

Coaching Handbook

U6

Thank you for choosing to be a coach! Whether you have experience or not, your willingness to help out is greatly appreciated. Without your help, CMYSA would not be able to provide our youth with the opportunity to play soccer. Thank you for your support!

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Introduction

Soccer instruction at the U6 age group must be based on creating a fun and safe environment for players. Though teaching proper technique is important, it is not the most important aspect of soccer instruction at the youngest ages. According to the United States Soccer Federation, “young soccer players require a certain amount of uninterrupted play. This allows them to experience soccer first hand. They should be allowed the opportunity to experiment, and with that, succeed and fail.”

The CMYSA U6 Coaching Handbook is a compilation of guidelines, overviews, age group characteristics, and sample drills and activities that will help coaches create an optimal environment for players to develop. It is designed to guide you through basic soccer instruction for the youngest age groups and contains components and activities from various soccer resources.

In addition to soccer-specific activities, this handbook contains fun coordination and balance activities. Five through eight year olds are learning to coordinate and control their body movements and are generally not very nimble or agile. Practicing activities that develop these basic motor skills, with and without the soccer ball, will be fun and beneficial for the long-term development of all young children. Whenever possible, the coordination and balance activities will incorporate a soccer ball.

**CMYSA Player Development Model and Programming Chart**

Using the United States Youth Soccer Association player development model, this player development chart illustrates the various opportunities CMYSA offers to players at all levels. We recognize the unique requirements of each phase for appropriate training specific to the needs of the player. As illustrated below, we have programs for players from as young as five years old through 18, and programs for players from a recreational level to an elite level in the developmental process. Furthermore, it helps to ensure optimum development as each player ages and progresses. It is important to note that each player is unique and may fluctuate between levels within each phase.

Phase 4: Training to Compete

**Age: U15-U18**

**CMYSA Program: Competitive/Travel**

Phase 4: Training to Compete

**Age: U15-U18**

**CMYSA Program: Recreational/In-House**

Phase 3: Training to Train

**Age: U11-U14**

**CMYSA Program: Competitive/Travel**

Phase 3: Training to Train

**Age: U11-U14**

**CMYSA Program: Recreational/In-House**

Phase 2: Learning to Train

**Age: U9-U10**

**CMYSA Program: Competitive/Travel**

Phase 2: Learning to Train

**Age: U9-U10**

**CMYSA Program: Recreational/Rec Plus**

Phase 5: Training to Win

**Age: U18+**

**Program: Recreational/In-House, Competitive/Travel, College**

Phase 1: FUNdamental Stage

**Age: U6-U8**

**CMYSA Program: Recreational/In-House**

**Adapted from the US Youth Soccer Player Development Model (Feb, 2012)**

**The Successful Soccer Coach Checklist**

*“Help Players Stay in Love with Soccer”*

Did you know that 70% percent of kids quit playing sports by age 13? And the dropout rate becomes alarming as early as 10 years old. When kids are surveyed about why they quit, the number one reason they cite: practice and games stopped being fun. Specifically, kids talk about the inability to handle the pressure to win, yelling at them for making mistakes, and being made to sit on the bench game-after-game watching teammate’s play. Implementing the following checklist will help kids stay in love with youth sports.

1. **Show the kids you care.** Kids do not care how much you know until they know you care. Coaches must show they care about the child in order to get the best out of them.

2. **Teach Using FUN Activities.** The successful youth soccer coach understands that the key to a positive youth sports experience is to make practice and games FUN! Successful youth soccer coaches have the unique ability to create an environment that is fun, while simultaneously helping players learn and develop.

3. **Focus on learning, not winning.** The experts at Positive Coaching Alliance are consistently reminding us that the top athletes don’t set out to win, but rather set out to accomplish their personal goals, oftentimes focused on skill mastery.

4. **Create individual goals***.* Work with each and every individual player to set goals for themselves. Set both short- and long-term goals, and make sure your athletes understand what they’ll need to do to reach those goals. Applaud both effort and improvement.

5. **Have kids play multiple sports**. (If they are interested) It helps avoid burnout in their favorite sport. Playing multiple sports helps them develop other muscles and other skills. It helps them see sports from the role of leader and follower.

6. **Provide positive criticism.** For example, 5-to-1 is Magic Ratio to deliver feedback and criticism in a way that kids can both hear and understand, while helping to keep their Emotional Tanks full. No one – adults included – want to continue with something if they constantly hear only about what they do wrong.

