



Coach,

Welcome to South Lakes Soccer Club. We are very pleased that you have accepted the challenge of coaching the “beautiful game”. Perhaps you have played or coached before, maybe not. Regardless of your experience in the game I hope that you will find this document helpful.

First, I would like to offer you a sincere “thank you” for taking the time to further your coaching knowledge and review this coaching document. I know your players are appreciative of your efforts.

If you have any questions at any time please contact me. I will be happy to answer any of your questions or help in any way possible.

This document in no means has the answer to all of the many questions and concerns that will arise with coaching youth soccer. The internet can be a great tool in answering questions and locating quality activities. If you have additional questions or would like a professional coach’s opinion please email me at [doc@southlakessoccer.org](mailto:doc@southlakessoccer.org). Thank you for everything you do for the kids and promoting the best game on the planet!

Good Luck!

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## **‘Coaching’ the Player**

### *Helpful Practice Hints*

- U12 players should practice for 75-90 minutes no more than twice per week.
  - Avoid lines, laps, and lectures.
  - Be flexible with your activities. If it isn't working or the players are not having fun, CHANGE IT and move to a new activity.
    - One topic per practice.
  - Practice Structure should contain the following three phases:
    - o Warm-up: Select a topic specific activity/game that will get the players physically and mentally ready for practice. Non-number dependent Activities/games with simple rules work best.
    - o Nucleus: This is the ‘teaching’ part of your practice. These activities/games should be topic specific and provide the players multiple opportunities (repetitions) to work on the selected area of focus.
    - o End game: All practices should end with a scrimmage game and allow the players to put the ‘new skills’ into a game context
      - Move from simple to complex throughout practice with regards to practice activities/games and coaching information.
- ALL players should be involved in ALL activities at ALL times. No elimination games.
- Allow the players to ‘learn through playing the game’; don't over coach.
  - Avoid using a whistle.
  - Look like a soccer coach.
- Avoid corporal punishment. Use time outs as punishment.

### **Principles of Play for the U12 Player**

1. **Attacking** – Ball possession by our team
  - a. Everyone attacks –  
All players moving toward the attacking goal when attacking.
  - b. Player on the ball -  
Decision to shoot, pass, or dribble.
  - c. Other players; ‘Opening Up off the ball’ –  
Intro. Combination play
    - Width* –  
Making the field bigger when your team is in ball possession by making the field wider.
    - Length* –  
Making the field bigger when your team is in ball possession by making the field longer, in front of the ball.

2. **Defending** – Ball possession by the opponent

a. Pressure on the ball –

When ball is lost the player nearest to the ball immediately applies pressure on the ball.

b. Everyone defends –

All players moving toward the defending goal when defending.

Getting goal side when defending.

Helping out your teammates.

3. Transition -Moment between attacking and defending phases of the game. Offense to Defense & Defense to Offense.

- a. Must be done very quickly. Example: must make the field big when ball possession is gained.

**Areas of focus for U12 players**

*Technical Skills–*

U12 - ‘The ball and a small group’

- Basic Techniques (dribbling, passing, receiving, and shooting)
  - Intro. Outside of the foot passing
    - Intro. Heading
    - Dribbling fast and slow
    - Dribbling feints and fakes
      - Tackling
  - Receiving and turning- with all surfaces of feet
    - Intro. Receiving balls out of the air

**Game Awareness and Strategy**

- No kicking for kicking, ‘every pass has a purpose’
  - Basic positioning during games and practice
    - U12 -Principles of play
- 1 v 1 & 2 v 1 situations, attacking and defending
  - ‘The Player as the Decision Maker’

**Essential Knowledge**

- Basic Soccer Rules of Play
  - ‘Love of the Game’
  - It is okay to make a mistake - perseverance
- Improving concentration and ability to stay on task
  - Sportsmanship
    - Fair play

### **Activities**

Activities are soccer related games that engage the players' imagination while allowing them to make decisions and perform soccer skills and techniques.

