

YOUTH PLAYER DEVELOPMENT (UNDER 10)

SKILL PRIORITIES:

Physical:

All fitness work should be done with the ball, in fun, engaging activities either individually or in pairs.

- Agility, Balance, Coordination
- Flexibility, range of motion
- Speed, Quickness
- Endurance
- Proper warm-up and cool-down are mandatory now

Technical:

Running with the ball:

- Familiarity and confidence to advance the ball with the instep and both the inside and outside of both feet.
- Close control of the ball

Dribbling:

- U-10 Continue with dribbling foci from U8
- Dribbling fakes

Receiving:

- Soft first touch
- Prepare the ball out of the feet, for passing
- Receiving the ball with all appropriate body surfaces
- Receiving ground balls with the instep and outside of foot
- Receiving bouncing balls with the instep (cushion) and sole/inside-outside of foot (wedge)

Passing:

- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Instep drive
- Introduce crossing
- Throw-ins

Shooting:

- Shooting with dominant foot, all surfaces

Heading:

- Introduction to the fundamentals of heading, defensive and attacking

Tactical:

Attacking Principles:

- Basic attacking principles (Width, Support, Penetration)
- Role of the 1st attacker
- 2v1 attacking

Defending Principles:

- Basic defending principles (Pressure, Cover, Balance, Delay)
- 1v1 defending, man-to-man defense, role of the 1st defender

Set Plays:

- Introduction to set plays

Psychological:

- Keep it fun and enjoyable to foster a desire to play (intrinsic motivation)
- Working in groups of 3, 4 or 5
- Imagination & Creativity
- Encourage decision-making, how to play
- Discipline, sensitivity, how to win or lose gracefully, sportsmanship
- Emotional management, parental involvement
- Communication

SOME GENERAL THOUGHTS ABOUT THE U10 AGE GROUP:

As we move up the age ladder from the U8 level to the U10 level there are many differences we must attend to in order to provide an optimal experience for players of this age. However, there are also many similarities.

Just as in parenting, it is important to be consistent in coaching and we must make sure that we follow a progressive trend of development for young players. To this end, we need to continue to focus on technique during our practices, as we did at the younger ages.

Creating an environment in which players get maximum repetitions of technical skills is critical. 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.
- **Starting to think ahead:** They begin to think “If this, then that”.
- **More inclined towards wanting to play soccer rather than being told to play:** This is usually based on the fun-factor they have experienced so far in the organized soccer.
- **Demonstrate increased self-responsibility:** Bringing a ball, water and all equipment should now be their complete responsibility.
- **Starting to recognize fundamental tactical concepts:** Understanding defending and attacking principles.
- **Children at this age begin to become aware of peer pressure:** Very influential to the child.
- **Players greatly affiliate with their team or coach:** “I play for the Tigers and/or 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, with increased focus on the psychological factor.

SOME RECOMMENDED GAMES FOR U10 PLAYERS:

1. Free Dribble

Everyone has a ball and uses the 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, coach can walk around and put pressure on players 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, 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, turn 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 but have players pass only with a specific foot or part of their foot.

4. 1 v 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. 1v 1 To 2 Small Goals

In a grid 10x10 yards, players line up on opposite sides. 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 the ball goes out of bounds. The coach rotates the lines so all players get to compete against each other.

6. 2 v 2 To 4 Cross Goals

Teams defend one goal and have the opportunity to score on the other three. Players 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. Seeing as the game is continuous, they must run on to the field immediately.

7. 2 v 2 To 4 Small Goals

8. 4 v 4 To End Zone

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

Make a triangle with three cones in the center of the field. The sides of the triangle each serve as a goalmouth so teams can shoot at three different goals. Place 2 goalies in the triangle and the 2 goalies must protect the three goalmouths. 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. 4v 4 To 4 Small Goals

In a 30 X 35 yard grid, two teams attack the two opposite goals and defend their two goals. The goals are three feet wide and setup near each corner. The same rules as 3 v 3 (With three attackers the players now have the 1st attacker (ball) and 2nd attackers (support) and a triangle shape in attack, looking to change the point of attack away from pressure. The defending team now has the 1st defender (pressure), 2nd defender (cover), and 3rd defender (balance). This game can be played to lines, goals with keepers, four squares or targets), but now players must show a diamond shape in attack.

US YOUTH SOCCER U10 GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Game form: 6v6 is the best option for these ages, with a maximum of 7v7

GK status: Goalkeepers should be used

Field Size: Minimum = 45 x 35 yards to maximum = 60 x 45 yards

Ball size: Size 4

Goal Size: 12'x6'

Game Length: 2x25 minutes

Offside: None

Penalty Kick: Yes, 8 yard mark

Throw-In: Yes

Corner Kick: Yes

Practice Time: 60-75 minutes, total. Every practice should end with a scrimmage