

US Youth Soccer in conjunction with
American Sport Education Plan



The Volunteer Coach

What youth coaches need to know for a successful season

» Four elements of Coach Preparation

- > Training activities
- > Training session plans
- > Running a training session
- > Seasonal planning

» Five Characteristics of an Effective Coach

- > C – Comprehension
- > O – Outlook (Philosophy)
- > A – Affection (Concern)
- > C – Character
- > H - Humor

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» What motivates people to coach?

- > No other person volunteered and the team needed someone to coach.
- > Spend more time with their daughter or son.
- > The person loves the sport and wants to share their passion by working with kids.

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- » Coaches, understandably tend to focus on very tangible elements: competition and training.
- » Competition outcomes are unpredictable
- » Value of Season Planning and Training Session Planning
- » Importance of being able to make adjustments when things don't go as planned
- » The fact that you have decided to coach young athletes probably means that you think participation in sports is important. These three examples illustrate a number of motivating factors and there are more variations on these themes.



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Most coaches focus on the elements of competition and training, which addresses the question – “How do I get my team prepared to play?” So let’s start with that. Soccer is not a predictable game. A team can have 20 chances to score and still lose to a team that musters only one chance. All a coach can do is manipulate the percentages as best you can in your favor. Consider while planning your season and your training sessions and running the activities during training sessions, that it won’t always work out as planned. There are too many uncontrollable factors over which coaches have no control – weather, field conditions, illness of players, performance of the opposition, etc. Just wait until your team’s shots hit the woodwork and rebound out to remember that it often is a game of inches.





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- Training session vs. practice ... understanding the difference
- What's best for the athletes ... more than just a recipe book of drills
- Think productive training sessions built on dynamic activities



» Well let's first give a few definitions.

- > Practice = what a player should do alone or with a friend – trying to improve ball skills and fitness.
- > Training = what players and coaches should do together – trying to learn the rules of the game, fair play, new ball skills, general strategies of the game.

» Next the difference between drills and activities.

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Many coaches want to know about drills they can do during practice. Here we'll explain why you need a bit more than a recipe book of drills, why you should use activities instead of drills and why it's a training session and that practice is something else.



Drills

- » Static
- » Rigid Structure
- » Lines
- » Boring
- » No Thought
- » Age Inappropriate

Game-Like Activities

- » Dynamic
- » Flexible Structure
- » Free Movement
- » Fun
- » Decision Making
- » Age Appropriate

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» During your training session avoid the three L's.

- > No Lines
- > No Laps
- > No Lectures



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» Decision Making

- > The most important part of a player's body to develop is the soccer brain. Soccer is a game of constant problem solving. Thinking for themselves is a crucial skill for talented players. Decision making needs to be present in every training session. When that happens then awareness and thinking fast on your feet have a chance to occur during a match.



