

Mass Youth Soccer U8 Specialty Clinic

This is the age where players can begin to understand the concept of working with a teammate. The notion, or willingness, to intentionally pass the ball to someone is just beginning to take hold. Coaches and parents will have more success encouraging players to pass the ball in the seven to eight year old age group. In this age group, the player begins to think beyond their personal needs and actively begins to cooperate with a teammate. However, players in this age group must continue individual ball work.

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U8 age group is to be a sensitive and patient teacher with an enthusiastic and imaginative approach. It is helpful if they have the ability to demonstrate and very important that they understand technique.

License Requirement

The G License is required. The National Youth License is recommended.

The U8 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

- Short attention span, but better than U6
- Love to use their imagination...pretend
- Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time
- Beginning to solve simple soccer problems (i.e. pass to a teammate)
- Some understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

- Beginning to develop physical coordination
- Improvement in pace regulation
- Skeletal system is growing; growth plates near joints
- Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adult's; heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover
- Catching skills are still not developed
- Improvement in dribbling and kicking
- Love to run, jump, fall and roll

Socially (psychosocial)

- Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop
- Sensitive...dislike personal failure in front of peers
- Negative comments from peers and adults carry great weight
- Limited experience with personal evaluation...effort is synonymous with successful performance
- Inclined more toward cooperative activities (small groups)
- Inclined to establish and cooperate with friends
- Desire social acceptance; want everyone to like them
- Influential person in their life is their father or significant parent
- Like to play soccer because it is FUN; intrinsically motivated; play for enjoyment

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What to Teach U8 Players (Game Components)

Techniques (skills):

Dribbling

- With outside of the foot
- Change of speed and direction

Receiving

- Ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of foot
- Bouncing balls with various body parts
- Ball lifting and juggling

Passing

- With toe, inside of foot and laces
- Throw-ins

Shooting

- With toe, inside of foot and laces

Tackling

- Toe-poke

Catching

- From self and from partner
- Rolling, bouncing, and air balls

Psychology (mental and social):

- Working in pairs
- Sportsmanship
- Dealing with parental involvement
- “How to play” (social cooperation)
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education):

- Introduce the idea of warm-up
- Agility
- Leaping
- Tumbling
- Eye/foot & eye/hand coordination

Tactics (decisions):

- Being exposed to all positions
- 1v1 attacking
- 1v1 defending
- 2v1 attacking
- Introduce the names of positions
- Shape (triangles, diamond)

Mass Youth Soccer U8 Specialty Clinic

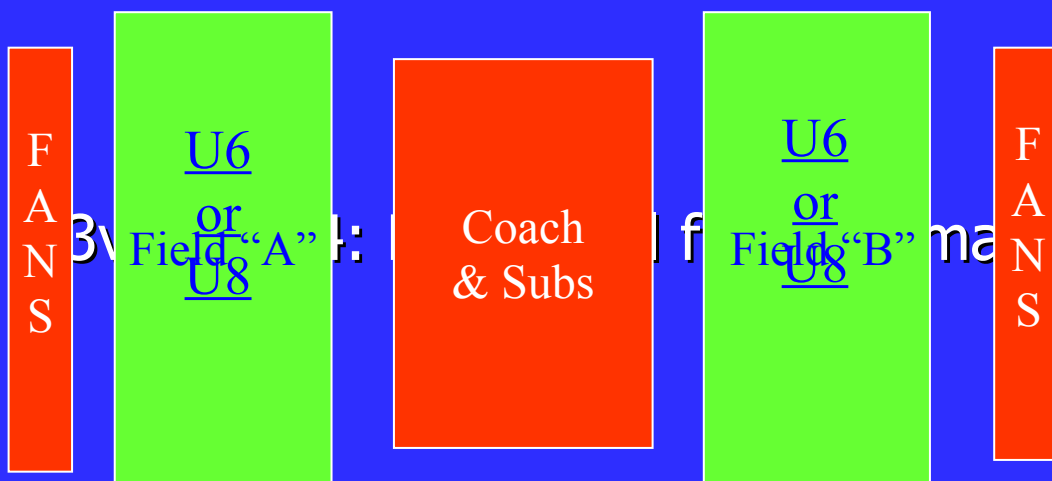
Rules:

- Review the kick off
- Review the goal kick
- Review hand ball
- Review physical fouls (pushing, holding, striking, tripping)
- The corner kick
- Direct kicks
- Throw-ins

US Youth Soccer U8 Modifications to The Game

Playing numbers:	4v4 (no goalkeepers)
Field Dimensions:	
Length	25-35 yards
Width	20-30 yards
Goal Dimensions:	
Height	6 feet
Width	18 feet
Duration:	four 12-minute quarters
Ball:	number 3

Game Day Arrangement



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The Training Session

General Information

The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities.