### **Small-Sided Games**

Small-sided games are the best learning environment for 'teaching and learning' soccer. Small-sided soccer games allow the player to have a 'free backyard' type of learning environment at practice. The rule to these games can be modified or simplified to highlight a specific practice topic. Varying the number of the players on the field (1 v 1, 2 v2...) or adjusting the field size can help improve the learning environment.

### **Technical Skills Activities**

Technical Skills activities are a manner in which to 'teach' soccer techniques. These activities are geared to provide an increased opportunity for isolated technical repetition. The repetition training should take place in a 'game like' environment as much as possible. Technical skills activities should make up no more than 30 minutes of a practice.

#### Activities Check list

1. Is the activity FUN?
2. Is the activity organized?
3. Are the children ALL involved in the activity?
4. Is creativity and decision making being used?
5. Is the space appropriate and safe?
6. Is the coach's feedback important?
7. Are there implications for the games? Is it Soccer?

### **Developmentally Appropriate**

All activities for U12 players need to be developmentally appropriate. Developmentally appropriate activities or games challenge and reward all players at their own personal developmental level. Developmentally appropriate activities or games don't exclude players and allow for continuous participation.

### **Line-ups and Positions**

Soccer is a free flowing game, where the player's are the decision makers. Positions are an important component to the game. However, rigid positional requirements for the U12 player are NOT APPROPRIATE. U12 players should be allowed to experience a variety of positions during games and practices. While experiencing these positions players must be allowed to move freely around the field. Remember these are starting points. Line-ups and positions don't score or prevent goals; players do.

## **Managing the 'TEAM'**

### ***Pre-season Parent Meeting***

- Players may be included, if coach desires.
  - Hold before each season.
  - Discuss coaching philosophy.
- Discuss what is expected of parents and players (transportation, communication, sportsmanship, etc.)
  - Obtain additional player information.
- Uniforms, Practice Schedule, Location, etc.

### ***Team Administrator***

- Volunteer 'Team Parent'
  - Handles schedules (snacks, drinks, transportation, etc.)
  - Handles cancellations and reschedules.
- Handles registration of team with club or association.

### ***Assistant Coach***

- Limit # to reduce distraction and confusion.
- Selection should be made with prior knowledge of their coaching philosophy and agenda.
- Be sure to establish roles and responsibilities prior to beginning practice or games.

### ***Equipment***

- Players should be encouraged to take responsibility and care of their own equipment at the U8 level. This should include a ball, shin guards, proper shoes, clothing appropriate for all weather conditions, and water bottle.
- Coaches should be responsible for cones, bibs, extra balls, air pump, ice, extra water, etc.
- ALL teams/coaches should have a 1st Aid Kit and be familiar with its contents.
- ALL medical forms should be carried at ALL times to ALL events.

### ***Risk Management***

Remember that accepting a coaching position means accepting responsibilities.

### **Important Points**

- Never leave a child alone after a practice or game.
- Be certain that players depart with their parent or appropriate individual.
- Avoid being left alone with players who are not your children.
  - Use caution when transporting players.

## **Game Organization**

### **Pre-game**

- Players arrive 30 minutes early.
  - Warm-up Activities
  - Pregame and a drink of water
    - Objectives for the game
- Make a connection between game and practice
  - Line-up
  - Team Cheer

### **During the Game**

- ALL Players should play at least 50% of the game.
- Players should be exposed frequently to all positions.
- Limit Coaching. NO running commentary or threats. Allow the players to make their own decisions. Only give suggestions or recommendations post action.
  - Positive encouragement and praise for good performance.
    - Observe and analyze the game.
  - Say nothing negative to the referee.

### **Halftime**

- Compliment the players as they leave the field.
  - Allow the players to relax.
  - Water and Snacks for the players and coach.
  - Positive encouraging words to ALL players.
- Go back over your pregame objectives and talk about how some or all of them
  - Organize your comments by focusing on offense and defense.
    - Don't single out any individual player for criticism.
      - Positive motivating words to ALL the players.
        - Don't forget the Line-up
        - Team cheer.

### **Post game**

- Take a deep breath.
- Positive words of encouragement for all the players.
  - Team cheer for other team.
  - Shake other teams and referees hand.
- Don't review the game with the players.

