

Player Development Guideline

Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Boys and Girls Soccer

www.holdenyouthsoccer.org





Holden Youth Soccer

Holden Youth Soccer Mission

Our Mission is to promote the game of soccer as a means of improving the physical, psychological, and social well-being of children while allowing every player an opportunity to play at a level that considers their ability.

Our Core Values include sportsmanship, fair play, and to educate:

1. our community on the benefits of soccer,
2. coaches as the cornerstone of player development, and
3. players to develop competence in the sport of soccer.

We strive to create an environment that develops respect, promotes leadership, and instills confidence while making the game of soccer available to all who desire to participate. We aim to be progressive and innovative in program, coach, and player development

Holden Youth Soccer Goals

Our goal as a group of volunteers on the HYS board, volunteer coaches, parents of our kids, our kids, and referees is to **BRING KIDS BACK YEAR ON YEAR!** This is our measure of success. We will accomplish this with three fundamental principles of coaching!!

Maximize Enjoyment!



Providing an enjoyable experience for players is far and away our top priority, want them to come back.

Maximize Repetition!



We look to provide players with a high number of repetitions of key technical skills—particularly foot work, juggling, shooting, and passing/receiving.

Maximize Empowerment!



We look to empower players to take risks on the field, contribute thoughts and ideas, take on responsibilities, and generally have a sense of ownership.



Player Development Guideline Objective

The goal of this document is to:

- Establish clear and age-appropriate goals and objectives so our coaches, players, and parents know what we are working toward.
- Establish objectives so coaches have a common understanding of which skills players should have when they proceed to the next age group.
- Establish age-appropriate priorities and focus areas in the four elements of the game (technical, tactical, psychological, and physical).
- Ensure consistency among our programs, so we're all teaching the same way and using the same vocabulary.
- Create confident coaches that are better prepared for the season ahead.



Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Player Development Overview

The primary focus of Grade 5 & 6 soccer is to introduce a range of intermediate technical skills, introduce some tactical concepts, and for the players to have fun.

Transition Considerations

A typical Grade 5 & 6 (U12) player that starts at age 10 will play 4 seasons (2 years) of play at this level before they move up to Grade 7 & 8 (U14). They may or may not have played at the previous U10 level before.

For most Grade 5 & 6 Players:

- Now playing on a much bigger field with larger goals
- Have been used to playing 7v7 games
- Have basic positional awareness but lack understanding and discipline at this scale
- Are not new to rules (offside, throw-ins, corner kicks, goal-kicks or fouls) but lack discipline to follow them
- Will be challenged by the larger field size

Typical Characteristics of Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Players

1. **Have an understanding of abstract concepts** – can visualize and understand hypothetical situations. Players understand dynamic pictures on the field and can act accordingly.
2. **Wide range of abilities and maturity levels** – there are a wide range of abilities and maturity between children at this age – children all develop at varying paces. Your challenge to is to manage this range in your practice in a way that challenges each player at a level that is reasonable for that player.
3. **Physical challenges** – players need to warm up and stretch – muscles pulls and nagging injuries can become prevalent. Body co-ordination may depend on whether or not they are in a growth spurt or not. Playing too much can lead to overuse injuries and or burn-out.
4. **Creativity and risk** – its easy for players based on egos to stop taking risks at this age – encourage players to be creative and to take risks – we never want them to stop doing these things . Players at this age like to solve problems for themselves.
5. **Shift from coach to peers** – Peer evaluation and judgment is a constant, egos are sensitive and needs to be managed carefully. Ask players for feedback – they will tell you how things are going. Try to hand over leadership and ownership to the team.



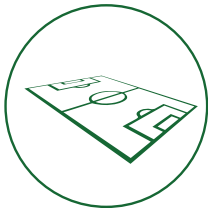
General Player Development Objectives

This document will help to identify key objectives within the four key areas of player development. The priority areas will evolve for each age group progression. The key areas of player development across all age groups and levels are:



Technical Development– These are the skills used to play the game, i.e., the “fundamentals”. This includes things like dribbling, passing, shooting, receiving, tackling, juggling, heading, etc.

Along with making sure players have fun, technical skills are probably the most important area for youth players to focus on.



Tactical Development – Tactics for youth soccer focuses largely on decision making, i.e., how players can make the correct decision given a particular situation. We should try to understand the progression of tactics and develop the players in the proper sequence, so that players are comfortable solving easier problems (1v1, 2v1) before they move on to solve more complex ones (4v4).



Psychological Development – For youth soccer, this relates to whether the player is having fun playing soccer, and other aspects such as how they deal with winning and losing, their level of motivation, and how they interact with teammates, coaches, officials, and their parents.