7. **Keep Everyone Involved.** There is a role for every player in youth sports. Break down practice into skills drills and small skills competitions. No lines or waiting around! Keep the players involved! It only makes sense: the more kids sit and watch, the more likely they are to fall out of love with sports – and hence quit.

8. **Leverage the Power of Team**. Everyone likes to be part of a team. As coaches, we need to remember to use the power of the team to keep kids motivated and inspired. Use techniques like Winners Circles and Buddy System. Help ever player to be valuable member of the team.

9. **Respect The Game**. Teach respect for the game. And practice the same from the sidelines and the stands. Respecting officials and opponents can sometimes be the hardest part.

10. **Let them play**. Last but not least, let kids just play. Kids love to play without being constantly interrupted or micro managed during practice and games.

Article by Positive Coaching Alliance

**Age Group Characteristics – U6**

(Adapted from USYSA Player Development Model, 2012)

*U6 Psychomotor Development*

* Physical movements such as running, jumping, skipping, hopping and main­taining balance are not fully developed.
* Eye-hand and/or eye-foot coordination is primitive at best – not ready for bouncing or flighted balls
* No sense of pace. Will go full speed, then need a rest, then are ready to go again.

*U6 Cognitive Development*

* Can perform one task at a time when simple directions are given. Complex tasks are difficult.
* A visual demonstration is necessary to help understand what is expected.
* Tactics at this age are very limited. Their biggest concern during their play is to determine which way to go when they have the ball.
* Boundaries may not mean much.
* Short attention spans

*U6 Psychological Development*

* Very fragile self concept
* Need to feel secure in practice and game environments.
* Social interaction is just developing.
* Soccer is FUN
* “My Ball.” Teamwork not yet able to be grasped.

**Age Group Overview – U6 Players**

(Adapted from USYSA Player Development Model, 2012 & WDMSC Coaching Department, 2011)

**Coach Philosophy:**

* Soccer is new so make it FUN!
* One player to a ball.
* Be positive, patient, encouraging, and enthusiastic.
* Encourage risk taking and applaud effort – mistakes are an integral part of learning development.
* Communicate with the players, AND the parents. Parents need to be informed so they understand.
* Primary objective is to make the experience with soccer so ENJOYABLE that when a player has a choice of activities; he/she chooses to play soccer on his/her own. SUCCESS=effort, sportsmanship, hard work, individual improvement, having fun.

**Soccer Practice Emphasis:**

* Encourage creativity & ball skills.
* Encourage sharing the ball (passing), and applaud them for trying.
* One ball/ one player and INTRODUCE one ball/two players. Maximize number of ball touches/ contacts.
* Series of fun activities emphasizing exploration & experimentation that encourage the players to explore their physical abilities.
* No lines. No laps. No lectures.
* No tactics or positional instruction.

**Rules:**

* Game format: 3v3 (NO Goalkeepers)
* Each player SHALL PLAY a MINIMUM of 50% of the total playing time.
* All rules infractions shall be briefly explained to the offending player.
* All fouls result in an DIRECT kick (there are no penalty kicks).
* Kick-ins, not throw-ins.
* There is NO off-side.
* A goal MAY NOT be scored directly from the kickoff.
* Opponents must be AT LEAST 4 yards away from the ball on all restarts (kickoff, kick-in, corner kick, direct kick).

**Misc:**

* 3v3 is the start of the key shape in soccer…the triangle. Do not worry about the players keeping this shape, but mention it so they become familiar with it. The triangle allows for 2 options of support for the ball carrier on the attack, and also allows for support when on defense. Again, do not get wrapped up in this, as the players are not at a level to understand this. You can introduce the concept of attacking and defending, but be sure that each play does both, and do not tell a player they must stand back and play defender. Let them be in the action. Spreading out is a good thing on offense, but not at the expense of having one player totally separated from the play.
* Do not have one player who is the deepest back (defense) stand at the half line. Encourage them to stay behind the play but move up to support.
* During games, let them play and don’t coach too much! Let them experiment and learn from the game. Let them have fun!

**Training Objectives**

(Adapted from USYSA Player Development Model, 2012)

The biggest focus is body control and movement. Do activities with and without a ball. Technical and tactical training objectives are very simple and very limited.