## **U12 FIELD SESSIONS**

### *U12 – Last minute practice reminders*

- Remember to select activities/games that fit your practice topic
- The minimum number of activities/games required for a U12 practice should be 3-4. However, be prepared with a few extras activities/games, in case the U12 players' attention span waivers.
- Low intensity activities can be used to transition for one activity to the next without a water break or may be used to monitor and manage the player's energy level.

### **Dribbling Activities:**

#### **Individual Sharks and Minnows**

- Set-up a field 25 yds. by 35 yds.
- Assign two players to be sharks. Put sharks in vests.
  - Make a stack of vests for future sharks.
- Sharks try to kick the minnows' balls out of the space.
- If minnows' balls are kicked out, they rush to put on vests and become sharks.
  - Each game lasts for a set period of time (3-4 min.)
  - Select new sharks and play again.
    - Variations:
      - o Have sharks tag as opposed to kicking the balls away
      - o Have more sharks or sharks with balls

#### **Team Sharks and Minnows**

- Set up field 25x35 yards
- Divide players into two teams and give one team half the balls to dribble inside the field.
- The other team tries to take the balls from the dribbling team and attempts to maintain possession.
- Play for a set time period (3-4 minutes) and count the balls at the end. The team with the majority of balls wins.
  - Set up the other team with half the balls and start over.

### **Haunted House Dribble**

- Set up field 25x35 yards
- All the players have a ball except one or two players. Put the players without balls in pennies as ghosts.
- Coach will give the players a command and the players' with a ball will perform the required dribbling skill. Possible commands:
  - o Dribble with left or right foot only
  - o Stop
  - o Speed up or slow down
  - o Change/Turn
  - o Dribble Out
- o Divide players into two teams and give one team half the balls to dribble inside the field.
- As the players are dribbling the ghosts are trying to steal the other players' balls and dribble them out off the field. If they succeed they switch places with the player whose ball they just dribbled out.
  - Variations:
    - o Ghost tag and switch as opposed to steal balls
    - o Ghost have balls, must perform the same commands, and tag convert the players to ghosts
  - o Don't have ghosts and players switch. Have the players' become ghosts until there are two players left. These players are the new ghosts.

### **Island to Island**

- Field with a 5 yd. zone on both ends. Assign two players to be sharks. Put these players in pennies. Make a stack of pennies on the sideline for future sharks. The islands are the safe zones.

Sharks cannot eat the swimmers when they are on the island. Swimmers try and swim from island to island. Each successful swim is worth 1 point. Sharks try and eat (kick the ball out) the swimmers as they swim to the next island. Eat successful brunch is worth 1 point. After a shark has eaten swimmers, they rush to the stack of pennies and put one on. Then they are a shark and try to eat the swimmers. Swimmers may start on either island. And may swim at their own pace. Once all the swimmers have become sharks. Ask the players their points, select new sharks, and play again.

  - Variations:
    - o Make the island further away
    - o Make the one island into two islands
    - o Add more sharks in the beginning
  - o Add the volcano rule: swimmers may not stay on an island for more than 5 seconds before a volcano erupts and the swimmers lose all their points.
    - o Put a small island in the middle
    - o Make the sharks have balls

### **Break in and Break Out**

- Place a 7 yd. by 7 yd square in the middle of your field. This space will be the jail.
- All the players with balls except two/three. The two/three players without balls will be sheriffs.
- The players with the balls will try to break in (from outside the space) and break out (from the jail). Each successful break is worth one (1) point.
- As the players breaking in and out the sheriffs try and steal they players ball. If the sheriffs steal the players' ball they try to dribble out of the space. Each successful dribble for the sheriff is worth one (1) point.
- Hint: The sheriff's can't steal the players' balls when they are in the jail or when they are outside the space. Also the players don't have to re-enter the field in the same spot that they left it.
- Play for a set time period, 3-4 minutes. Ask the players their points. Pick new sheriffs  
Play again.
  - Variations:
    - o More sheriffs or sheriffs' with balls
    - o Make the distance between the outside and the jail greater
    - o Make the jail larger or smaller

