

SYS U5-U8 COACHING GUIDELINES

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GOALS OF MINI – SOCCER

For many of the children participating in mini Soccer, this will be their first exposure to a team sport, let alone soccer. We want the players (and coaches and parents) to have a fun time, both individually and as part of a team enjoyed in a healthy competitive atmosphere. As a volunteer coach, you can best insure this by being prepared, organized, have patience, a good sense of humor, and by having fun yourself. Of course we'd like to expose players to the skills and attitudes that will allow them to play competitive soccer as they grow older, but realize there is quite a bit of time to do this after the mini program. What we want to do in the minis is provide an experience where a child will want to continue on in the soccer program, a fundamental feel for the game, and skills needed to begin to make the soccer ball do what they want it to do.

Mini-soccer isn't about winning/losing or goals scored, but fun the players should have. The second goal of mini-soccer (both in practice and games) is to give the players lots of touches on the ball. At practice this means lots of drills where every player has a ball, and they touch the ball frequently. In games this means small sided (3v3 and 4v4 instead of 11v11).

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PRACTICE GUIDELINES

The primary goal of mini coaches should be to insure that the players have a **FUN EXPERIENCE**. If the players are having fun, using the suggested curriculum, activities and practice format will improve their soccer skills.

CURRICULUM

At SYS we suggest that you follow the MYSA U6-U12 curriculum (see separate handout or get the curriculum at the www.mayouthsoccer.com). Realize that the MYSA curriculum is presented for U6 and U8, whereas SYS distinguishes U5 and U7. At the younger ages the skills taught should be more basic. The curriculum is summarized briefly below

- ? U5 – Dribbling and basic coordination and balance
- ? U6 – U5 skills + Dribbling with all sides of both feet, dribble out of trouble, dribble past someone and soft first touch.
- ? U7 – U6 skills + Shielding
- ? U8 – U7+ Introduce proper shooting technique and passing.

You'll note that passing/shooting is not introduced until fairly late, so you might ask, what should we teach about putting the ball in the goal?? I'd suggest mentioning that we don't use our toe while dribbling/shooting/controlling the ball, and to dribble close to the goal. I'd also suggest showing a proper instep/laces shot/pass but not to spend much practice time working on it.

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PRACTICE FORMAT

It's useful if every practice has a similar format, the one suggested below is derived from US Youth Soccer Assistant Coaches Series of practice plans:

1. Warm up - individual dribbling 10 min
2. Small group activities
3. Larger group activities
4. Scrimmage

Insure that there are plenty of rest/water breaks, both between activities and during activities (especially at the younger ages of U5-U6).

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

The MSYA curriculum includes a number of suggested activities for each age group. In addition to these other suggested activities are listed below. Note that any given activity may work well with your particular group of players or may not, so it's suggested that you have a few back up activities if the ones planned for practice seem to not be working. Also once you find an activity the kids really love, don't worry about repeating it often.

U5 SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Free dribble with coaches 'challenging'
2. Body part dribble
3. Cat and Mouse (Shark and Guppy)

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4. Ball Fetch
5. Glob (players dribble across field avoiding the coach 'monster' glob)
6. Ball taps.
7. Dribble through gates
8. Squares (town) dribble – no crossing/simple one square

U6 SUGGESTED ACTIVITES

(U5 activities plus)

1. Red light / green light
2. Simon Says
3. Follow the leader
4. Dribble to coach (hit coach with ball)
5. Supervised 1v1 to lines (i.e. Every 1v1 has coach/parent keeping kids focused)
6. Musical Balls
7. Dribble to flip cones

U7 SUGGESTED ACTIVITES

(U5-U6 activities plus)

1. Squares (towns) dribble with teams
2. Free Dribble, change direction 180 on command
3. Small team (3 players) dribble relay races
4. 1v1 (groups of 3 rotate to allow for rest) to goals

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5. Tag, everyone it with balls.
6. freeze tag
7. Scrimmage with two goals each side.

U8 SUGGESTED ACTIVITES

(U5-U7 activities plus).

1. 2v1 (4 players rotating to allow for rest)
2. clean your yard
3. 3v2
4. Passing relay races
5. Dribble turn shoot relay race
6. 2 player Team ball fetch, passing to return
7. 4-6 v 1 keep away.
8. Group Dribble/shoot across field

GENERAL PRACTICE SUGGESTIONS

1. Do not use a whistle, voice commands of start/stop/freeze etc. are much friendlier to the ears
2. Always have a practice plan
3. Get to the practice field early, and set things up (i.e. Place cones etc. if you'll be using them for a drill)
4. Involve parents in some drills. At times have parents on the field urging their child on, or have a parent or two help keep the players well behaved and focused (this is especially true at the U5-U6 level).

