

Introduction

We built this for those who want it and to provide guidance to our coaches in order to have a quality, consistent soccer program. If you do nothing else, please read our philosophies for guidelines of what Northfield Soccer Association is promoting. After that, take and use what works for you. Ignore what doesn't.

Send us feedback via email. We'd love to have ideas for new activities to post for next year, thoughts on the appropriateness of our tenets, and feedback on the clarity of the activities and skill explanations.

Philosophies

Keep the Ball

It is dramatically easier to score if you have the ball. Never urge a kid to "just kick it" or cheer more because someone "had a great kick". We want the kids to keep the ball (especially since we encourage them to do so much work to take it away from the other kids). To do that, we have to teach them how to keep it through finding space, shielding while dribbling, passing, etc. While, at older ages, it is important to kick the ball away to clear it from the goal, at early ages, we want kids to grow use to keeping the ball.

Find the Space

One of the easiest ways to keep the ball is to be by yourself when you have it. "Spread out" is hard for kids to understand. "Find the Space" is a bit easier. We have activities that begin to help kids finding space.

No Practices, No Drills

98% of the kids at these ages want to have fun first. Ensure you're working to promote this. You can send this message in a thousand little ways. Two that spring to mind – these are sessions, not practices. In these sessions, you help the kids have fun with some activities, not drills. Practices imply monotonous repetition. Drills are done in the army.

Having Fun Encourages Fun

98% of the time that I drive to a session to coach the kids, I feel like turning around and just going to take a nap. It has usually been a long day at work and I'm wore out. But 98% of the time, if I can start the session with some energy and some fun, the kids and I feed off each other and have a great time.

10 Minutes of Planning Pays Off

Take 10 minutes of thinking before driving to the fields and plan the session. This small bit of organization pays off in having a fun, varied set of activities. Ensure that about half of your activities for each session are new. If they went ok, repeat those new ones the next time to reinforce the lessons in them. Never do the same activity more than 3 sessions in a row. But, after 3 or 4 sessions, you can go back to an activity.

Kids First

You're there for the kids. Always greet them and say good bye to them first to reinforce this message. Your interactions with the parents is secondary.

Coaching Framework

We want kids to have fun and grow their soccer skills. We believe the proper activities for the proper age is crucial for BOTH of these. We have provided the following coaching framework to guide our volunteer coaches in this regard. It is based on our own experience, discussions with recognized leaders in the soccer coaching field, and USSF guidelines. If you have additional ideas or thoughts in this area, we'd love your input.

We have identified the following main skill areas – shooting, passing, dribbling, space, teamwork, and defense. Each of these areas has a set of skills necessary for good soccer. You'll see each of our sample activities list a set of skills that it builds.

As with anything, kids go through a series of levels in mastering the skill. You'll see in our activities that we identify three levels.

- Initiate – can do occasionally or not at all
- Build – can do frequently (50%)
- Master – can do consistently

You'll notice that, in the activities, we also refer to the skill level for that activities. Take this as a guideline. Note that we rarely use the Master level in our activities. In general, a kid has reached Master level for the skill in that activities when they can effectively complete it as expected. **Note that many activities can be extended to allow for challenging the kids to a higher level through either the noted Advanced Options or incorporating additional physical components – use the opposite foot, using thigh or head instead of foot, or more people (3 people work together instead of 2, 3v2 instead of 2v1).**

Using the above, we have built Tenets as to the appropriate skills for kids at each age level.

Tenets

Area	Skill	Grades Pre-K & K (U-6)	Grades 1 & 2 (U-8)	Grades 3 & 4 (U-10)
Dribbling	Shielding	Initiate	Build	Master
Dribbling	Opposite foot	Initiate	Build	Master
Dribbling	Straight line	Initiate	Build	Master
Dribbling	Change direction	Initiate	Build	Master
Dribbling	Pace	Initiate	Initiate	Build
Dribbling	Head up	Initiate	Build	Master
Dribbling	Under pressure	N/A	Initiate	Build
Dribbling	Non-linear	Initiate	Initiate	Master
Trapping	Feet	Initiate	Build	Master
Trapping	Standing	Initiate	Build	Master
Trapping	Side of foot	N/A	Initiate	Build
Trapping	Moving	N/A	Initiate	Build
Trapping	Shield	N/A	Initiate	Build
Passing	To space	N/A	Initiate	Build
Passing	Straight line	N/A	Initiate	Build
Passing	Appropriate pace	N/A	Initiate	Build
Passing	Opposite foot	N/A	Initiate	Build
Shooting	Off dribble	Initiate	Build	Master
Shooting	Small goal	Initiate	Build	Master
Shooting	Opposite foot	Initiate	Build	Master
Shooting	Instep	N/A	Initiate	Build
Shooting	Under pressure	N/A	Initiate	Build
Shooting	Controlled	N/A	Initiate	Build
Shooting	Straight	Initiate	Build	Master
Shooting	Angle	N/A	Initiate	Build
Teamwork	Work together	Initiate	Build	Master
Space	Find space	N/A	Initiate	Build
Defense	Attack the ball	Initiate	Build	Master
Defense	Tackling	N/A	Initiate	Build

Helpful Links

Here are some links we've found useful to find other drills.

http://www.guidetocoachingsports.com/soccer_drills.htm
<http://www.soccerxpert.com/u6-u8-soccer-drills.aspx>
http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/site_map.htm