

COACHING U-8s
Some Characteristics Of U-8 Children

- Attention span a bit longer than U-6, but still not at the "team at all costs" intensity.
- Inclined more toward group activities - key word here is inclined.
- Still in motion - twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements.
- Still very sensitive (dislike personal failure in front of peers) ridicule from the coach in front of, the group is very destructive here.
- Boys and girls still quite similar in physical and psychological development - no facial blemish concerns, yet.
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a two wheeler at this point).
- Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling - natural instinct, when asked to however - "I can't do that."
- More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important) - unfortunately, they are not professional soccer players.
- STILL LACK SENSE OF PACE - GO FLAT OUT- will chase the ball until they drop.

THE U-8 PLAYER AND THE COMPONENTS OF SOCCER

Technical

- It is left to the youngster which type of kick to apply. With practice the player develops their own style of kicking.
- This applies also to the stopping of the ball, heading, and dribbling.
- At this stage it is a matter of only basic moves resulting from play.

Tactical

- This age group is already aware of possession of the ball and will compete for it.
- This is the stage where the fundamentals of tactics are introduced during game play.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

DRIBBLING SESSION I

I. Warm-up

- a) In grid, have players walk
- b) Skip. Different ways to skip
- c) Skip higher than someone. Skip highest.
- d) Walk, but as far away from everyone else as possible. Faster.
- e) Same but run.
- f) Same but add a ball. Faster

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) "Everybody's it." Each player with a ball. Try to tag everyone else. Don't get tagged.
- b) "Knockout" Each player with a ball. Try to keep your ball and knock others out of the grid. If knocked out...do 5 toe touches and return.
- c) 2's with one ball. Same as above but if your ball gets knocked out, both players must go get ball and do 5 toe touches before returning.
- d) Four goal game with gate keepers. 2v2 in the middle of four goals that have gate keepers standing in them. Individual gate keepers step in and out of the goals on a signal from the coach. The players playing 2v2 in the middle may only score by dribbling through a goal that is "open".

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two small goals with no GK.
- Encourage dribbling but let them play.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

DRIBBLING SESSION II

I. Warm-up

- a) Every player with a ball, dribbling.
- b) Players act as if their ball was a car and they're "driving" in traffic. They should slow down, stop, speed up, or put their car in reverse as needed.
- c) Players use a body part to stop the ball, and then dribble the ball in a new direction. (coach calls out which body part to use)

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) "Shadow Dribble". Groups of two, both with a soccer ball. One player dribbles the soccer ball while changing speed and direction, the other player follows as closely as possible without hitting the lead player.
- b) "Everybody's It". All players with a soccer ball in a grid. Players should dribble their ball and tag the other players while trying not to be tagged themselves.
- c) "Pac-Man". All players in a grid, one with a soccer ball (the Pac-Man). The player with the ball attempts to tag the other players. When a player is tagged he/she runs to get a ball and is now a Pac-Man also.

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without a GK
- a) All players with a ball. They dribble until, on coaches command, they all try to score on their own goal by dribbling through it.
 - b) The team that scores all of their soccer balls first gets a point.
 - c) Same but, use four soccer balls. Teams may now attempt to steal the soccer balls from the other team.
 - d) Now, only use one soccer ball (the game). The players may score any time by passing, dribbling or shooting the ball through the goal.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

DRIBBLING SESSION III

I. Warm-up

- a) Players dribble in and out of each other in a confined area.
- b) Players toss their ball in the air and then dribble to the closest ball found.
- c) Two players without a ball chase and tag others who have a ball. When tagged, players are "frozen" until coach "unfreezes" them. Switch roles of players.
- d) Coach has a pile of soccer balls. The coach kicks or throws the soccer balls in all directions. The players chase the soccer balls and dribble them back to the pile at the coaches feet. The players objective is to never let the pile get down to zero.

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) Put out as many cones as there are players. Players dribble randomly until you command that they dribble to a cone. They should all explode to a cone and freeze with the ball.
- b) Same, but add one or two "Ball Bandits" who may steal the soccer balls. When they steal a soccer ball, the roles change.
- c) In groups of three, play 1v2. The player who has the soccer ball tries to dribble and keep it, the others try to steal it.
- d) Two equal groups of four or five are separated by fifteen yards. They jog or skip until coach calls the names of one player from each group and rolls a soccer ball in between the two groups. Those two players run to win the soccer ball and compete to dribble it back to their group. Which team can bring more soccer balls back to their group?

