minutes when engaged in a task)* – this may vary greatly on any given day depending on school, diet, etc. Try to get a gauge each day and do not fight crankiness
- *Have an understanding of time and sequence* – they now understand “if I do this, then that happens”
- *Many have incorporated a third or fourth speed into play* – not all players, but many players now have incorporated a speed or two between stopped and as fast as possible
- *Extremely aware of adult reactions* – be very aware of your verbal and nonverbal reactions, as they look for your reaction frequently
- *Seek out adult approval* – be supportive when they ask about their performance or try to show you skills. They very much need reassurance and you need to help build their confidence to try new things at this age
- *Begin to become aware of peer perception* – a social order is beginning to develop. Be sensitive to this
- *Wide range of abilities between children at this age* – children develop at varying paces. You may have an 8 year-old who seems more like a 10 year-old and one that seems more like a 6 year-old on the same team. Your challenge is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player
- *Some will keep score* – the competitive motors churn faster in some than others.

Regardless, we do not need to stress winning and losing at this age. Results should not be important at this age

- *Beginning to develop motor memories* – by attempting fundamental technical skills they are training their bodies to remember certain movements
- *Less active imaginations than U6 players* – still have active imaginations by adult standards, but some of the silliness that 6 year-olds allow will not be appreciated by this group. Still use their imaginations; just watch their reactions to games to read how far you can go with things.

Some Recommended Games for U8 Players:

1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session. Kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move.

Version 2: As players get comfortable, the coach can walk around and put pressure on players as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

2) Knock Out---In same space as previous activity, have players dribble balls while trying to knock other player’s balls outside of the grid. Players can never leave their own ball. If their ball gets knocked out, have them retrieve it quickly and get back into the game. (You may wish to have them perform a skills task before reentering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times).

3) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If the ball goes out of bounds, person who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show

technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, and turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

4) Marbles---Players are in pairs, each with a ball. This time instead of chasing each other, one player plays out his ball and the partner passes his own ball in an attempt to strike the ball his partner played out. Players should keep track of how many times they hit their partner's ball. *Version 2:* Once players understand this game, make it fast paced by having the players take turns at trying to hit each other's ball without ever stopping. If player 2 misses player 1's ball, then player 1 immediately runs to his own ball and tries to hit player 2's ball (player 2 does not get to touch his ball after missing player 1's ball). After player 1 has a chance, then player 2 immediately tries to hit player 1's ball right back etc. This game is continuous and players should keep score.

Hint: If 2 balls are very close to each other a player should kick their ball hard at the other ball so when they hit it, it is more difficult for the other to hit their ball back.

5) Gates Passing---Players are paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Have players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

6) Triangle Tag---Set up cones in a triangle formation with each side of the triangle being roughly 1 yard long. Every triangle has a pair of players, each with a ball. Similar to the tag game, one player is being chased and one is "it". However this time the player who is "it" tags the player by kicking her ball and hitting the other player's ball or hitting the player below the knee. Players can dribble in either direction around the triangle and must stay close to their own triangle. Neither player can go through the triangle.

Version 2: Allow the player being chased to go through the triangle. When in the triangle she is safe. However, after going through triangle, player must go completely around triangle before she can go through triangle again. She cannot stop inside the triangle.

Version 3: Allow pairs to move from triangle to triangle (incorporates speed dribbling and traffic). If two pairs are at the same triangle at the same time that is fine, but players still only compete with their partner.

Note: To increase difficulty, do not count hitting a player below the knee as a tag.

7) Get Outta Here---Place two small (2 yard) goals at the end of a field 15 x 10 yards. Place half of team behind each goal and coach stands at halfway line with all balls. When coach plays out a ball the first two players run out and try to score on each other's goal. If the ball goes in the goal or out of bounds, the coach yells "get outta here" and plays in a new ball immediately for the next two players.

Version 2: Coach can stop yelling "get outta here" after a while and see if players recognize when balls go out and are attentive.

Version 3: Coach can vary service of ball. Sometimes play it to one player, sometimes toss the ball up in the air.

Version 4: Have the first two or three players from each group come out each time a new ball is played and play 2 v 2 or 3 v 3.

8) Clean Your Backyard--- Break group into two teams and have each team stay only on their half of the field. Place a 6 yard buffer zone between halves that no one can enter or cross. Each player needs a ball. Place three small (2-3yd) goals at the far end of each side of the field. Have both teams shoot balls at other team's goals in an attempt to score through anyone of the small goals (below knee height). Players cannot cross the buffer zone or go into the other half. Balls get recycled naturally in the game. This is a competition and teams need to keep score. Play 2 or 3 games and have teams re-strategize between each game. Teams can play defense though no hands. Only shots with laces count as goals.

9) 2 v 1 keep away---In a grid 10x15 yds, three players play 2 v 1 continuous keep away. Two attackers combine to keep the ball away from one defender. When the defender wins the ball, he or she immediately combines with the attacker he or she did not win the ball from and the attacker who lost the ball becomes the

defender. Balls out of play are dribbled in or passed in.

10) 1 vs. 1 to End lines---In a space that is wider than long (15 x 20 yds) each player defends one end line and attacks the other. Players score by dribbling the ball under control over the opposing player's end line.

Version 2: You can make this 2 v 2, 3 vs. 3 or 4 v 4.

Every practice should include a scrimmage

Modified Game: 4 v 4 (*without a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 25 to 35 yds long X 20 to 30 yds wide

Ball: #3

U10-Pee Wee

Skill Priorities

- Continue with dribbling focus from U8
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Shooting with both feet---using laces
- Receiving the ball with all parts of body
- Heading
- Tactical Priorities
- Basic Attacking Ideas
- Basic Defending Ideas
- Comprehend 1 v 1 concepts
- Comprehend 2 v 1 concepts
- Introduction to 2 v 2 concepts

From U8 to U10 there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for young players of this age. However, there are also many similarities. We need to continue focusing on technique during our practices, as we did at the younger ages.