**Technical Training Objectives:**

Dribbling:

* The ability to dribble with the ball using all surfaces and both feet.
* The ability to stop and start dribbling.

Shooting:

* Use either the inside of the foot or the instep (laces: toe down, ankle locked). Get them directing it towards the goal and get them excited about scoring!

**Tactical Training Objectives:**

* Where is the field?
* What are the boundaries?
* Which goal are we shooting at?
* Which goal are we protecting?

**Practice Preparation and Organization**

(Adapted from USYSA Player Development Model, 2012 & WDMSC Coaching Department, 2011)

Practice organization is one of the most important attributes of a successful coach. This aspect can make or break a season in the eyes of a player and parent. A coach’s ability to move through well thought out and fun activities without players standing around is a very important attribute at all ages. It reduces the amount of time young players have to misbehave or lose focus. Follow the suggested progression below to get the best results. As you become more experienced, this aspect of coaching will become easier and easier.

**Session Topic**

Every training session should have a theme. For example, “Dribbling & Turning”. This should be your first decision when planning a training session. Focusing every practice on a specific theme is a great habit to get into and this aspect will become more and more important as your children get older.

**Choosing Activities**

Choose activities that will focus on your session’s theme. Well thought out activities will indirectly teach your players the session’s theme. Choose activities that allow for the ratio of 1 player to 1 ball. These types of activities will make sure that your players get a lot of touches on the ball. NO LINE DRILLS!

**Session Plan**

Once you have activities, put them into a practice plan. When placing your activities in your plan, make sure they follow each other in a smooth progression, from easy to most difficult, starting with a warm-up and ending your 3v3 game scrimmage.

**Arriving at the Field**

Be there first! Being the first person at the field sets a great example to your parents and players. Be there to welcome to the session.

**Practice Coaching**

Coaching during practice at these ages is a difficult undertaking as you are dealing with young children who have limited attention spans and are only concerned about themselves. Trying to teach these children simple soccer techniques or keeping them spread out during the scrimmages area almost impossible tasks. Our responsibility at this age group is to teaching basic motor skills (with soccer skills thrown in), such as running, stopping and turning. In order to teach these skills we must introduce technique and motor skills in a very indirect manor, through fun activities. Keep all activities and scrimmages fun; if soccer isn’t fun for these children, why would they come back to play again?

When coaching during practice, follow these guidelines to ensure a successful practice:

Introducing Activities

Introducing activities should be done through an explanation and demonstration. Explanation of activities should be done as quickly as possible. The only aspects that should be explained while players are sitting are the boundaries and general rules. Anything more than this and will lose the players’ attentions. Most players at this age learn better by doing rather than listening. After the demonstration, let the players try the activity. If they perform the activity incorrectly, stop them and explain the activity again while demonstrating what you want them to do.

Make Coaching Points

At this age, it is important that the activity you are playing does most of the teaching. When stopping players and making coaching points, do it in the form a question; try to avoid stopping players, barking instruction or giving long lectures. Questions involve the players in the process and will distract them from getting bored while you talk. When asking questions, be sure to keep them simple and short. For example, when teaching dribbling:

Guided Discovery Questions-

* Which parts of the foot can we use to dribble?
* When we dribble, should we take big or small touches?
* When we dribble, should we look down or should we try to lift our head up?

Positive Reinforcement

Keep everything you say to players positive. Make sure to praise everything that the players do well related to soccer; encourage good passing, dribbling, turning, stopping, etc. Players at these ages consider themselves ‘successful’ if they are giving their best effort.

Crowd Control

Always try to have an assistant with you at practice. This way one person can be coaching and the other can be controlling players who have difficulty with the activities or boundaries.

Water Breaks

Remember players at these ages are very explosive; they have very high energy levels but only for a short period of time. Give players short water breaks often throughout your training sessions. Also, take into consideration the weather. On hot days, take more water breaks and cool days try to keep players moving for longer periods.

Final Remarks

At the end of every practice, finish with your final words. Have all players sit with their soccer balls in their laps and answer questions on the day’s activities. While they answer the questions, demonstrate the technique. For example, when we shoot the ball, which part of the foot should we use? Also, send players away with some form of soccer homework.

Article by Paul Thomas, LTSC Technical Director

**Basic Techiques**

Dribbling: Use inside, outside, laces, and soles to move the ball.