✓ The session becomes more thematic (dribbling, passing, receiving & shooting)

Light coaching on simple technique is appropriate (dribbling, passing, receiving & shooting)

Small-sided directional games such as 1v1, 2v1, 2v2, 3v2, and 3v3 should be included as well.

Training should always conclude with a 4v4 game without goalkeepers.

The duration of the training session should be 60-75 minutes.

Sample Training Session Format

Activity #1 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with a ball)

Activity #2 – Dynamic Activity (players moving with a ball)

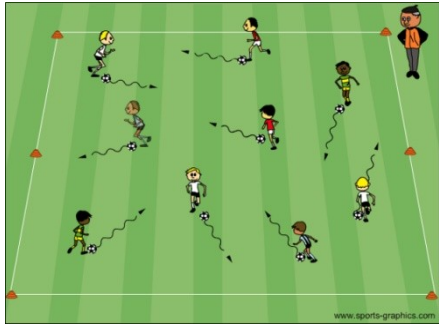



Activity #3 – Dynamic Competitive Activity (activity with pressure*)

Activity #4 – Dynamic Competitive Game-like Activity (activity with pressure*)



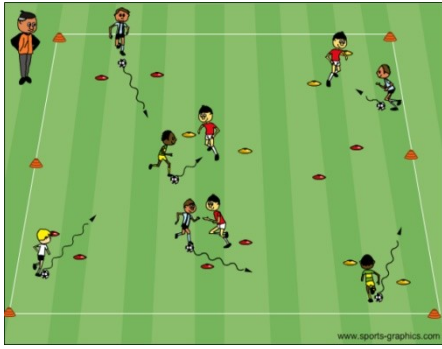

Activity #5 – 4v4 Games

**** pressure from opponents, space, cones (equipment), time***

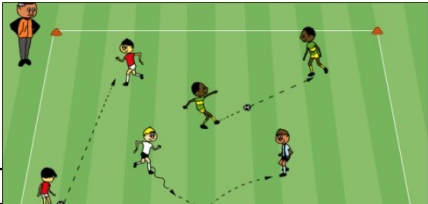
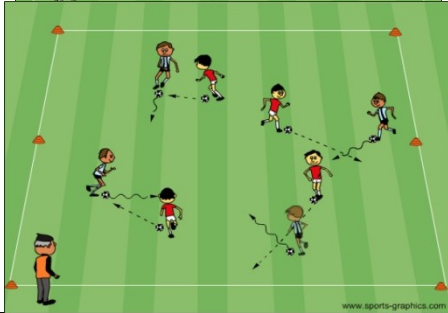
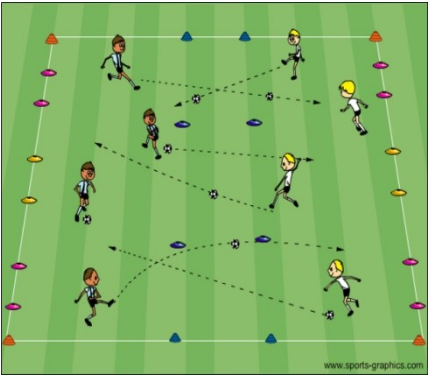
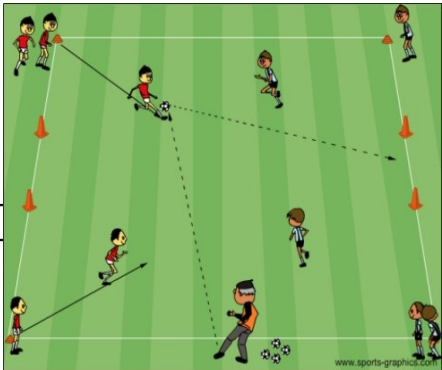
Mass Youth Soccer U8 Specialty Clinic