Creating environments in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is key. Players at this age should still work on ball mastery and demonstrate growing familiarity and comfort with a ball at their feet.

Typical Characteristics of U10 Players

- *Attention span lengthens from U8---they start to show the ability to sequence thought and actions.*
- *They start to think ahead and think "If this, then that."*
- *They are more inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play.*
- *Demonstrate increased self-responsibility – bringing a ball, water and all gear should now be their complete responsibility.*
- *They start to recognize fundamental tactical concepts.*
- *Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure.*

- *Players greatly affiliate with their team or their coach*—“I play for the Tigers” or “I play for Coach Amy’s team.” *Players at this age are extremely rule bound*—remember each rule you create is the equivalent of a bar in the prison in which you would like to live.
- *There is a wide continuum of maturity evident on most teams. This is still a crucial age for technical skill development*

Some Recommended Games for U10 Players:

1) Free Dribble---Everyone with a ball, use inside, outside, and sole of the foot. Have players dribble with speed (outside of foot), change direction, and perform moves. Coach calls out moves or changes in direction and sets the pace as the manipulator of the session. Kids carry the ball towards someone and try a move.

Version 2: As players get comfortable, the coach can walk around and put pressure on them as they are performing dribbling tasks. This adds fun and interaction.

Version 3: Make the game a knockout game in which players try to knock each other’s balls out of the grid while maintaining possession of their own.

Note: You may wish to have them perform a skills task before re-entering such as 10 toe touches or juggling 5 times. You do not want players sitting out.

2) Shield-Steal---Half of players in the group have a ball and half do not. If you do not have a ball you need to steal one from someone who does. If ball goes out of bounds, the player who touched it last does not get possession. You can teach players the technical points of shielding as a group at start of activity. Show technique with body sideways, arm providing protection, ball on outside foot, knees bent, turning as defender attacks, using feel to understand where defender is going. Fix technical shielding errors throughout this activity and make sure entire group knows how to properly shield.

3) Gates Passing---Same set up as previous game. However players are now paired up and must successfully pass the ball through the cones to their teammate to earn a point. Again, players try to accumulate as many points as possible in the time allotted. Similar to previous game, have the players pass only with their left foot or right foot, or the outside of their foot.

4) 1 vs. 1 To lines---In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. The first player in each line alternates attacking the player opposite them. When the attacker dribbles over the line they score a goal. If the defender wins the ball he or she can counter attack to the opposite line to also score a goal. The players switch to the opposite line if a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

Version 2: Make the grid larger and make this a 2 v 2 or a 3 v 3 game.

5) 1 vs. 1 To Two Small Goals---Same grids as above except now there is a three foot goal in the middle of each line. Attackers try to score by passing the ball through the goal. Defenders can counter attack to the opposite goal if they win the ball. Players switch sides after a goal or if the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

6) 2 vs. 2 to Four Cross Goals---Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three. You must dribble through a goal to score a point. The goals are on the ends of a large cross in a square grid roughly 10yd X 10yd. Have one team of 2 on deck. They come on when a team gets scored on twice. Game is continuous, they must run on immediately.

7) 2 vs. 2 To Four Small Goals---In a 15 X 15 yard grid with a small goal in each corner teams of two attack and defend two goals. The coach will set up as many grids as needed to accommodate the players. When the ball goes out of bounds it can be passed or dribbled in to play. The teams should be rotated every three minutes until all groups have played against each other.

Version 2: 3 v 3 in a 20 X 25 yard grid. Teams should show a triangle shape in attack.

8) 4 vs. 4 End zone Game---Teams comprised of 4-6 players depending on numbers and space. To score you must pass the ball to a teammate into the opponent's end zone (created with discs). The player cannot go into the end zone until after the ball has been passed. Stress recognizing opportunities and timing of passes.

9) Triangle Goal Game---Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goal mouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goal mouths. Two even teams play a normal soccer game, except they both can score on any of the three faces of the triangle for a point. The game is continuous and if a goalie catches the ball he just throws it out so the game continues.

Version 2: Use two balls at the same time.

10) 4 vs. 4 To Four Small Goals---In a 30 X 35 yard grid, the same rules as 3 vs. 3 but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

Every practice should include a scrimmage

Modified Game: 6 v 6 (*including a goalkeeper*)

Field Size: 45 to 60 yds long X 35 to 45 yds wide

Ball: #4

U12 and Older Overview

AGE CHARACTERISTICS TABLE

U12 Characteristics	U14 Characteristics	U16 Characteristics
1. Enjoys competition	1. Differences in mental development	1. Covers a wide range ages
2. Psychological development has progressed	2. Sense of belonging, achievement and accomplishment	2. Transition from childhood to adulthood
3. Teamwork has improved	3. Varying stages of puberty	3. Biological, cultural and psychological transition
4. Coordination has improved	4. Displays independence and is self critical	4. Strive for a personal identity and a self-definition
5. Technical competency has improved	5. Aware of praise, status and personal recognition	5. Time of wanting to be independent and making their own decisions
6. Development of speed and strength	6. A time of self-discovery	6. Conflicting influences at times between parents and peers
7. Problem solving can take place with teammates		7. Age of accepting responsibility and being held accountable
8. Self-appearance and peer pressure is a concern		8. High expectations of themselves
9. Varying stage of puberty for both boys and girls		9. Need to belong – to be accepted

Coaches are encouraged to use the many activities and drills posted on the web site, to continue providing opportunities that allow each player to have a ball and to let the kids play!