### **Nutmeg**

- Set up field 25x35 yards
- Divide players into three teams and give one-team balls, the second team colored pennies, and have the third team stand throughout the field while making small goals with their legs.
- The team with the balls scores by dribbling/kicking their balls through the legs of the players' making small goals. The defending team scores by stealing the balls and dribbling outside of the space.
  - Play for a set time period (3-4 minutes). Switch teams and play again.
    - Variations:
      - o Smaller or larger field
      - o Allow defenders to score on player goals as well

### **World Cup Dribbling**

- Set-up multiple small fields 15 x 10 yards
  - Play 1v1 for 75 to 90 seconds.
- Dribble the ball over the goal line for one point.
  - Winner moves up one field.
  - Loser moves down one field.
- In case of a tie, the player that moved up the previous game moves up again.
  - Everyone tries to reach the top field.
    - Variations:
      - o Use technical training activities as active rest between games to allow players to recover

### **Passing and Receiving**

Please note that most passing activities are also receiving activities. What makes it a passing or receiving session is the topic that you as the coach chose to highlight during your session. Many of the dribbling activities that you and the players are familiar with can be adjusted or modified to highlight a passing or receiving topic.

#### **Hunter**

- Focus is either passing or receiving
- Divide team into groups of 3 with 2 balls per group.
- One player dribbles with ball while the other two players have one ball between them and try to hit the dribbler's ball.
- Switch after at set time period (2 minutes to 3 minutes)
  - Variations:
    - o Make the field larger
    - o Both "hunters" have a ball

#### **Passing Squares**

- Focus is either passing or receiving
- Divide the team into two groups
- Throughout the field set-up enough small squares (5 yds by 5 yds) for one team of players. All the other players have a ball.
- Players with the ball score one (1) point each time they pass the ball successfully to a player in a square who receives it and passes it back. Players within the square score one (1) point each time they receive the ball successfully.
- Players may not pass the ball to the same square twice in a row.
- Play for a set time period. 2-3 minutes. Ask the players their score and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Reduce or increase the size of the squares.
    - o Give players extra points for players passing with their not so strong foot.
    - o Have the players use different surfaces of the foot or one touch
    - o Develop challenges for the players (patterns, one touch then two touch, etc.)

#### **Falling Meteor**

- Focus is on receiving
- Players toss the ball in the air and touch it before it hits the ground. Then dribbles four touches before tossing it in the air again.
  - Variations:
    - o Challenge the players; touch it twice in a row before it hits the ground.
    - o Use a variety of surfaces to receive ball (feet, thigh, chest, or head)

### **Combat**

- Focus is on moving without the ball
- Coach has all the balls and players are divided into two teams
- If coach tosses out a ball 2 players from each line run out and try to pass the ball back to the coach.
- If the coach tosses out a ball and calls out a color that teams sends 3 players and the other team sends 2 and the teams try to pass the ball back to the coach.
  - Variations:
    - o Change the number of players who participate in the numbers up vs. numbers down situation.

### **Scooby Doo**

- Focus is on passing
- Set-up a field that is 25 yds by 40 yds
- Designate half the team as ghost and half the team as scoobies. Each player has a ball.
  - Ghosts dribble inside the grid.
- Scoobies stand at the edge of the grid and try to hit the ghosts' balls with a pass. The other scoobies retrieve the missed passes.
- Play for a set time period (2 to 3 minutes), change roles and play again.
  - Variations
    - o Change the size of the field.