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 with no GK.
- Encourage dribbling but let them play.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

PASSING SESSION I

I. Warm-up

- a) "Fetch". Each player with a soccer ball. Coach kicks or throws soccer balls and each player chases the ball and brings it back to the coach. Start with the players bringing the ball back any way that they want, then ask that they bring it back only using their feet.
- b) Same, but put the players in groups of two. Each group of two must bring the soccer ball back to the coach in a variety of ways. Ex: two elbows and one head, each player must touch the ball 4 times, each player may only touch the ball two times each time he/she receives it, etc.

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) Each player has a soccer ball in a confined area. Each player tries to pass the soccer ball into someone else's soccer ball for a point.
- b) "Passing Pac-man". All players are in a grid, one with a soccer ball who tries to pass his soccer ball into the feet of the other players who are trying to elude him/her. If the other players are hit they quickly get a soccer ball of their own and now become another Pac-man.
- c) Groups of two with one soccer ball in a confined area. Pairs should imagine that their soccer ball is a paint brush. Each pair should attempt to paint the entire area (canvas) with their paint brush by passing it to each other. Add "ball-bandits".
- d) Four goal game with gate keepers. 2v2 in the middle of four goals that have gate keepers standing in them. Individual gate keepers step in and out of the goals on a signal from the coach. The players playing 2v2 in the middle may only score by passing to a teammate through a goal that is "open".

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK.
- Encourage passing but let them play

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

PASSING SESSION II

I. Warm up

- a) Players walking, coach asks them to get in groups by calling out a number. The players must quickly form groups of that number.
- b) The same but have players jog or skip while waiting for coach to call a number.
- c) The same but coach should call out a math problem. Ex: "Get in groups of four plus two."
- d) The same but give half of the group soccer balls. After getting into their groups, coach can give an instruction like "which group can make six passes the quickest?"

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) Use cones to form ten small (two yard) goals. Players should be in groups of two with one soccer ball. The players have 45 seconds to attempt to pass the ball through the goals to their partner as many times as possible. The players can't score on the same goal twice in a row. Repeat...can the pairs beat their last score?
- b) Four goal game. Groups of two with one soccer ball per pair in the middle of four small goals. The pairs attempt to pass the ball through the goals to their partner as many times as possible in 45 seconds. The players can't score on the same goal twice in a row. Use two ball-bandits that try to steal the soccer balls.
- c) "Get out". 2v2 or 3v3 on a small field (15 x 25) with two goals. Have players ready to come on quickly for both teams. When a goal is scored, the team that was scored on has to "get out" and they are quickly replaced by the players that were waiting to come on. If the ball goes out of bounds, both teams "get out" and are replaced by the players that were waiting to come on. This is a fast moving game, so the coach should be sure to have a supply of soccer balls at his feet. The coach may want to make a restriction that the players should make three passes before scoring.

III. Larger group activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK.
- Encourage passing

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

PASSING SESSION III

I. Warm up

- a) "Fetch". Each player with a ball. The coach kicks or throws the soccer balls that should be returned to the coach as quickly as possible any way the players want. "Who can bring their ball back the fastest?"
- b) The same, but now the players must dribble it back and then pass it to coach.
- c) The same, but now coach moves and the players must make eye contact with coach before passing it to him/her.
- d) The same, but now the players are in groups of two with one soccer ball and must perform various passing tasks before returning it to coach (Ex: four passes before returning it to coach).

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) "Moving Targets". Have players move in a confined space with a ball. Every other ball represents a moving target. Ask players to keep track of the number of targets they hit in a given amount of time. Repeat and beat your record.
- b) "Quick Pass". Players in pairs with one soccer ball each pair. Ask players to make as many quick passes as they can while moving in a confined area. Again, set a time limit and repeat to beat your record.
- c) "Turkey Shoot". Set down a dozen cones over a wide area. Explain to the players (in pairs with one ball) that they are going on a turkey shoot. The cones are the turkeys. Ask them to keep track of the number of turkeys they shoot and to reset any cones that they knock over. Partners should discover that it would help if they pass to their teammate to get closer to a "turkey".
- d) "Passing through bridges". Ask half of your team to assume a bridge-like position (Bend over and place your hands on the ground so that you form an arch). Instruct the other players (in pairs with one ball) to dribble and/or pass around until they can pass to each other through a "bridge".
- e) The same, but add a couple "ball-bandits" who hold pinnies in their hand and may steal the soccer balls.