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5. At U5-U6 team competitive activities (like relay races) don't seem to motivate players, but at U7/U8 they seem to love the 'team' competition
6. Every child should bring a ball and water to practice
7. Every child must wear shin guards
8. Cleats are not required for a child to play, but highly encouraged.
9. Always use practice vests when available.
10. Always scrimmage at the end of practice.
11. Do not have kids run laps without the ball. Running should involve ball contact (though note at young ages you may have some drills without the ball that focus on balance , or speed)
12. No need to do stretching before practice or game.

SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS TO DISCOURAGE

The MYSA curriculum lists the skills and tactics to encourage during a practice. Below is a list of observed behaviors that should be discouraged (and some of them, if occurring during a game should require game stoppage and correction)

1. Standing in goal
2. Freezing the ball (i.e. Placing foot, shins/knees on top of ball firmly)
3. Pushing/pulling/charging. Stop play during game and inform player of the foul.
4. Reaching down and grabbing the ball. Stop play during a game.
5. Booting the ball down the field.
6. Dribbling/kicking the ball off the field constantly (effort should be to keep ball in play).

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7. Unsportsmanlike behavior such as overzealous celebration after a goal, talking back, etc.

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GAME GUIDELINES

For games of 3v3 and 4v4 each team plays two concurrent games on two adjacent fields.

RULE MODIFICATIONS FOR MINI SOCCER

Rule	U5	U6	U7	U8
Team Size	3v3	3v3	4v4	4v4
Ball size	3	3	3	3
Throw-in	No, Kick in	No Kick in	Yes – allow repeat	Yes – allow repeat
Corner Kick	From Corner	From Corner	From Corner	From Corner
Goal kick	From goal line	From goal line	From goal line	From goal line
Multi-touch bringing ball in play	Yes	No – allow repeat	No – allow repeat	No – allow repeat
Offsides called	No – allow offside	No – allow offside	No – allow offside	No – allow offside
Opponent distance from ball	6 yards	6 yards	6 yards	6 yards
Substitutions	Unlimited - anytime	Unlimited - anytime	Unlimited - anytime	Unlimited anytime

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REFEREEING

U5-U7 games are refereed by the coaches. At U5-U6 a coach from each team is on each field, co-refereeing and helping players with position/play. At U7 coaches still referee but do so from the sidelines (i.e. calling ball in/ball out etc.) Whistles should not be used to start/stop play, but use verbal signals.

At U5-U6 the intent is to let the kids play, and as such, don't stop play when a ball is slightly out of bounds, it's at the discretion of the coaches how far out of bounds before stopping play.

TEAM COMPOSITION

When choosing what teams to field, a team's (and opponent's) composition can determine how you want to structure the two games, and field your teams. Very timid players don't benefit from being paired with or against very aggressive players, so if there exist a large number of timid players, it could make sense grouping them on one team, and facing a like opponent. We would like all temperament and ability levels to both have fun and be challenged. The coaches of each team should work out before the game how they would like to handle this. If one team is short players and another fully represented, player sharing can occur so that everyone gets more quality playing time.

THINGS TO WORK OUT WITH OTHER COACHES BEFORE GAME

1. Length of game (if its hot or turnout is minimal might want to make games shorter)
2. Length of half and quarter times.
3. Team Strength composition. Player sharing for short handed teams.
4. How lines etc. are called.

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GENERAL GAME SUGGESTIONS/RULES

1. Players bring ball and water to games
2. No Jewelry allowed.
3. Shin guards required, under socks.
4. Parents are not to sit between the two fields the teams are playing on, but around the outside of the two fields
5. Half Time snack. Rotate through parents, suggest they bring enough fruit (grapes, sliced oranges, etc.) and extra water for the team. Bring a garbage bag for the orange rinds
6. Cleanup after game, make sure everyone leaves with their ball/water bottle.
7. Show up (and tell parents to show up) 15 minutes before the game start. Games should start on time.
8. If its cold, and a child needs additional layers, have them worn under the team jersey/t-shirt.
9. At the end of the game, do a hand shake line, an opponent 'thanks' cheer and a team cheer.

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OTHER SOURCES FOR COACHING IDEAS

The Mass. Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) website has a number of documents mentioned in these guidelines. www.mayouthsoccer.org

The Coach's library can be found at:

http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/pages/17_coach_resource_library.cfm

This contains the "Mass Youth Statewide U6-U12 Curriculum" and the "21st Century Club/Player development Manual"

www.usyouthsoccer.org is the website for US Youth Soccer and also has number of interesting documents.

Below is a list of websites that contain useful information about coaching U5-U8 soccer:

<http://www.joesoccer.com/info/games.html>

<http://www.footballcoachingcourses.com/Fungamesforunder8%27s.html>

http://www.finesoccer.com/finesoccer_drills_archive.htm

<http://www.bettersoccermorefun.com/dwtext/tablecon.htm>

<http://eteamz.active.com/youthsoccercoach/news/index.cfm?cat=35337>

The website below, the North Alabama Soccer League has a number of coaching manuals, and other pointers to youth soccer coaching pages.

<http://www.nasl.com/coach.htm>