Activity 1	Activity Description	Considerations
	<p>Free Dribble: All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 20x25 yard grid using their inside, outside, and the sole of their foot.</p> <p>Coach: Have players change direction and accelerate away. Have players demonstrate a move and accelerate away.</p> <p>Version 2: Coach can put pressure on players dribbling. Version 3: Players can dribble at each other and perform a move and accelerate away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge players to use different surfaces of foot • Players must dribble with their head up • Encourage the players to try a new move <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Sharks and Minnows: In a 20x25 yard grid have 3-4 players acting as the sharks. The minnows are in one end of the grid with their soccer balls. When the coach say “GO” the minnows try to dribble to the other end of the grid and the sharks are trying to kick the ball out. When the dribbler’s ball goes out, he/she becomes a shark. If the minnows reach the other end, they will wait for the coach’s command to play again. The game continues until all players turn into sharks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing speed and direction • Running with the ball • Defending – 1v1 <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Snake: All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 20x25 yard grid with the exception of at least 2 players. The 2 players hold hands or lock arms to create a snake. The snake works together to tag the dribbling players who then become a part of the snake. The snake must try to stay connected and not break into little parts.</p> <p>Coach: Encourage the snake players to hiss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing speed and direction • Running with the ball • Sudden stops and going <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Get “Outta” There with Numbers: The players are divided into two teams, with each player given a number from 1-4 or 5 (depending on total amount of players). Players are positioned at either side of the coach, with multiple soccer balls, outside a 10x15 yard grid with two small goals on each end line. The coach serves a ball into the grid and the players try to gain possession and score on their opponent. If a goal is scored or the soccer ball goes out of bounds, the coach yells “Get outta there”.</p> <p>Coach: Can make the games 1v1, 2v2, or 3v3. They should vary the service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1v1 dribbling • 1v1 defending • Scheming and creativity • Decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
<p>Scrimmage</p>	<p>Activity Description</p>	<p>Time</p>
<p>4v4 - Dual Field Scrimmage</p>	<p>Set up two fields of 20x25 yards with a 5yd space between them in order to keep the majority of your team playing.</p>	<p>30 minutes</p>

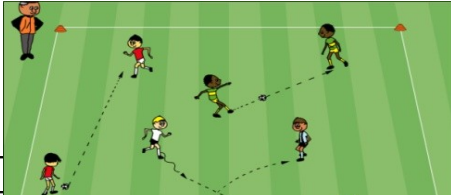
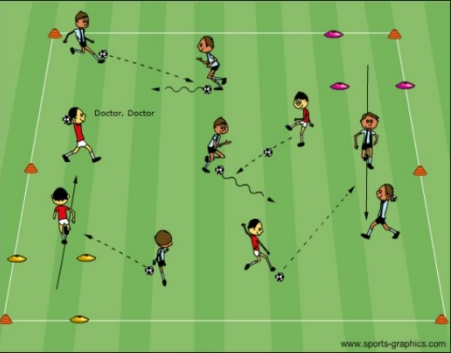
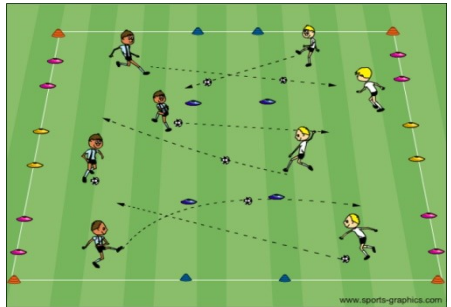

