



U10-U12 Curriculum

Understanding your players

Why does a U9 & U10 child play soccer? Similar to U7 & U8 players they want to have fun, they enjoyed their last experience, siblings play, their parents sign them up and/or they have friends on the team.

However, at these ages they are becoming more intense and serious about soccer, they value being part of a team, they love learning new skills, they want to form new friendships and build a relationship with a coach.

Thus, their overall soccer experience needs to be more encompassing.

Why do children stop playing soccer? The continuing themes include soccer is not fun, they are not playing with friends, parents have had a bad experience with the coach or club, they are constantly failing to have success and they watch (sit out) more than play. New areas include the coach does not provide a positive/educational environment and they are not challenged with new (age specific) techniques or tactics. **What are the Physical Capabilities of a U10 player?**

1. The Skeletal System continues to grow.
2. Genders are no longer similar in size and weight, leagues and teams are now split by gender.
3. There is a greater diversity between players in terms of maturity and physical abilities.
4. Improved coordination in fine motor skills.
5. Prone to heat loss and related injuries. **What are the cognitive characteristics of a U10 player?**

Some children are starting to move from the concrete to the operational learning stage.

They are becoming psychologically better well rounded, they have a sense of 'me' and the 'team'.

They are able to understand the concept of space and time.

They can start to think ahead, which will allow for limited tactical instruction.

They have an ability to recall specific information.

Parents are no longer the players biggest influence.

7. They begin to demonstrate increased responsibility. **What can players deal with emotionally?**

They are beginning to identify with the team.

They enjoy the company of their friends & teammates, however, they will blame others for their mistakes.

Teachers and coaches are becoming more influential, maybe even more than parents.

They are easily hurt by negative comments and still require lots of positive reinforcement.

Players begin to show confidence when problem solving.

Coaching the development Model

1. The **tactical** awareness and vision to see your teammates run
2. The **technical** ability to pass the ball in the correct direction with the correct weight

3. The **physical** ability to be balanced and coordinated while executing the pass
4. The **psycho-social** understanding that it is the best decision for the team if you play a pass to your teammate who is in a better position than you to score a goal.

Coaching Session Should be Themed We Have Ball

Take risks in possession, without fear of making mistakes or losing the ball.

Attack with pace and some creativity.

Create scoring opportunities.

They Have Ball

Everybody defends.

Work hard to apply high pressure to our opponents.

Cover for each other.

Deny scoring opportunities.

Playing indirect when we are attacking.

This is the most technically and tactically demanding of the attacking styles. It is defined by connecting short passes through all thirds of the field and keeping the ball on the ground. It requires all players on the team to be able to deal with the pressure from an opponent, be comfortable with the ball (dribbling), pass accurately and intelligently as well as having good supporting movement in front, behind and to the side of the ball at all times. The aim of this style is to move the defending team out of their defending shape by moving the ball until an opening can be found to exploit and create goal scoring chances. **Immediate Chase when transitioning to defend.**

This is the attempt to apply immediate pressure to the opponent when the team has just lost possession.

This type of defending is very aggressive and is often referred to as 'attacking without the ball'. It is not tied to a particular area of the field or position, which requires a good defending mentality from all players on the field, all players must buy in! It is also the most physically demanding method of defending as it requires players to attempt to win the ball back by chasing the opponent as soon as possession is lost. **High pressure when we are defending.**

High pressure is when you decide to defend earlier rather than later in an attempt to win the ball back higher up the field. This is usually a tactic used by stronger teams and / or against teams that attempt to start their attack in their defensive third of the field (either direct or indirect). This method of defending requires players to defend as a group by apply pressure to the opponent and covering each other. These aspects are tactically and psycho-socially appropriate for this age but will be challenging for them to understand. **Counter Attacking when we are transitioning into the attack.**

This is when a team attacks very quickly upon winning possession of the ball back. The attack can either be completed by an individual (by dribbling) or small group (combination play) and requires the team to penetrate as soon as possession is won. A counter attack usually starts and ends within 6 seconds. The concept of attacking first is a great way to instill a positive attacking mentality into your players.

Tasking players with these styles of play will challenge them in all components of the game and will make game day a huge part of their overall development.

