



Salem Youth Soccer Association

Salem Youth Soccer Association, Inc. PO Box 209 Salem, NH 03079

U-8 DIVISION

COACHES HANDBOOK

Fall 99

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U8, 4 v 4 Guidelines

GAME RULES

The primary objective of small-sided soccer is to provide players with a safe, enjoyable soccer learning experience. Scrimmages and games shall be played 4 v 4 with no goalkeeper. Coaches are discouraged from keeping score. Rules shall be interpreted in such a way as to assure equal playing time for all players and to ensure that each player has fun learning to play soccer.

1. Field Size and Layout

Small-sided soccer fields shall be in accordance with the table below. On all fields a line is placed parallel to the goal line the specified distance from the goal line, joining each sideline. This area is called the penalty area. A quarter circle of 1 yard marks each corner. A centerline divides the field in two halves. A combination of marker cones and corner flags may be used to mark the field of play.

Age	Size	Penalty Area
U8	20 by 30 yards	6 yards

2. Number of Players

The game is played with 4 players of each team on the field. Substitutes may be used. Use of goalkeepers is prohibited. Teams may be divided in half in order to participate in two simultaneous games on adjacent fields.

3. Goals

Goals are 6 feet wide and 4 feet high. They are placed on the center of each goal line. Goals can consist of cones with flag staff and pennants.

4. Soccer Ball

The soccer ball shall be a FIFA size 3.

5. Scoring and Offside

There is no offside in small-sided soccer. Goals can be scored from anywhere on the field, goals may be scored directly from a goal kick or a kick off.

6. Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when the whole of the ball passes over the defending goal line, having last been played by a defending player. The corner kick is taken from inside the quarter circle on the side of the goal the ball passes over the goal line. All opponents must be a least 5 yards from the quarter circle until the ball is kicked. The player taking the corner kick cannot play the ball a second time until another player has made contact with it. If this happens, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opponents from the spot where the second kick occurred. Goals can be scored directly from a corner kick.

7. Goal Kick

A goal kick is awarded to the defending side when the ball passes over the defending goal line, having last been played by an attacking player. The goal kick should be kicked directly into play beyond the penalty area. The goal kick should be taken from the edge of the penalty area.

8. Kick-Ins

When the ball goes out of play over the sideline, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick taken by a player of the team opposing the player who last touched the ball while still in play. All opposing players must remain at least 5 yards from the player who is taking the free kick. Goals may not be scored directly from a kick-in.

9. Time Considerations

The game consists of two 25-minute halves with a 5-minute half time.

10. Penalties and Misconduct

Offside and penalty-kicks are not called in small-sided soccer. Penalties and infractions of the rules of play include:

Tripping;

Violent play (striking, kicking, pushing and abusive language);

Handling (use of hands or arms up to shoulders to deliberately attempt to control the ball).

Penalties and misconduct are punished only by an indirect free kick together with an explanation of why the free kick is awarded. Penalties or misconduct that occur within the penalty area will result in an indirect free kick from the edge of the penalty area.

11. Goal

A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line between the goal posts and below the imaginary crossbar connecting the top of the posts. The decision of the referee (coach) that a goal has been scored is final. Goals may be scored directly from a kick off or goal kick. No record of scoring shall be maintained.

12. Equipment

Players must wear team jerseys, shorts, shinguards fully covered by stockings and recommended footwear. Opposing teams should wear different colored jerseys. Goalkeepers should wear distinctly different color shirt from their team and opposition.

13. Referee and Linesmen

If no referee is available, then by agreement of the coaches, one volunteer (coach or parent) shall act as referee. Other volunteers shall act as linesmen. The referee has full control of the game and his/her decision is final. The linesman assists the referee by indicating a kick-in and the team to which the kick-in is awarded when the ball goes out on the lineman's side of the field.

Principles of Youth Coaching

- Developmentally appropriate.
- Clear, concise & correct information:
- Brevity
- Clarity
- Relevance
- Simple to Complex.
- Safe & appropriate training area:
- Does child feel comfortable enough to take a risk (psychological aspect)
- Decision making:
- Do they have to think?
- How does it relate to the game?
- Implications for the game.

3 L's - No LINES, No LAPS, No LECTURES

Coaches Activities Checklist

- Are the activities fun?
- Are the activities organized?
- Are all the players involved in the activities?
- Is creativity & decision making being used?
- Are the spaces used appropriately?
- Is the coaches' feedback appropriate?
- Are there implications for the game?

CHARACTERISTICS OF U - 8 PLAYERS

- Attention span is a bit longer than U-6 players but still not at a "competitive" stage
- Inclined towards small group activities.
- Always in motion: scratching; blinking; jerking; rocking....
- Easily bruised psychologically. They will remember negative comments for a long time. Shout praise. Give "hints".
- They want everybody to like them.
- Developing physical confidence. (Most are able to ride a two-wheeler.)
- Starting to imitate older players or sports heroes. Want the same "gear" as them.
- Lack sense of pace. They go flat out until they drop.
- Skeletal system growing rapidly. Often results in apparent lack of coordination.
- Cardiovascular and temperature regulation system is not developed. Their heart rate peaks quickly and they overheat quickly. make sure that they get adequate water breaks.
- Limited understanding with personal evaluation. "If they try hard, they performed well" regardless of the actual performance. Thus, they need to be encouraged constantly, and asked "Now, can you do this?"
- Better at recognizing when the ball is out of play, and remembering what goal they are going for... but, in the heat of battle, they will sometimes still forget. They still find it difficult to really be aware of more than one thing at a time.