Mass Youth Soccer U8 Specialty Clinic

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	<p>Shadow Dribble: Two players (Leader and Shadow) both with a ball each and will dribble their soccer ball in a 20x25 yard grid. The leader will determine where they are going while the shadow will try to keep up with the leader.</p> <p>Coach: Call the change from leader to shadow</p> <p>Version 2: Use only favorite foot or other foot.</p> <p>Version 3: Leader must make a move.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing directions • Dribbling using different surfaces of the foot <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Gate Dribbling: In a 20x25 yard grid set up as many gates (two cones about 2 yards apart). All players with a ball must dribble through the gate in order to score a point.</p> <p>Coach: Have players keep count of how many points they scored in 30 seconds or a minute. Repeat asking the players to beat the score by one or more points. You can also ask them to dribble with the left or right foot only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing direction • Acceleration after going through a gate • Decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Dribbling Gates With Bandits: In a 20x25 yard grid, set up many gates (two cones about 2 yards apart). Select 2-3 players to be the “Bandits”; they will try to dispossess the players with trying to score points by dribbling through the gates. When the bandit steals the soccer ball, the player that lost the ball becomes the bandit.</p> <p>Coach: Play multiple 1-2 minute games. Award a point to all players who have a soccer ball at the end of each game.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep ball close • Changing direction • Acceleration after going through a gate • Decision making • 1v1 defending <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>2v2 to End Zones: Divide the 20x25 yard grid into two equal grids of 12x20 yards, with a one yard buffer zone in between. Make a one yard wide End Zone along each end line. Players will score by dribbling and stopping the soccer ball in the End Zone. Defenders can't defend in the End Zone.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of dribbling, and passing-receiving technique under pressure • 1v1 defending • Decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
<p>Scrimmage</p>	<p>Activity Description</p>	<p>Time</p>
<p>4v4 - Dual Field Scrimmage</p>	<p>Set up two fields of 20x25 yards with a 5yd space between them in order to keep the majority of your team playing.</p>	<p>30 minutes</p>

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Activity 1	Activity Description	Considerations
	<p>Paint the Field- Passing: In pairs, players will pass the soccer ball back and forth in a 20x25 yard grid. Explain to the players that their soccer ball is a paint brush and wherever it rolls it will paint the area. Their task to pass (kick) the soccer ball to paint as much of the grid as possible in the allotted time.</p> <p>Version 2: Tell the players to use the other foot</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passing and receiving technique • Weight of the pass • Ability to pass through traffic • Communication and mobility of the players <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Team Tag: Split the players into two teams (Dribblers and Taggers). The taggers are trying to tag the dribblers' feet or soccer ball with their soccer ball. The taggers need to keep track of their tags. The dribblers are trying to keep their ball from being tagged by shielding it. After a determine time, the teams switch roles.</p> <p>Coach: Can help taggers adding their points.</p> <p>Version 2: Taggers can only tag the dribblers' ball.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dribbling technique • Passing and receiving technique • Weight of the pass • Accuracy of the pass • Protecting the ball <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Clean Your Backyard: Split the players into two teams to play in a 20x25 yard grid. With cones, divide the field into three portions. The central portion (the buffer zone) is 6yds wide and no one can enter it. Place three goals (3yds each) at the far ends of the grid. Players in each team will try to shoot/pass and score below knee height in any of the other team's goals.</p> <p>Coach: Allow players to enter the buffer zone to retrieve any ball that has stopped in there.</p> <p>Version 2: Allow teams to defend the goals using their hands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Shooting technique • Simple decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>4 Corner Shooting Without Goalkeepers: In 20x25 yard grid with cone goals at each end, players of the same team are placed by the corner cones of the goal they are defending. Half of the team is in a line at one cone and the other half at the other cone. The coach is standing outside the middle with all the balls. The game starts when the coach serves the ball into the field. The game is over when one team scores or the ball goes out of bounds. Players need to get out of the field quickly and get back in line.</p> <p>Version 2: Add Goalkeepers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of dribbling, passing-receiving and shooting technique under pressure • 1v1 defending • Decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
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	<p>Doctor, Doctor: Divide the group into two teams. Send them to their hospital (corner boxes). Each team selects a doctor. He/she will cure (unfreeze) his/her team's players. Teams try to freeze each other by hitting the players with their soccer balls below knees or striking their balls. When frozen, players must put ball above head, remain in place, and yell "Doctor, Doctor". The Doctor is without a ball, and is safe in the hospital, but when he comes out, he can be frozen. When the doctor is frozen the game is over.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dribbling Technique • Protect the ball • Passing technique • Weight and accuracy of the pass <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>Clean Your Backyard: Split the players into two teams to play in a 20x25 yard grid. With cones, divide the field into three portions. The central portion (the buffer zone) is 6yds wide and no one can enter it. Place three goals (3yds each) at the far ends of the grid. Players on each team will try to shoot/pass and score below knee height in any of the other team's goals.</p> <p>Coach: Allow players to enter the buffer zone to retrieve any ball that has stopped in there.</p> <p>Version 2: Allow teams to defend the goals using their hands.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic Shooting technique • Simple decision making • Shoot, Shoot, Shoot! <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
	<p>2v2 to Small Goals: Divide the 20x25 yard grid into two equal grids of 12x20 yards, with a one yard buffer zone in between. Place a 3yard goal with cones on each end line. Players will score by dribbling or passing through the goal they are attacking.</p> <p>Coach: have two games going at the same time. If you have extra players, make sure you sub them in.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of dribbling, passing-receiving and shooting technique under pressure • 1v1 defending • Decision making <p>Time: 8 minutes</p>
<p>Scrimmage</p>	<p>Activity Description</p>	<p>Time</p>
<p>4v4 - Dual Field Scrimmage</p>	<p>Set up two fields of 20x25 yards with a 5yd space between them in order to keep the majority of your team playing.</p>	<p>30 minutes</p>