Physical Development – Fitness for youth soccer players can be largely achieved by just letting them play soccer, although some of the older age groups (U14 and maybe U12) may start incorporating speed and conditioning into practice games and activities.





Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Player Development Objectives


The following key training priorities are recommended by US Youth Soccer and Mass Youth Soccer for coaches of Grade 5 & 6 (U12) players. A focus on helping players develop these skills and very basic tactics is critical as it will serve as the foundation for skills and tactics that will be introduced when these players move on to the next age group.

The key focus is building off the basic and intermediate technical aspects of the game, introducing tactical concepts, and ensure all the players are having fun.

Technical 

Tactical 

Psychological 

Physical 

Key

Low Importance





High Importance





Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Player Development Objectives



In the table below, we will go into the specific elements within each area that players will be encouraged to learn before entering the next age level.

Priority Area	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus
<p>Technical</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dribble with all sides of both feet (inside, outside, sole) • Dribble out of trouble • Dribble past someone • Changes of speed/direction and turns • Soft first touch • Receiving the ball with inside and outside of foot and chest • Shielding – Players should develop proper technique to shield the balls from opponents • Shooting with both feet (with inside of foot and laces) • Shooting for power, for accuracy and volleying • Passing with inside and outside of both feet • Basic thrown-in technique • Introduce proper defending technique • Introduce block tackles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce proper goalkeeping positioning (hands and body) • Goalkeeping - ball distribution (throwing, rolling, punting) • Goalkeeping basic diving from the ready position • Goalkeeping - collecting balls from the attacking player's feet
<p>Tactical</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 v 1 (attacking and defending) • 2 v 1 (attacking and defending) • 2 v 2 (attacking and defending) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate transition from defense to offense or vice versa • Width and depth in the attack • Possession and support • Pressure and cover • Player movement on throw-ins • Goalkeeping - Calling for the ball when receiving with defending players • Goalkeeping - Communicating with the other players on the team during the game



<p>Psychological</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep it fun and enjoyable!!! This will help foster a desire to play (intrinsic motivation) ● Encourage imagination and creativity ● Build confidence ● Foster our players to be part of a team ● Promote independent decision making ● Promote problem solving ● Encourage player to learn to deal with winning / losing ● Encourage players to watch games on TV ● Increase Demands ● Maintain Discipline 	
<p>Physical</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Just play soccer!!!! ● Make sure every kid has a ball as much as possible at their feet ● Introducing dynamic stretching into practices and warm-ups ● Proper warm-up, cool-down and stretching 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● No laps ● No lines ● No Lectures



Grade 5 & 6 (U12) Player Development Overview

The period this age group is entering is often referred to as the dawn of tactics. Typically players of this age begin to understand the basic tactical situations of the game and are more aware of movement off the ball and the reasons for tactical choices. Problem-solving becomes systematic and these players tend to learn quickly.

Children of this age typically are beginning to develop abstract awareness, so they can understand coaches when we talk about space and runs off of the ball. However, just because they understand these basic tactical concepts does not mean we should focus on these concepts entirely.

Players are still developing technically at this age, especially as they go through growth spurts and awkward phases. It is quite common to look out at a U12 field and see players that are physically the size of adults. Yet, other U12 players appear as if they could still be in the 3rd grade. These children are all growing at different rates and undergoing physical, mental, emotional, and social changes.

The average age for the beginning of pubescence in girls is 10 years old with a range of 7 to 14; for boys it is age 12 with a range of 9 to 16. As coaches, we need to be sensitive to these changes and their social implications when coaching this age group. Some players may pick up skills quickly, where as others may struggle. However, it may be the case that this is simply the result of differences in maturation.

In a year, the slower developer may surpass the player who developed earlier. For this reason we need to be patient and keep open minds about all players through these years. They are aware of their struggles more than anyone else as peer evaluation is omnipresent at these ages. When we see them struggling, it is important for us to help them and to keep the game fun.

Player Development Web References and Resources:

- Mass Youth Soccer week by week practice plans offering proper coaching technique and example drills.

[https://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/Grade 5 & 6 \(U12\)/](https://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaches/Grade%205%20&%206%20(U12)/)

- Holden Youth Soccer has posted other coaching resources available for download at:

<http://hys-coaches-blog.blogspot.com/>

Player Development Curriculum Updates

Holden Youth Soccer wishes to thank its Board of Directors for their work in contributing to this development curriculum.

Comments and Suggestions are always appreciated

Please forward all comments pertaining to the coach's handbook or players development handbook to the Director of Development who can be located at rhall@holdenyouthsoccer.org