Although you will see a marked improvement in players actually playing the positions you task them with, patience, as with all aspects of tactical development at these ages, is vital! Below are a some ideas on how to help your players learn about playing positions along with their functions and roles:

1. Choose a shape / formation / system of play that you are going to continue throughout the whole season with. This will help players remember aspects about each position that they, and their teammate, play.
2. End each practice with a game (scrimmage), which includes all the rules of the game they will play on the weekend; throw-ins, corners, goal-kicks, etc. This will allow you to place players in a realistic game environment where they can start to learn the roles and functions of each position.
3. Limit player rotations during a game. Rotating players through a number of different positions in one game is very confusion, especially when players are just learning their roles and functions. Make every effort to keep players in one position for a whole game and even better for two or three. This will allow players to learn more about the role and what is expected before moving on to another.
4. Use consistent verbiage and incorporate a numbering system. This will help speed up a players understanding and help them to relate to a position when you refer to it during practices and games.

Below is US Soccers numbering and positional name breakdown. 7 v 7 is broken down on the next page.



US Soccer's small sided game mandate requires players at U9 and U10 to play 7 v 7 (6 field players and a goalkeeper). 7 v 7 provides a lot of different ways that you can set up your team, however, how you set up your team and the style of soccer you play can aid in your players development. Below we will go through three different systems, outlining some positives and negatives. Note: numbers have been adapted from 11s.



Positives

- #7 & #11 will provide natural width in attack.
- #1, #4, #5, #8, #7 & #11 provide natural triangles, which will help build possession out of the back.
- Three midfielder players will allow a good defensive block in the middle third.

Negatives

- Having two backs (#4 & #5) will leave the team exposed defensively and susceptible to the counter attacks, particularly in wide areas.
- One forward gives limited options when transition from defense to attack.



Positives

- #9 & #10 will provide two forward targets.
- Having two forwards will allow the team to defend from the front.
- #2, #3, #8, #10 & #9 provide natural attacking triangles in the middle and attacking third. • #1, #2, #3 & #4 provide natural triangles in the def 1/3.

Negatives

- No outside midfielder players will leave the team exposed defensively in wide areas of the attacking half of the field.
- No natural width in attack when in the attacking half of the field. Either the #9 & #10 or #2 & #3 will have to pull wide to help provide width in the attacking half.



Positives

- #9, #7 & #11 will provide three forward targets to play to when building possession.
- Three forwards will allow the team to defend from the front.
- Shape provides natural attacking triangles from back to front. • Play in two lines is simpler to understand than three.

Negatives

- No central midfielder players will leave a gap defensively in the middle of the field.

All the systems of play outlined have positives and negatives, as a coach try to choose a shape that will help you develop your players. Please note, the shape you choose to play can be adjusted and a shape may make sense to play one season but not the next. However, consistency is key for learning and your team shape should not change game to game!

Lesson 1

AGE GROUP: U9 or U10 players

TOPIC: Welcome Session

OBJECTIVES: Learn each players name and start to get to understand each players personality. Additionally, for players to start to learn each others names.

First Activity Area:

Circle

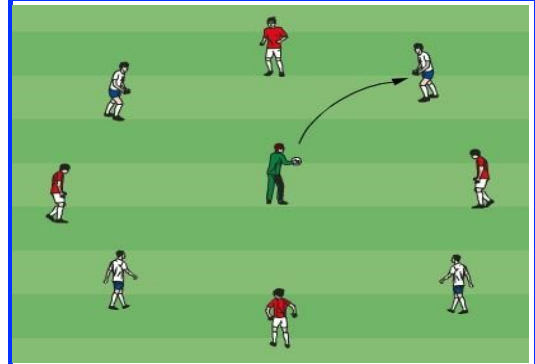
Players

Organization:

1. Coach has a ball and throws it to individuals. As the individual catches they say their name.
2. Coach tries to say the players name before throwing.
3. Players throw the ball amongst each other and do the same thing.

Objectives

- Coach to learn the players names.
- Players to learn each others names.



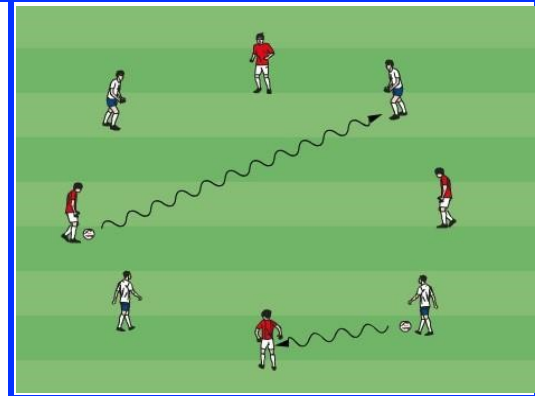
Second Activity Area:

Circle Players.

Organization: Play with two soccer balls. Players dribble across the area and identify a player to switch with. As players switch they must say each others names.