Passing: Use the inside of the foot. Plant foot next to ball pointed to target. Push the ball keeping both knees bent. Passing foot should have toes up and ankle locked.

Shooting: Use the laces of the foot. Plant foot next to ball pointed to target. Push the ball keeping both knees bent. Shooting foot should have toes pointed down and ankle locked.

**Ballnastics**

(Exercises to improve coordination, ball skill, mobility, and balance. Use some of these as part of every practice.)

**Mexican Sombrero Dance --** Toe taps on top of ball and then moving in a circle around the ball (ball stays stationary) to the Mexican Sombrero song. Start and stop with the music.

**Foundation** -- Knock ball back and forth with the inside of feet keeping it under you and controlled. Stay in one place.

**Circle Weave** – Weave around circle of coaches/cones with and without ball. Coach gives commands: dribble with both feet, left only, right only, stop, walk, job, sprint, hop, summersault, etc.

**Backward Sole Rolls** -- Walk backwards pulling the ball with the sole of the foot. Alternate feet in a rhythm– Try to increase speed

**Sideways Sole Rolls** --Walk sideways using the sole of the foot to roll the ball with you. Try to increase speed

**Pull Back** -- Pull ball back with the sole of the foot and across body (open your hips) to go the other way

**Inside of the Foot Cut** -- Dribble at opponent (cone), push to outside with outside of foot, then chop it back laterally with the inside of the same foot. Explode. Raise up arms to sell the move.

**Outside of the Foot Cut** -- Dribble at the opponent (cone), push ball inside with inside of foot, then chop it back laterally with the outside of the same foot. Explode. Raise up arms to sell the move.

**Juggling** -- Hold ball in hands. Alternate bouncing off left or right thigh and catch. Build up to kicking bouncing off of the foot and catching it.

**Trapping** -- Pick up the ball and drop it. Trap it with the sole of the foot. Then have them trap with the inside/outside of the foot while they are moving.

**Dribbling Exercises**

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| Cross Over Dribbling | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | All players with a ball standing around the perimeter of a 15x20 yard grid. When the coach says **“GO”** the players will try to dribble to the other side of the grid. When they reach the other side, the players turn and dribble back to their spots.  **Variation 2:** Have then reach the other side and return to another spot.  **Variation 3:** Time the activity and see how many times the players cross over in 30 seconds or a minute. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Don’t run into anyone |
| Paint the Field | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | All players will dribble their soccer ball in a 15x20 yard grid pretending that it is a paintbrush and wherever it rolls it is painting the field. The players will try to paint as much of the area as possible in the time allotted.  **Variation 2:** Ask the players to dribble their favorite foot and then dribble with your other foot. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Don’t run into anyone |
| Kangaroo Jack/Jill | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | In a 15x20 yard grid, two or three players are the kangaroos and the other players are dribbling. The kangaroos are trying to tag the dribblers. Once a dribbler is tagged, he/she turns into a kangaroo. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Look up so you know where the kangaroos and dribblers are |
| Free Dribble | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 15x20 yard grid using their inside, outside, and the laces of their feet.  **Coach:** Have players change direction and accelerate away. Have players demonstrate a move and accelerate away.  **Version 2:** Coach can put pressure on players dribbling.  **Version 3:** Players can dribble at each other and perform a move and accelerate away. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Don’t run into anyone * Be sure to work on the change of speed |
| Hit the Dirt! | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | |  | | --- | | All players are dribbling in a 15x20 yard grid. When the coach says **“Hit the Dirt”**, the players must stop the ball and lie on his/her chest on the ground. When the coach says **“Up”** each player gets up and dribbles again.  **Variation 2:** When the coach says **“Hit the Dirt”**, the players hit the ground and jump up again. | | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Don’t run into anyone * Be sure to work on the change of speed |