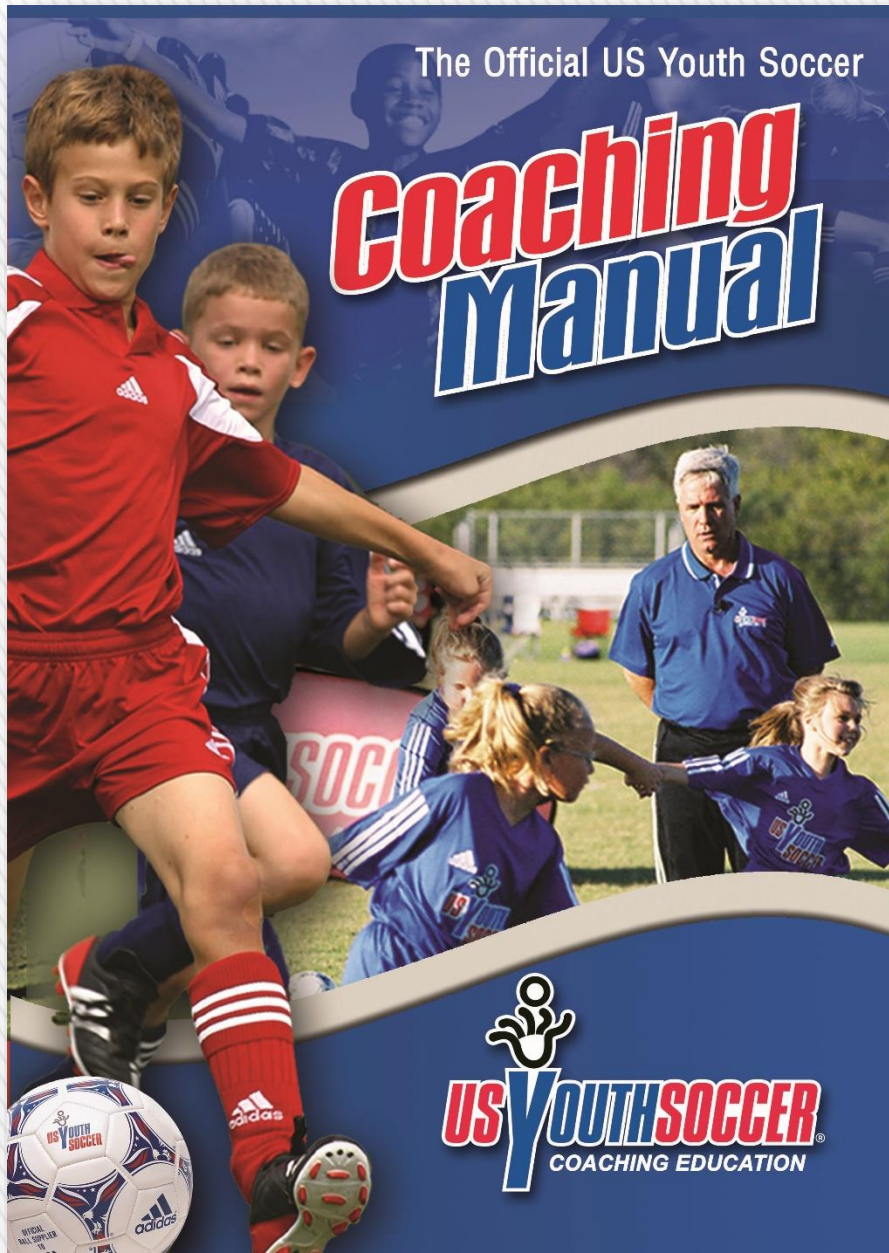
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» Our last foundational concept is to have training sessions and matches that are **player-centered**. Too many youth coaches take a coach-centered approach to youth sport. That is with the coach as “commander” and the players as “cogs in the wheel” which has the coach making most of the decisions during matches and training sessions. This coach-centered approach does not help players meet the demands of a free flowing game.

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For greater detail on these concepts and more please refer to [The Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual](#) from US Youth Soccer and [Coaching Youth Soccer 5th Edition](#) from Human Kinetics.



Training Activities

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» During a training session a coach controls the equipment. Take into account the use of balls (various types), cones (a variety of shapes and colors), goals of various sizes (actual goals or use cones, coaching sticks, corner flags, gear bags, etc.). If you use portable goals you **MUST** be sure they are properly anchored!

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- » In training sessions present problems of “what to do?” and “when to do it?” and not just “how is it done?”
 - > This objective can be achieved through the use of game-like activities. The activities challenge the player’s skill and puts the skill used into the right moment in the game.
- » **Guided Discovery**
 - > Getting players to read the game. Guided discovery helps to develop anticipation players.
- » **Game-like Activities**
 - > Activities challenge players within all four components of the game – fitness, psychology, tactics and technique.

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Consider the ability level of your players, both tactically and technically, when choosing activities.





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Player development is an organic process. You cannot fully predict the outcome. You can only create the conditions under which players can flourish.



Training Session Plans

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Always write out a session plan for each training session you conduct.

Remember, plan the practice and practice the plan.

Well yes it' supposed to be a training session, but you get the idea.



» Coaching Organization

> Preparation

- + Session Plan: in order to be efficient during training sessions all coaches must prepare a session plan. Regardless of a coach's experience preparation prior to training is essential to a dynamic and rewarding training session.
- + Time: the coach has to plan and manage time during the session.

> Before the Session

- + Equipment: Have all the necessary materials prepared.
- + Initial Set Up: make sure you have the spaces organized and plan for a smooth transition from one activity to another.

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» Structure of the Training Session

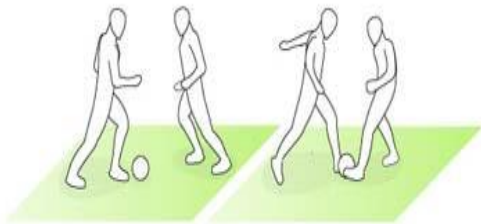


> Flexible Components

- + Space: keep the organization of the space simple. The initial set up, with small changes, should be maintained throughout the whole session. Resetting cones during the session can easily disturb the flow of training.
- + Time: time is flexible. Let the session flow and make your coaching points at the right time, using breaks to give feedback to the group.
- + Intensity: use short periods of time at high-intensity, some low-intensity activities and use resting periods to explain a coaching point or two.
- + Rules: use different rules to adapt the session to the characteristics of the players and make the activities age-appropriate.
- + Number of Players: training should progress from smaller to larger groups of players – individual to pairs to groups to team.