Objectives

- Introduce dribbling techniques.
- Players to learn each others names.



Third Activity

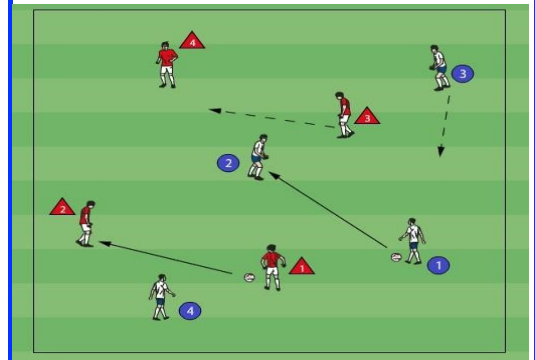
Area: 25 x 20 yards with two large goals.

Organization:

- Play with two soccer balls. Players pass and move with each other within the area. Players should shout the name of the player they are passing to and receiving from.

Coaching Points

- Introduce passing and receiving concepts.
- Players to learn each others names.



Scrimmage

Area: 40 x 50 yards with two large goals.

Organization:

- Play 5 v 5 with GKs.
- Formation: 1 - 2 - 1 - 2 or 1 - 3 - 2.

Coaching Points

- Introduce playing in a game.
- Players to learn each others names.



Lesson 2

AGE GROUP: U9 or U10 players

TOPIC: Individual Attacking - Dribbling to Penetrate

OBJECTIVES: Teach players how to dribble, running with the ball and fakes & feints. Establish situations (1 v 1) in the attacking half of the field where players should look to take risks and beat opponents on the dribble to create goal scoring opportunities.

Warm Up Activity

Area: 35 x 20 yards.

Organization: Each player has a ball:

1. Ask players to dribble around freely.
2. Ask players to change direction using all surfaces of the feet.
3. Ask players to change tempo of their dribble & find times to explode into open space.
4. Ask players to complete designated moves (chose from techniques section).

Coaching Points

- Dribbling & Running with the Ball Technique.
- Execution of fakes & feints.



Small Sided Activity

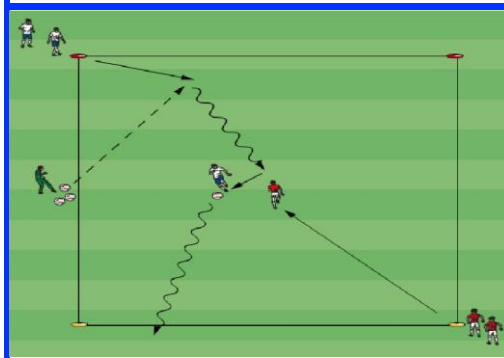
Area: 15 x 20 yards.

Organization

- Place players into two teams.
- Place teams diagonally opposite each other.
- Coach starts activity.
- Players score by dribbling across the oppositions end line.

Coaching Points

- Dribble (keep ball close) as you approach the defender.
- Use a move to **fake** the defender before **changing direction** of the ball.
- **Change pace** coming out of the move and exploit the space behind the def.

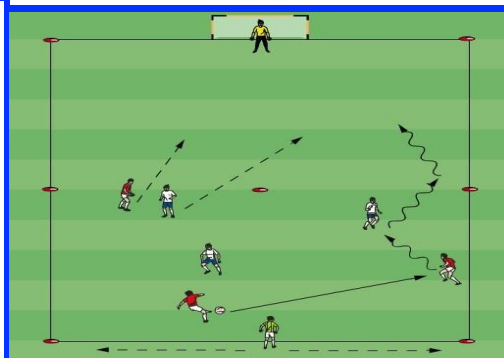


Expanded Small Sided Activity

Area: 35 x 40 with a large goal. Place a restraining line 20 yards from goal.

Organization

- 3 v 3 with a GK & Target.
- Attacking team goes to goal, defending team score by passing to the target.
- Attacking team must dribble across the restraining line before going to goal.
- Progression: remove the dribbling restriction. **Coaching Points**
- Technical execution: dribbling, fakes & feints and running with the ball.
- Decision in Possession - penetrate or possess? 1 v 1 vs. 2 v 1?
- Support of teammates - angles & distances.



Game

Area: 50 x 60 yards with two large goals.

Organization:

- 5 v 5 with GKs.
- Game rules apply.

Coaching Points

- When, Where & Why would we dribble to penetrate?
- Safety vs. Risk.
- How do we do this in a game?
- Supporting options provided by the closest teammates.