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| Crab Soccer | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | Have 3-4 players without soccer balls inside a 15x 20 yard grid acting as crabs. These crabs are standing upright. The other players start anywhere in the grid and when the coach says **“GO”** they dribble their soccer balls around, avoiding the crabs. The crabs try to kick the balls out of the grid. If a dribbler’s ball goes out of the grid, that player becomes a crab as well. Play until all players turn into crabs. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Touch/keep the ball away from the “crab” |
| Red Light, Green Light | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | All players are dribbling freely in a 15x20 yard grid. When the coach says **“red light”** the players must stop and put their foot on the ball. When the coach says **“yellow light”** the players must dribble slowly, and when the coach says **“green light”** the players must dribble fast  **Coach:** Control the frequency of light changes.  **Variation 2:** Add other light colors and actions (i.e.: **“purple light”** = hop back and forth over the ball, **“orange light”** = run around the ball, **“black light”** = dance, and **“blue light”** = hide behind the ball. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Use your arms for balance |
| Sharks & Minnows | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | In a 15x20 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. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Touch/keep the ball away from the “sharks” |
| Body Part Dribbling | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | All players dribbling a soccer ball. The coach calls out a body part (elbow! - knee!) and the players then touch their ball with that part of the body.  **Coach:** Should vary the body parts, number of body parts he calls out, and rate at which he calls them out. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Work on balance |
| Gate Dribbling | Description | Coaching Points |
|  | |  |  | | --- | --- | |  | In a 15x20 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.  **Coach:** Have players keep count of how many points they score 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. | | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Don’t run into anyone * Look for open gates |

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| Cookie Monster | Description | | Coaching Points |
|  | Ask kids what type of cookies they are first-they love this. Within a grid suitable for the number of players, have the coach stand at one end as the “Cookie Monster” and the players with their balls at the other side as the “cookies.” The “cookies” ask, “Cookie Monster, are you hungry?” and the CM says “no”. The kids dribble until they hear “Stop.” They ask again and again until the Cookie Monster yells’ “yes” and runs to gobble up all the cookies. The cookies are safe once they get back to the Cookie Jar. If the CM kicks one of the cookie’s balls out of the grid, they become a CM as well. Last cookies left win. To control young CMs, tell them to watch your hand behind your back. Fist means answer “no”, open hand means to answer “yes” and go get the cookies. | | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Use your arms for balance |
| Mission to the Moon | | Coaching Points | |
| Use discs as launch pads, countdown to “Blast Off!” 1st mission: To the moon-fly (dribble) to the moon and do foundation (taps with inside of feet back and forth) then fly back. Mission 2: To the sun- do toe touches on top of ball b/c it’s hot. Add aliens (coaches) to try and catch the astronauts. | | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Use your arms for balance | |

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| Bee Stings | Coaching Points |
| Each player with a ball in a grid. They dribble around chasing the coach and try to “sting” him/her by shooting the ball at him/her. | * Passing: Strike ball with the inside of foot (logo of shoe) * Shooting: Strike ball with laces of shoe * Plant foot next to ball pointing to target * Use arms to balance * Passing: Knees bent, passing foot’s toes up, ankle locked * Shooting: same but toe pointed down, ankle locked * Striking leg should move smoothly to target, not off to side |
| Foxes & Hunters | Coaching Points |
| ½ kids with balls, other ½ without. Kids with balls are hunters, kids without balls are foxes. Hunters try to “shoot” the foxes, who, in turn, run around in the grid. Switch them up. Remember fox ears. | * Same as above |
| Alligator Alley | Coaching Points |
| Set up 3, 5 x 10 yard areas with goals at one end. Create a danger strip in the middle (3 x 5) with cones. Have a coach or a parent crab or crawl around in the danger zone. The players have to dribble around the coach/parent and shoot on the goal at the other end. | * Keep the ball close * Use your shoelaces, inside, and outside of feet. Don’t use your toes * Touch the ball, then look up * Touch/keep the ball away from the “alligator” * Same as above for shooting points * Shoot ball into the corners of the goal |
| The Wall | Coaching Points |
| Coach plays GK and calls herself/himself "THE WALL" Be energetic and animated. The game is the coach/gk vs the kids. If they score 3 in a row from a certain spot, the coach does something funny that the kids choose. If the coach/gk stops/kids miss 5 in a row, the gk wins, then they pick something the kids have to do. The more animated and "cocky" you get the more the kids get into it. | * Strike ball with laces of shoe * Plant foot next to ball pointing to target * Use arms to balance * Shooting: same but toe pointed down, ankle locked * Striking leg should move smoothly to target, not off to side * Aim for corners |
| Moving Goal | Coaching Points |
| All players are dribbling a soccer ball in a 15x20 yard grid. Two coaches hold a practice vest (penny) between them, forming a goal. The players must try to kick their ball through the goal.  **Coaches:** Move around into open space so that the players have to dribble around and kick their ball through a moving target. | * Passing: Strike ball with the inside of foot (logo of shoe) * Shooting: Strike ball with laces of shoe * Plant foot next to ball pointing to target * Use arms to balance * Passing: Knees bent, passing foot’s toes up, ankle locked * Shooting: same but toe pointed down, ankle locked * Striking leg should move smoothly to target, not off to side |
| Zookeeper | Coaching Points |
| Ask the kids what their favorite zoo animal is and maybe what they eat. Coaches spread their legs, players standing along a line in front of them. Players try to pass the ball (“food”) through the coaches’ legs (“animal mouth”). Must be a pass through the legs so be sure to break down how to pass (inside of foot, knees bent, ankle locked, etc). You can also use cones set up as small gates, in front of the kids to be used as the animal’s mouth.  Variation: put out random “animals” (gates, legs, etc) and have the zookeepers dribble around the zoo feeding the animals they see. | * Same as above |

