

Practice Notes for U6/U8 Coaches

What players need to learn

- Kicking
 - pace
 - accuracy
 - keeping the ball on the ground
 - look at the ball when you kick it
 - knock it offline when receiving it
 - use both feet
 - (more advanced) use outside of feet
- Dribbling
 - keep the ball in close
 - inside/outside/sole of both feet
 - (more advanced) change direction ("cut"), change speed
- Basics: throw-ins, goal kicks, kick-offs
 - throw-ins: both feet on the ground, hands go overhead
 - Kick-offs: ball must go forward

How to build a practice

For full-length (45-minute) practices, you might:

- Start with a warmup
- Stretch, and describe what's going to be learned
- Run an individual or pair-based game to introduce the skill
- Run one or more small-sided fun games to practice the skill.
Add more "real" elements to consecutive games: for example, introduce (more) defenders or goals
- End with a scrimmage

For pre-game warmup/practice, you might:

- Start with a five-minute warmup (tunnel tag, look up)
- Stretch
- Split the team into groups, and have each play a small-sided game (for example, keepaway, 3v3) emphasizing a particular skill (kicking, dribbling) for five minutes.
- Have the players shoot on a goal for five minutes. Player passes ball to coach and runs toward goal. Coach passes back, player shoots. Run as many lines as you have volunteer coaches.

Resources

There are many, many books, videos and websites full of fun practice games for beginner players. Here's a few books to start: many of these books are available at the local library.

- **Coaches Handbook**: is available from the Club. It contains a good overview of what you need to teach players at the level you're coaching.
- Clark, Bobby: **Baffled Parent's Guide to Coaching Youth Soccer** (McGraw-Hill 2000) available through the library, with good information about what players need to learn and when.
- Faulkner: **Soccer Practice Games for 6 to 9 year olds** (ReedSwain 2002) available through the library, contains lots of ideas for specific practice games.
- Ingels, Neil: **Coaching Youth Soccer** (recommended) is a good general book covering what skills are relevant, what to look for when coaching those skills, and with good practice games.

If you have the opportunity to take an E-level Coaching Clinic, you're encouraged to do it. It takes a weekend, but they're free and fun. At the end of the clinic, you'll have all the nonce and confidence you need to coach your players, and you'll have a US-recognized certification as well. Check the website (<http://www.swysc.com>) for information about upcoming clinics.