INVOLVING THE PARENTS

It is imperative that coaches get the parents involved. Not only are they a major resource for your team, but the U-8 player still views their parents as the most significant people in their lives. A pre-season meeting should be held with the parents so that objectives and team policies can be addressed. Some topics that you may want to address at this meeting are:

- A means of contacting everyone without one person doing all of the calling. (Phone chains.)
- Choosing a team administrator-someone to handle all of the details.
- Complete all paperwork required by your league or club.
- Discuss the laws of the game.
- Carpool needs.
- Training and game schedules. How you feel about starting and ending on time, what your attendance expectations are, what you think is a good excuse to miss training.
- What each player should bring to training: inflated ball, filled water bottle, soccer attire, shin guards (Cleats are not mandatory.)
- Most importantly, your philosophy about coaching U-8 players. Let them know that everyone plays; that the game does not look like the older player's

games; that you are there to ensure that their player is safe and has a good time, as well as learn about soccer.

- What your expectations for them is during game time. How do you want them to cheer? Do they know that they should not coach from the sidelines?
- Above all, try to enjoy yourself. If you do they probably will too.

THINGS YOU CAN EXPECT

6, 7, and 8 year old players are a bit more compliant than their U-6 counterparts. They will be able to follow 2 or 3 step instructions and are starting to have a good understanding about what it means to play a "game". They are also starting to cooperate more with their teammates. In fact, they now will recognize that they even have teammates by the fact that they occasionally, and I mean occasionally, will pass the ball to a teammate, on purpose. Often, they will repeat the phrase "I can't do that!", but, will quickly run to you to show you that they can, even when they only think that they can. Some other things that you can expect to happen during a season with this age group are:

- There will be at least 200-300 falls during the season, but, now they will usually pick themselves back up.
- The puddle in front of the goal is still too tempting to resist.
- Keep a spare pump in your bag as the players usually do not realize that their ball is flat until they try to kick it, or the coach tells them that it is flat.
- Some of the girls are a lot tougher than the boys.
- They will still want to wear a pinnie, even when the color is identical to their shirt.
- It will be impossible to remember who is who's best friend as you try to make up teams.
- School conflicts will come up... please, let them go (they must face their teachers five days a week).
- They will wear their uniform to bed.

COACHING RATIONALE

Some of the players that are playing as a 7 year old have had two years of soccer experience and thus have already touched the ball a few thousand times in their lives. This, however, does not mean that these players are ready for the mental demands of tactical team soccer. True, they do have some idea of the game, but the emphasis still needs to be placed on the individual's ability to control the ball with his/her body. They are still there to have fun, and because some of the players may be brand new to the sport, it is imperative that activities are geared towards individual success and participation. Following are some more items that a coach of U-8 players should consider.

- Small sided soccer is the best option for these players. Not only will they get more touches on the ball, but, it is an easier game to understand.

- Because of rapid growth spurts during this age, players will go through times when they seem to have lost control of their body. What they could easily do 2 weeks ago now seems unattainable. Be patient.
- Passing is not an important part of their game, no matter how much anybody yells at them to do otherwise, it is much more fun to dribble and shoot. Let them.
- Training once or twice a week is plenty, and should not last longer than one hour and fifteen minutes.
- Each player should bring their own size #3 ball to training. Learning how to control it should be the main objective. They need to touch it as many times as possible during fun activities that will engage them.
- Challenge them to get better by practicing on their own. There is no rule which states that they can't learn by themselves, no matter how important we think we are.
- Incidental things are important. They are forming the habits that will impact their future participation. Ask them to take care of their equipment (water bottle included), cooperate, listen, behave, and try hard. Realize, however, that they often forget and will need to be reminded often.
- Ask them to work with others to solve a particular challenge. Start them with just one partner and work from there.

TYPICAL TRAINING SESSION

Here are some items that should be included in a U-8 training session:

WARM-UP: A brief warm-up is appropriate in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the time ahead. This should involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. They can chase their ball as it is thrown by the coach, bringing it back with different parts of their body. Or, they can chase someone with their ball at their feet. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball. "Soccernastics" activities are very appropriate, like: dribbling the ball with the bottom of their feet, with their elbows, backwards, with the back of their neck while holding on to it; keeping the ball up with their thighs; keeping it up with their feet while sitting.

INDIVIDUAL OR SMALL GROUP ACTIVITIES: Follow the warm-up with some kind of individual activity, not a real 1v.1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. An example would be a kind of tag game, or a game where players are trying to work with a partner or small group to obtain a goal. Keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait on lines. Play games of "inclusion" (where everyone plays), instead of games where the "loser sits". Be creative. These players like "crazy" games with a lot of action.

PLAY THE GAME: Small sided soccer can be used to heighten intensity and create some good competition. Play 1v.1 up to 5v.5. Be creative. Play with 4

goals, or 2 balls. Play with or without boundaries. Perhaps play to emphasize a particular skill (can only dribble the ball over a goal line in order to get a point). Use cones if you don't have real goals. Keep players involved. Have more than one game going on at a time if necessary. Switch teams often, give everyone a chance to win. Also, it is important that every player has a chance to shoot on goal as often as possible.

WARM-DOWN & HOMEWORK: Finish the session with a warm down. Give them some more stretches to do with the ball. You may want to review what you started the session with. Also, give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Think of some ball trick that you would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their head, then thigh and then catch it. Can one player kick a ball to a partner and then back without it hitting the ground? It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it. Stop at this point and you will get an enthusiastic return.