



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*

- U8 players should practice for 60 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.
- Be prepared before practice. ‘Not preparing is preparing to fail’. For U8 players have at least 5 activities per practice.
  - One topic per practice.
- 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.

## **Focus for U8 players**

### *Technical Skills*

#### **U8 – ‘Partner and the ball’**

- Dribbling
- Passing
- Receiving
- Shooting

### **Game Awareness & Strategy (Tactical)**

#### **U8**

- Everyone defends and everyone attacks
- Moving away from your teammate when they have the ball

#### **Essential Knowledge**

#### **U8**

- Basic Soccer Rules of Play
  - ‘Love of the Game’
  - 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.

### **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 (Age Appropriate)**

All activities for U8 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 and should be introduced at the U8 level. However, U8 players WILL NOT NOR SHOULD THEY BE EXPECTED TO stay in their positions. They must be allowed to interact freely within the game. Soccer doesn't have 'pre-planned plays' during the run of play. If your U8 players are out of position, it is okay and it is developmentally appropriate. Positions are only given as a starting point for the players.

## **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.

## **Game Organization**

### **Pre-game**

- Players arrive ready to Play 15 minutes early.
  - Warm-up Activity
- Line-up and a drink of water
  - 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. Allow the players make their own decisions. Give suggestions post action only.
- Positive encouragement and praise for good performance.
  - Observe 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. Example: ‘You girls are playing great, with super dribbling and passing. Keep up the good work!’
- Positive motivating words to ALL the players. Example: ‘Let’s go have FUN. YEAH!’
  - Line-up
  - Team cheer.

### **Post game**

- Take a deep breath.
- Positive words of encouragement for all the players.
- Team cheer for other team. (2,4,6,8, who do we appreciate..)
  - Shake other teams and referees hand.
- Team celebration – Tunnel, snacks, and good-bye.
  - Don’t review the game with the players.

## **U8 Fields Sessions**

*U8 – Last minute practice reminders*

- Remember to select activities/games that fit your practice topic
- The minimum number of activities/games required for a U8 practice should be 2. However, be prepared with a few extras activities/games, in case the U8 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.

U8 Model Session – 60 minutes

Warm-up Activity – (10 minutes)

Water break – (5 minutes)

2nd Activity – (20 minutes)

Water Break – (5 minutes)

3rd Activity or small-sided scrimmage (4 v 4) – (15 minutes)

Cool Down – (5 minutes) – Very Low Intensity

**Dribbling Activities:**

**Freeze Tag**

• Each player has a ball. Assign two players as taggers. Put taggers in pennies. Have the players try and dribble away from the taggers. Players are frozen if the taggers tag their backs. Once frozen players spread their legs. Players may become unfrozen if another player plays the ball through their open legs. Game last until all players are frozen or a set time period. Select new taggers and repeat.

• Variations:

- o More taggers.
- o Taggers without a ball.
- o Have less taggers.
- o Coach is the tagger.

**Road Map**

- Place a 5 yd. by 5 yd square in each corner of your field. Allow the players to name the square with a state name. Each player has a ball. Assign two players to be the sheriffs/state troopers. The states are the safe zone. Speeders cannot be caught for speeding in the states. Speeders try and dribble from state to state without being caught by the sheriffs for speeding. Each successful dribble to another state is worth 1 point. Each speeders ball kicked away by a sheriff is worth 1 point. After being caught by a sheriff, the speeder gathers their ball and begins traveling again. Play for a set time period, 3-4 minutes. Ask the players their points. Pick new sheriffs and play again.

- Variations:

- o No Sheriffs; no balls kicked away; dribble from state to state in a pattern
  - o More sheriffs or sheriffs without balls
  - o Make the distance between states greater
- o Assign different point value for length dribble vs. width dribble.

### **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 zone. 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. Eating 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
- o Use partners and pass from island to island

### **Passing Activities**

### **Ball Blast**

- Each player has a ball. Place two easy to distinguish balls in the middle of the field. These balls are the special balls. Distinguish which special ball belongs to which team. The players try and blast their special ball over the other teams end line. Play until one team's ball crosses the other team's end line. Reorganize the balls and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Increase the field size.
    - o Reduce the number of specials ball to one. Have both teams blast at the one ball.
    - o Reduce the field size.
    - o Change the special ball to a larger ball i.e. beach ball
  - o Allow the players to blast from any point on the field other than the other teams end line.

#### Individual Battleship (confined area)

- Each player has a ball. Set-up cones through the area. Players dribble around the space and try to pass their ball into the cone. Each successful pass equals 1 point. Play for 3 minutes. Repeat and try and improve score.
  - Variations:
    - o How quickly can all the 'tall cones' get knocked over?
    - o Add two defenders who protect the battleships (airplanes).

### **OK Coral**

- Each player has a ball. Players dribble around the space and try and pass their ball into the other players' balls. Each successful pass equals 1 point.
  - Variations:
    - o Use 'not so strong foot' and hit a ball equals 2 points.

### **Receiving Activities**

#### **Passing Gates**

- In a field with 6-8 small goals in the field of play, players will work in pairs with one ball between two. The pairs will pass back and forth between a small goal. Each successful pass is worth 1 point. Play for a set time period. 2-3 minutes. Ask the players their score and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Reduce the size of the goals.
    - o Have the pairs move from goal to goal after each pass.
    - o Give players extra points for players passing with their not so strong foot.

### **Falling Meteor**

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- 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, how many in a row can they touch, etc.

### **Shooting activities**

#### **Take Out The Trash**

- Divide your field in half. Divide the group into two teams. Encourage each team to have a team name. Put each team in one half of the field and give each team half the balls to start. Each team must take out the trash and shoot the balls to the other teams' half of the field. This taking out the trash continues back and forth for a set time period. 4-5 minutes. At the end of the time period the team with the fewest balls on their side win the game. After time count the balls, announce the winner, reorganize the balls and play again.
  - Variations:
    - o Make a channel in between the two fields.
    - o Make players retrieve balls that they passed out of bounds.
    - o Require players to pass with their not so strong foot.
    - o Reduce the size of the field

#### **Team Battleship**

- Set-up a field with two rows of 10-15 cones in the middle area about 15 yds. apart. Divide the players into two teams and place the teams behind a row of cones. Each player will have a ball to shot. On command all the players will shot their balls in an attempt to knock down the other teams cones. Coach determines the command. There is no defending of the cones, players must shot their ball and then step back as to not interfere with the other teams shots. After all the balls have stopped moving, players gather a ball from their side of the field and prepare to shot again. The first team to knock down all the other team's cones sinks that team's battleship. Set up the cones and play again. Play 2-3 times as sinking the battleship takes a fair amount of time.
  - Variations:
    - o Increase the distance between the two rows of cones.
    - o Require the players to shot with their not so strong foot.
    - o Reduce the distance between the two rows of cones.
    - o Place the cones in the battleship close together. This means two cones will be knocked over more often.

### **Small-sided games:**

### **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
    - o Parent goalies

### **Six-Goal game**

- Play a regular game with two teams with each team attacking three goals and defending three goals.
  - Variations:
    - o Vary number of players on the field
    - o Multiple fields
    - o Large or small goals
    - o Parent goalies

### **One-Goal game**

- 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, ...)
    - o Multiple fields
    - o Large or small goals
    - o Parent goalies

## **'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?
- You represent SOCCER to your players.

Thank you for volunteering your time  
at SLSC!