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK. Encourage Passing.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

SHOOTING SESSION I

I. Warm up

- a) All players with a ball. Dribbling with no restrictions.
- b) Ask the players to dribble the soccer ball and then to pop it up in the air using their laces (on coaches command).
- c) Players in pairs with one soccer ball. Coach places six to eight cones around the playing area. Ask players to "shoot" their soccer ball to their partner. Every time a player shoots the soccer ball to their partner, he/she must run around any one of the cones that coach has placed around the playing area to "re-energize" before receiving and shooting the soccer ball again. "Which pair can shoot the soccer ball to each other the most times?"

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) Every player with a soccer ball. Give each player a number. Ask all the players to dribble their soccer balls. When coach calls a players number, the player quickly picks the soccer ball up and rolls it between his/her legs towards the goal, then chases it to shoot on goal. Call numbers frequently so all players are active.
- b) Same as above, but now the players throw the ball in the air and shoot on goal before the third bounce.
- c) Set up games of 2v2 with goals approx. 10 yards apart. As quickly as a shot is taken or the ball leaves the area, the server (coach) provides another ball. Set up multiple fields so all of the players are playing. You may choose to have two teams of two waiting to quickly rotate in every 60 seconds.
- d) Same as above, but have the players start in a sitting position. When the soccer ball is served they quickly get up and try to shoot on goal.
- e) 3v3 in the penalty area. Coach makes four goals, one on each side of the penalty area. Coach serves soccer balls to the players from outside the penalty area. The players may score on any of the four goals, but whenever the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the two teams go off and two new teams quickly come on.

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK.
- Encourage shooting.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

SHOOTING SESSION II

I. Warm up

- a) Every player with a ball. Ask players to dribble in and out of each other in a defined area.
- b) Explain that the players should pretend to be cars in a parking lot. Players must avoid traffic and collisions. When other cars are in their area they must use their foot-break and change directions.
- c)
 - 1) Ask players to balance with one foot on the ball. Switch or alternate feet as fast as possible.
 - 2) Ask them to balance the ball on their forehead while doing a deep knee bend.
 - 3) have them lay down with the ball under the back, and roll back and forth while trying to stay balanced over the soccer ball.

II. Individual to Small Group Activities

- a) Coach places fifteen to twenty cones over a 30x30 area. Send the players on a hunting trip to shoot at any cone they see. Have them keep track of their hits. The only requirement is that they pick up any cone that they hit.
- b) Same as above, but coach is a moving target that counts for two points if hit.
- c) Play 3v3 to one full size goal. Have a large supply of soccer balls to keep the action going. As soon as a shot occurs, send in another soccer ball. Keep the players going for about a minute. Change the six players.
- d) Play 3v3. Set up three small goals with cones (3yds). Tell the players that they can score on any goal they choose. Play with two or three soccer balls at first, then take them away until there is eventually only one soccer ball.

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK.
- Encourage shooting.

U-8/U-9 TRAINING

SHOOTING SESSION III

I. Warm up

- a) All players with a soccer ball in a confined area. They should dribble in and out of each other.
- b) Same as above, but the players should use any part of their body except their feet to move the ball.
- c) Same as above, but on coaches signal the players should roll their soccer ball five to ten yards away and quickly get any other soccer ball as fast as possible. Continue.
- d) Same as above, but on coaches signal the players strike the soccer ball with their foot and quickly find someone else's soccer ball as fast as possible. Continue.

II. Individual to small Group Activities

- a) All players with a soccer ball in a confined area. The object is to shoot your soccer ball and hit someone else's soccer ball.
Players should keep track of their hits.
- b) Same as above, but form two teams of equal numbers. Each player may only shoot at the soccer ball of the opposite color.
- c) "Get out". 2v2 on a small field (15 x 25) with two goals.
Have players ready to come on quickly for both teams. When a goal is scored, the team that was scored on has to "get out" and they are quickly replaced by the players that were waiting to come on. If the ball goes out of bounds, both teams "get out" and are replaced by the players that were waiting to come on. This is a fast moving game, so the coach should be sure to have a supply of soccer balls at his feet. Encourage shooting.
- d) Same as above, but progress to 3v3.

III. Larger Group Activity

- Play 3v3 or 4v4 to two goals without GK.
- Encourage shooting.