### **Pass Across**

- Focus is on either passing or receiving
- Set up a field 25 yds by 40 yds with a 5 yd channel in the middle
  - Pairs of players with a ball and two players who are defenders
- Players stand on opposite sides of the channel from their partner
  - Defenders are placed inside the channel
- Players score one (1) point with each successful pass across the channel. Defenders score one (1) point with each successful interception. Hint: Defenders can't take a ball from the same group twice and passing players don't have to stand only in one spot.
- Play for a set time period (2 to 3 minutes). Ask players their points. Change roles and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Increase or decrease size of the channel
    - o More or less defenders

### **Four Corners**

- Focus is on passing or receiving
- Set up field 35 yds long and 30 yds wide. Set up a small square in each corner
- Form three teams: two competing in the middle, one neutral team in the corner areas
- Score with a pass to a neutral player in one of the four corners. If the neutral player receives the ball with two touches and the ball stays in the triangle, the team gets one point
  - Switch roles. Ask players their points. Play again
- Everyone has to touch the ball at least two times (no one-touch!)
  - Variations:
    - o Increase or decrease size of field and squares
    - o Have multiple teams with fewer defenders (pairs or groups of three)
    - o Allow score only after pass back from the player in the square

### **Shooting**

Shooting activities and games need to have maximum realistic repetitions. Make sure that your activities eliminate the use of lines or long waits between repetitions.

### **Receive and Shoot!**

- Set up multiple fields 20 yds. long and 7 yds. wide
- Three players and one ball per field. Set extra balls behind the end of the fields.
- A passes to B. B must control the ball (first touch, if possible) and, with the second touch, take a shot on goalkeeper C from behind the line. If B scores, C stays in goal. If C stops the shot or if B misses, B becomes the goalkeeper.
  - Variations
    - o Goalkeepers may not use their hands
    - o When A passes to B, goalkeeper C may not touch the ball
  - o Don't have a goalkeeper in the middle and have player A serve as a goalkeeper after passing to B

### **Soccer Bowling**

- Set up field 25 yds by 30 yds
- Place as many cones (tall cones work best) as you have on both back lines
  - Form two teams and score by knocking down cone(s) with a shot
- Who can knock down the most cones in a given time period or who knocks down all the cones first or if using short cones, who can hit the cones (coach picks them up) and is the first to have no cones to score on? Play for a set time period or until all the cones have been eliminated or hit. Set-up cones and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Cones spaced through out the field and individual players with a ball. Each successful hit cone equals one (1) point

### **Goal Line Game**

- Set up field 25 by 30 yards
- Two teams. Each team has two players defending their goal line as goalkeepers
- Teams score with a shot over the entire goal line, defended by the two goalkeepers
  - After a few minutes, the field players switch with the goalkeepers
    - Encourage players to take as many shots as possible
      - Variations
        - o More or less goalkeepers

### **Distance Goal Game**

- Set up field 25 by 30 yards with two large goals a short distance off each endline
- Two teams. Each team has two players defending their goals as goalkeepers
  - Teams score with a shot into the goal, defended by the two goalkeepers
    - After a few minutes, the field players switch with the goalkeepers
      - Encourage players to take as many shots as possible
        - Variations
          - o No goalkeepers
          - o Goals on the endline
          - o More than two goals (three or four)

### **Small Sided Games**

For U12 use small-sided games with simple rules and restrictions. Try and limit your coaching to coaching ‘over the game’ and allowing the players to learn through the game and the game’s restrictions.

### **Get Out Of Here!**

- Two teams stand on sideline of small field next to coach, who rolls ball into play.
  - Players play 1v1
  - or 2v2, determined by coach before ball is rolled into play. When ball leaves field, players “Get out of here” and return to teams. Coach continues play with a new group. (Coach is boss of the balls – players don’t chase ball until coach passes it). Player don’t collect balls until all the balls have been played
  - Variations:
    - o Large or small goals

### **One-Goal game (Of course we are going to scrimmage!!)**

- Play a regular game with two teams with each team attacking one goal and defending one goal.
  - Variations:
    - o Vary number of players on field (1v1, 2v2, etc)
    - o Multiple fields
    - o Large or small goals

### **Two wide goals**

- Focus is on making the field wider in attack
- Play a regular game with two teams with each team attacking two goals and defending two goals.
  - Goals should be placed as wide as possible on the endline.
  - Variations:
    - o Vary number of players on field (1v1, 2v2, etc)

### **Over the half line to score**

- Focus is on moving up as a team
- Play a regular game with two teams with each team attacking one goal and defending one goal..
- A half line should be place on the field and in order for a goal to count all attacking players must be over the half line.
  - Variations:
    - o Vary number of players on field (1v1, 2v2, etc)
    - o Have a goalkeeper and make that player be across the half line as well