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Skill of Tackling for 10 and Under Age Group

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Coaching Points
<p>“Rehearsal”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have 2 players stand 2-3 steps on either side of the ball. • On command both players should squarely step to address and block the ball. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players rehearse safely a “block” tackle. • Inside of foot to ball. • Get weight into the tackle • Do not stretch or go to ground • Which way should you try to force the ball carrier?
<p>1 vs. 1 “Faced Up”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 vs. 1 to goal in a 12 x 10 yard grid. • Coach serves ball to slightly favor one player. • If you have 10+ players use 2 grids. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close to the ball. • Maintain a good distance to tackle and recover. • Get body behind tackle. • Tackle without crossing feet • What helps you decide to tackle the ball carrier one way or the other?
<p>1 vs. 1 “From Recovery”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 vs. 1 to goal. (As above but...) • Players attack goal they start at. • Defender must recover goal side. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recover goal side. • Do not tackle from behind • Face up to opponent. • Tackle firmly with closes • Why is good to be able to tackle with either foot equally?



Skill of Tackling for 10 and Under Age Group

Activity Name	Description	Diagram	Coaching Points
<p>2 vs. 2 “Decisions”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 vs. 2 to goal in a 20 x 15 yard grid. • Restarts are passed in. • Play 3-4 minute sets with good rest. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defender not on ball must be ready to close. • Close as ball is traveling. • Ensure proper tackling technique. • If you tackle and are really close to the opponent what might be a problem?
<p>6 vs. 6 “The Game”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 vs. 6 including keepers in a 50 x 40 yard grid. • No conditions on play. • Be prepared to stop 2-3 times in 15 minutes to review topic. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All tackles should be made from the front. • Avoid going to ground. • What is the possible problem with slide tackling? • Tackle with either foot as situation demands. • Do not reach; stay compact. • If we are successful in tackling and winning the ball what should we be thinking about next?



SAMPLE SESSION PLAN

Running a Training Session

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» The game will tell you what the team needs to learn. Observe and take notes during your matches and you'll have good ideas on topics for future training sessions. However this approach is only for the short term. To deeply impact player development follow a curriculum for the year. Use the *US Youth Soccer Player Development Model*. An additional reference is the *U.S. Soccer Curriculum*.

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» Organize A Training Session

- > Limit the emphasis of the training session to one or two techniques or tactical points. The bookends of every training session and match are a warm-up and a cool-down.
- > Be well organized before the players arrive with enough cones, training bibs, air pump, corner flags, goals (preferably portable [anchored]), a first aid kit, water for the players and you and a few extra balls. Be sure of the amount of space you have available for training and if it will accommodate the activities in your session plan. Check the training area for any safety hazards! Know the location of the nearest accessible telephone for emergencies.

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» The training approach should be progressive.

- > **Warm-up** – This is to ready the players physically and mentally for the tasks in the training session. It should implicate the technical or tactical points for the session. A form of active range of motion stretching can be included.
- > **Individual activities** – If appropriate, have each player with a ball to ensure maximum number of contacts with the ball.
- > **Small group activities** – This is when you train your players on the technical or tactical points of the workout in a more game-like environment keeping the numbers in each group small enough to provide repetition for each player.
- > **Large group activities** – This does not necessarily mean 11 v. 11. It can be numbers even, numbers up or numbers down. It does mean a competitive game or game-like activity.
- > **Cool-down** – For older players who have worked very hard during the session a cool-down should be included at the end of the training session. This would include light jogging and active range of motion stretching.

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» Coaching Organization

> During the Session

- + Coaching Position: Coaches should occupy a central, but sideline position during training which allows a clear, general vision of training and simultaneously permits the observation of small details.
- + Flexible: a good coach must be capable of adapting the initial plan of the session to the time available, characteristics of the players and the time required for players to learn a given task.

> After the Session

- + Discussion with the Players: do not underestimate the value and impact of a positive comment or individual feedback to a player after the training session
- + Evaluate Yourself: do not be ashamed to ask for constructive feedback and the opinion of your colleagues in relation to your coaching management and structure of the session.

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“Over-coaching is the worst thing you can do to a player.”

– Dean Smith



Seasonal Planning

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- » Good games can be planned.
- » Great games just happen.
 - > The three main phases of seasonal planning are preseason, in-season and postseason. There must be a proper balance between the number of matches played, training sessions per season and time off per season.
 - > A seasonal plan should begin at the end by devising the schedule from the last possible event the team could attend in that soccer season. For the 8-U team that likely is an end of the year soccer festival. For the 14-U team the last event could be the finals at the US Youth Soccer National Championship Series.
 - > By planning from the last point of the season to the first the coach sees the scope of the steps needed to develop players whose skills will culminate at the final season event.