For More U8 Practice Plans go to:
www.mayouthsoccer.org/coaching/practice_plans_u8.aspx

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SAMPLE U8 PARENT MEETING AGENDA

Team Goals: Our primary goals as a team are to have fun and to develop as young soccer players. I hope to be able to teach the players needed skills that will help them improve in the game. We will have fun practices that focus on technical skills. Winning will not be a priority for our team. Team priorities will be developing skills and enjoying the game. If you watch practice you may at times see us engaging in activities that do not look like “real soccer”. Please be assured that all activities we do will help with skill building, motor development, and enjoyment.

Style of Play: I will be encouraging the players to try new things and to be creative. We will focus primarily on developing dribbling skills, and also spend time on passing, receiving, and shooting skills so players begin to develop in age appropriate skills. It is my hope that players have the confidence to show their skills in the game and show comfortability on the ball. We will try to move up and down the field as a team and I will be moving players into multiple positions to help them learn all parts of the game. We will not be spending a lot of time on positions and organization. We will spend most of our time on skill development.

Attendance: I will be at every practice and game, foregoing any unforeseen emergencies. Please make every attempt to have your child at every practice and game (on time) as well as it is part of learning the responsibility of being on a team. Given our hectic lives, I do understand that players may have conflicts here and there. Please let me know before the first game of any conflicts you might have for the season so I can prepare my practices accordingly and we can make sure our team has enough players at every game. Please have your children at the field 20 minutes before the game starts and please pick up your children promptly after every practice and game.

Discipline: I have been told that I run a tight ship and will continue to do so. If players are acting out, I will ask them two times to fix their behavior. If they fail to do so after these warnings, I will sit them down at practice or during a game. If the behavior continues, we will need to talk about it to find a way to help resolve the behavior best without it detracting from the rest of the players’ experiences on the team.

Communication: I am typically a difficult person to reach by phone. The best way to contact me is via email at soccercoach@sampleclub.com. Should you wish to talk by phone, my office number is 1-800-852-6666 and the best time to reach me is between 12pm and 3pm. If these times do not work, let’s schedule a time that works for both of us. Please do not ask to talk to me during a practice or game or immediately before or after the game or in front of your child. I do encourage open communication and questions as we all hope to make this a great experience for the children.

Sideline Behavior: Please be supportive and enthusiastic on the sideline during games. The players and I will truly appreciate your applause and encouragement. However, if everyone is coaching, this will only confuse the players. Please do not coach from the sideline. The players need to make their own decisions and we need to support them and educate them at practice. Remember, you are a role model on the sideline for the players. Please set a good example.

Overall: I am excited for a great year and I hope you and your child are as well. Let’s all have fun and enjoy the game. If you have any questions, please, let’s keep open communication. ☺

*** Have the schedule of all practices and games and the weather/medical emergency plan attached to these agendas.