

Mass Youth Soccer



Statewide U6-U12 Curriculum

The purpose of this curriculum is to help standardize “best practice” soccer training throughout Massachusetts. Through licensure courses, clinics, and ongoing support of towns and clubs, Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association works to educate as many coaches as possible. However, the coaching population is constantly changing and with an estimated 30,000+ coaches in the state, we believe that we need to do more to connect with coaches on a consistent basis. This curriculum will serve as a bridge for those connections in that town/club leaders can disseminate this curriculum to all coaches in order to develop coaching consistency within age groups and a developmental progression across age groups. The curriculum can stand on its own to teach all coaches what is best for developing players. At the same time, both town/club leaders and all member coaches can utilize our coaching staff for constant consultation and/or clarification whenever needed. Please understand that every child varies in their development and these are strictly guidelines. Guidelines are meant to be flexible as all players of the same age are certainly not at the same developmental level. It is important we challenge all players at a level that befits their ability. The information in this document comes not only from the State Director of Coaching and the State Developmental Coaches but also from the National Director of Coaching and other National Staff Coaches. The information is not solely based on observation and experience in soccer, but also on research and practice in psychology, child development, physiology, child education, and learning theory. We hope all towns/clubs will use this curriculum to guide their coaches and to help insure our players are being provided the best soccer environment possible.

www.mayouthsoccer.org

Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U6 Curriculum

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Skill Priorities</u>
U-6	Dribble with all sides of both feet Dribble out of trouble Dribble past someone Soft first touch

Although sometimes we may mistake 5-6 year-olds for little adults, they are clearly not little adults. They have many years of childhood and development to enjoy before they are able to look at life in a similar fashion to adults. The reason for this is that they need time to intellectually, emotionally, and physically develop. Although we do live in the same world, when seen through our own eyes, the world both adults and children experience is quite different. In order to fully understand these wonderful children and to make practices run as smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics about U6 children.

Typical Characteristics of U6 Players

- *focused on themselves* – reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel
- *unable to see the world from another's perspective* – it is “the world according to me” time. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic
- *everything is in the here and now* – forget about the past and future, they live in the moment.
- *heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults* – we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
- *enjoying playing, not watching* – they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
- *limited attention span* (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) – keep your directions concise and to the point. When in an open environment, such as a park, their attention span will dwindle towards 10 seconds
- *effort is synonymous with performance* – if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
- *active imaginations* – if we utilize their imaginations in practice activities, they will love practice!
- *look for adult approval* – watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do!”
- *unable to think abstractly* – asking them to think about spatial relations or runs off the ball is unrealistic

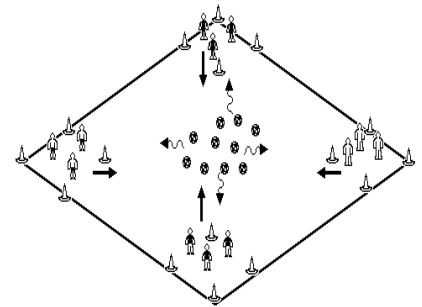
- *typically have 2 speeds* -- extremely fast and stopped
- *usually unaware of game scores* – we should keep it that way
- *often like to fall down just because it is fun* – they are just children having fun ☺
- *often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot* – they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right

Some Recommended Games for U6 Players:

- 1) Tag---Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if players can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must tag other players on their knees.
- 2) Hospital tag---Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and that they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot on their body at which they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the little soccer players so they can continue playing the game.
- 3) Red light/Green light---All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light”, players must stop ball and put foot on top of ball. When coach says “yellow light”, players must dribble very slowly. When coach says “green light”, players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball etc. etc.)
- 4) Freeze Tag---Break up the group into two teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place their ball above their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick his/her ball through the frozen player’s legs to unfreeze the teammate. If all players are frozen, game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise, stop game after a few minutes and have team reverse roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in same fashion
- 5) Planets---Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach’s order and dribble into the planet he calls out. Coach can have all players follow same directions or break up team so they start at different planet and then have them dribble through the solar system in clockwise or counterclockwise fashion. Coach can have groups dribble in opposite direction through the solar system.
- 6) Kangaroo Jack---All players except two or three begin with a ball. Players without balls are kangaroo jacks and must hop like a kangaroo and try to tag players. If a player gets tagged, he/she becomes a kangaroo as well until all players are turned into kangaroos.

- 7) Snake---In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players, The players with balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands with players making up the snake the snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the snake hiss. ☺
- 8) Ball Tag---Similar to other tag games except players try to tag others with their soccer ball instead of their hand. Have them keep count of how many times they kick their soccer ball and tag another person. Have the tag count if their ball hits another player or that player's ball. Can have the players tag the coach for 10 or 20 points. Then can have players tag other selected players for 50 or 100 points etc. etc. *Version 2:* Rather than having players tag each other, have them tag the coach by kicking their soccer ball. The coach moves around without a ball to avoid being tagged. Have players count up how many they got and can do the same variations as in the other game by affixing a lot of points to players.

- 9) Capture the Balls---Set up three or four "home bases" (squares) with cones roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break up the players into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams are free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal balls from each others' home bases. Coach calls time and counts up how many balls are in each space to determine a winner. Coach allows team 1 minute to make up a new team strategy before playing again.



- 10) Moving Goal---2 coaches use a pennie or an extra piece of clothing to form a movable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as the crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.

***** Every practice should include a scrimmage*****

US YOUTH SOCCER & MASS YOUTH SOCCER GAME RECOMMENDATIONS

Under 6's play 3 vs 3 (without a goalkeeper)
 Field Size: 20 to 30 yds long X 15 to 20 yds wide
 Ball: #3