### **First Back**

- Focus is making the field big, positions, and every pass is important
- Play a regular game with two teams with each team attacking one goal and defending one goal.
  - The coach off the side of the field will control all the balls.
- Whenever a ball goes off of the field, the next ball in comes from the coach, and the balls goes to the first team with all their players standing on their defensive endline.
  - Variations:
    - o Vary the type of service (ground or air balls)
    - o Vary the person to whom you serve the ball
  - o Play a few balls and then allow the players to meet and come up with a plan

## **'TRUTHS' ABOUT CHILDREN AND SPORTS**

### **Most frequently listed reasons for participating in youth soccer:**

1. To have fun.
2. To stay in shape.
3. For the excitement of competition.
4. To improve my skills.
5. To do something that I'm good at.
6. To go to a higher level of Competition.
7. To play as part of a team.
8. For team spirit.
9. To meet new friends.
10. To learn about the game.

### **Most frequently listed reasons for dropping out of soccer:**

1. I was no longer interested.
2. It was no longer fun.
3. I was tired of playing and practicing (boring).
4. I wanted to participate in other non-school activities.
5. This sport conflicts with other sports I wanted to play.
6. My coach was as poor teacher.
7. This sport required too much time.
8. Coach only played his/her favorites.
9. I did not like the coach.
10. There was too much pressure and emphasis on winning.

### **Reasons Children would return or continue to play soccer:**

1. Practices were more fun.
2. Coaches understood players better.
2. Practices or games did not conflict with social life.
3. I could play more.
4. The coach understood the sport better.
5. The coach was a better teacher.
6. Games and practices were scheduled at different times.
7. The coach didn't yell as much.
8. There was less emphasis on winning.
9. There were more leagues so other players were closer to my ability.
10. The sport did not take so much time.

## **Dealing with Injuries**

### **Soccer Injuries - Prevention**

- A well planned developmentally appropriate program for the players.
  - Proper use of equipment (shin guards, no jewelry, appropriate clothes).
    - Upkeep and monitoring of the playing surface.
  - Proper fitting shoes, proper type of shoe for surface.
    - Ample water supply and breaks.
- Avoid scheduling training during the hottest periods of the day and when there is intense humidity.
- Full rehabilitation of an injury prior return to play, determined by a physician.

### **Soccer Injuries - Care**

Treatment for minor injuries such as sprains, strains, and contusions is referred to as RICE (Rest, Ice, Compression, and Elevation). The RICE principle is the only first aid treatment that is safe treatment for a sports injury without professional advice. The treatment helps in 3 different ways.

RICE treatments, limited to 20 minutes, can do no harm to any type of injury. Almost anything else (including heat applications can cause harm in some instances).

### **General Principles when handling an injured player:**

- Avoid panic.
  - Treat the injury. Don't assess blame.
    - Use common sense.
    - Seek professional help.
- Check for breathing, bleeding, consciousness, deformity, discoloration, and shock.
- Dependent upon the nature of the injury, avoid moving the player.
  - Inspire confidence and reassure the player.
    - Determine how the injury occurred.
  - Use certified athletic trainers when available.
    - Always ERR of the side of caution.
- It is recommended that if a player has had medical attention, they must have written permission from the doctor to return to activity.

## **1. Final Thoughts**

- Positions/Playing Time-Flexible and at least 50%
- Atmosphere-Fun, No Stress
- Screaming/Chess on Grass-Avoid at all costs
- Referee Interaction-Friendly
- Managing the Sideline-You can do it!
- Managing the Score line-Especially when “up”.
- Emphasis on winning-Eliminate it
- Age Appropriate instructions that don't change the integrity of the Game.
- Your team is a reflection of you. Your demeanor and behavior affects your players.
- Players are grouped by age and not ability.
- What is the next level for players? What steps can be taken? (Competitive?)
- You represent SOCCER to your players.

Thank you for volunteering your time  
at SLSC!