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» Take into account match days, training days, regeneration training days, specialty training, holidays, major school events, planned days off and tournaments or festivals.



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» Planned time off is vitally important to avoid over-scheduling and the fallout of overuse injuries and mental burnout. Coaches must plan a reasonable soccer year calendar for each age group. Certainly the 6-U schedule should not have the same intensity, duration and frequency of activity as the 14-U schedule.

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September		SAMPLE				
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
						1 Parents' Meeting & Kids' Play Day
2 Day Off	3 Training	4 Day Off	5 Training	6 Day Off	7 Match	8 Day Off
9 Pick-Up Game	10 Day Off	11 Training	12 Day Off	13 Match	14 Day Off	15 Day Off
16 Training	17 Day Off	18 Pick-Up Game	19 Day Off	20 Day Off	21 Festival	22 Day Off
23 Day Off	24 Training	25 Day Off	26 Training	27 Day Off	28 Match	29 Day Off
30 Day Off	31 Pick-Up Game					

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» Here are the areas within the planning concept that the coach is responsible for when preparing a team to compete.

- > Periodization
 - + Peak at championship time
- > Short-term and long-term developmental goals
- > Rhythm of training
- > Tournaments must be few and far between. Discretion is necessary when deciding when and why the team participates in a tournament.
- > Avoid over training or under training
- > Avoid burnout, both mental and physical
- > Avoid overuse and chronic injuries

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Five Characteristics of Effective Coaches

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» Now that you are using a player-centered approach to plan your season and training sessions here are five fundamental characteristics that all first time coaches should consider:

- > C – Comprehension (Knowledge and Information)
- > O – Outlook (Philosophy)
- > A – Affection (Concern)
- > C – Character
- > H – Humor (Fun)

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» C – Comprehension

- > Understand your role as a coach
- > Know your sport – sport specific knowledge – includes rules, skills , activities, game tactics, etc.
- > Understand how to provide a safe environment
- > Understand basic emergency care procedures
- > Be objective and self-aware – assess your own strengths and weaknesses – take action to improve all coaching skills

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» O – Outlook (Philosophy)

- > Define your coaching philosophy, perspective and goals
 - + Have fun
 - + Help players discover skills
 - + Help players strive to play their best
- > One example of a way to address where winning fits in a coach's outlook is the ASEP Motto – Athletes First, Winning Second
- > It is important to share your philosophy with players and parents, take time to conduct a pre-season team meeting to address this and other critical information

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» A – Affection

- > Demonstrate genuine concern for each player
- > Treat each player as an individual
- > Be positive in tone
- > Be conscious of non-verbal body language
- > Recognize effort, reinforce skill development and acknowledge failure as part of the process for being successful

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» C – Character

- > Understand your role, responsibility and influence in helping develop character in the players you coach
- > In order to be a good role model:
 - + Identify your own strengths and weaknesses
 - + Set goals for yourself to improve
 - + Acknowledge your own mistakes/bad behavior and apologize
- > Incorporate character building into your plans by communicating expectations and recognizing behavior during the season

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» H – Humor (Fun)

- > Often overlooked, humor can be an effective coaching tool
- > Set boundaries for respectful interaction while creating an environment where humor is a positive, for example in the proper context, players laughing demonstrates enjoyment
- > Be careful that humor is not at the expense of any of your players
- > It's ok to smile – positive energy is a powerful force, so too is negative energy

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Conclusion

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- » As a coach you have agreed to take on a significant responsibility. For first time coaches it is a daunting task.
- » Use the four elements of coach preparation that if employed in any sport will help you develop skilled players in a meaningful and fun environment.
- » Use the five characteristics of an effective COACH to support your efforts in training and competition environments as well for your off the field interaction with players and parents.
- » Successful coaches embrace the challenge, seek knowledge and information and have fun providing a quality, meaningful experience for their players.

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» So as you can now understand the game plan for a fun and productive season actually begins with the seasonal plan and ends with the execution of the training activities.



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- » Coaching Youth Soccer, 5th edition
- » US Youth Soccer Player Development Model
- » US Youth Soccer Vision
- » US Youth Soccer Skills School
- » US Youth Soccer Player Development Model – Spatial Awareness
- » The US Youth Soccer Official Coaching Manual
- » U.S. Soccer Curriculum
- » U.S. Soccer Best Practices for Coaching Soccer in the United States

REFERENCES





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