U6 Shooting/Passing Exercises

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| Race to Goal | Coaching Points |
| 20 yd race dribbling, then shot on goal. 2 lines next to each goal. As soon as the shot occurs, the next 2 take off from the goal that as just shot on. Vary the course as you see fit. | * Push ball out in front of you a few yds when speed dribbling. * Shoot ball while moving * Aim for corners * Use proper technique |

**Game/Activities**

It is important to vary the activities from practice to practice. New and different activ­ities can be added over the course of the season. Each activity can also be modified to make it more or less challenging (this depends on the developmental levels and abilities of the children in the group). Remember, every child must have a ball. The following series of activities can be utilized during every training session although it is wise to develop new activities and games and introduce them over the course of the season.

*Ball Retrieve (Body Awareness/Target Game)*

The coach stands in the middle of the training site and collects all of the balls. The coach then explains that he will throw the balls in different directions and that each player must bring their ball back to the coach as quickly as they can. The coach puts various conditions on how they retrieve the ball (an example: with one hand; one hand with the ball touching the forehead; both hands and the ball touching their belly button, etc.). Once the children show comfort with the exercise, they are asked to maneuver the ball with their feet. Once a comfort level is reached again, the coach then creates a different challenge for the players to solve.

*Body Part Dribble (Body Awareness)*

Each player has a ball in an area such as a 20 x 20 yard circle or square. Players dribble their ball in the space and avoid touching other players. While they dribble, the coach or leader calls out a body part, such as “forehead,” “elbow,” “chin,” “knee,” etc. Simon Says is a good variation of this activity. After the player has touched the body part to the ball, the player should then immedi­ately continue to dribble. This activity promotes listening skills and reinforces the knowledge of body parts. Very young players do not understand left or right direc­tion. If you say “left elbow”, don’t expect compliance from the player.

*Glob (Target Game)*

Players like this so much they would likely perform this activity for the entire training period if permitted. Begin without a ball. Use cones to outline the sidelines and the finish line (a 20 x 20 yard space should be adequate). Stand in the middle of the area and talk and act like a Glob, challenging the players to TRY to run (without the ball) across the space without being caught (tagged) by the nasty Glob. Ham it up a bit to have more fun. Then, have them try to get across Glob Country by dribbling their ball while the coach tries to touch their ball out of bounds. Their re-entry back into the game can be done in many ways, (i.e. three foot taps on the ball, throw the ball in the air clap twice and catch it, etc). This is not an elimination game.

*Everybody’s It (Maze Game)*

This activity borders on the edge of controlled mayhem. In an appropriately sized space (approximately 20 x 20 yards), develop boundaries. Each player runs around, staying inside the boundaries, trying to tag as many other players while at the same time trying to not get tagged themselves. Give a signal of when to begin and let them play for 30-45 seconds. It’s a game of total vision, requiring the players to have full awareness of what’s around them. They need to learn how to move into spaces to attack (tag), and out of space to retreat (avoid being tagged).

*Gates (Maze Game)*

The coach places cones throughout the training area (20 x 20 yards) in pairs about three feet apart. Upon command, players dribble a ball through as many “cone gates” in the time specified by the coach. Sixty seconds work well. Parents should help the players count how many times they pass through the gates as the ability to dribble through gates and count is difficult at this age. Each player gets a chance to repeat the exercise to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to com­pete against themselves, not other players.