



## Active Start "First Kicks"

### Stage 1: Under 4

<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>Is to introduce children to soccer and its basic movements. The purpose is to get moving and be active.</p>
<p><b>Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NCCP – Child strongly recommended.</li> <li>- One coach is needed for each team of six.</li> <li>- Teams may be 12 players but must have two coaches (head coach and assistant coach or coach and parent volunteer etc).</li> <li>- The absolute maximum number of children a coach should be responsible for is 12. Teams of 12 must be split into two groups of six for game play.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Physical:</u></b> Provide environment for learning proper fundamental movements skills such as running, jumping, twisting, kicking, and throwing.</p> <p><b><u>Technical:</u></b> Dribbling, kicking, and shooting.</p> <p><b><u>Tactical:</u></b> None</p> <p><b><u>Mental:</u></b> Fun, fascination, and passion for play</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b> <i>U4 is not recommended for indoor soccer due to the very young ages of indoor players</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Player success is encouraged. The adult should encourage the child to “score” goals and “beat” the adult opponent.</li> <li>- Adults should discontinue play once the child loses interest.</li> </ul>

U4 programs are left to the discretion of the communities keeping in mind that the most important aspect of “Active Start” is to ensure kids are running, jumping, tumbling, etc. Each child should be given a ball and allowed to move creatively around a field with the ball. Several goals should be set up for the practice sessions to allow a high degree of success. Since children at this age lose interest quickly, programs should include a number of short activities that keep children’s interest.



## FUNdamentals "Fun With the Ball"

### Stage 2: Under 6

<b>Objective</b>	Individual player development is paramount. The objective is to create a stimulating learning environment that focuses on "freedom and fun".
<b>Coaching</b>  - NCCP – Child strongly recommended. - One coach is needed for each team of eight.	<p><b>Physical:</b> Develop ABCs of movement – agility, balance, co-ordination, and speed. Also focus on running, jumping, twisting, kicking, and throwing.</p> <p><b>Technical:</b> Games designed to promote a feel for the ball. Gaining ball control in receiving passes, dribbling, passing less than 25m, kicking ball forward, and shooting on goal.</p> <p><b>Tactical:</b> Individual play with the introduction of co-operation between players.</p> <p><b>Mental:</b> Fun, game intelligence, and decision making.</p>
<b>Recommendations</b>  Sessions should be split into 15-20 min skill building and then game consisting of 2 x 15 min halves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NO LEAGUE STANDINGS</li> <li>- Jamboree format, emphasize fun!</li> <li>- Equal playing time and get to play all positions</li> <li>- 1:1 practice to game ratio</li> </ul>

				Field Size		
Game Format	Team Size (for games)	Game Length	Ball Size	Min/Max Width	Min/Max Length	Goal Sizes
3v3 NO keepers	3v3 - Ideal 6; Max 8	2 x 15 min	3	18-22m (20 yd)	25-30m (30 yd)	4'-6' pop-up goals or cones; NO keepers



Long-Term Player Development

## “Learning to Train” “The Golden Age of Learning”

### Stage 3: Under 8 to Under 10

<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>Skill demonstration is very important. Children learn best by “doing” and repetition is important to develop technical excellence.</p>
<p><b>Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NCCP – Child strongly recommended as a minimum</li> <li>- NCCP – Youth preferred</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Physical:</u></b> Optimal window for trainability for speed, flexibility, and skills.</p> <p><b><u>Technical:</u></b> Focus on building a greater repertoire of soccer related movements within basic soccer games.</p> <p><b><u>Tactical:</u></b> Designed to develop field awareness and encourage decision making. Players should be taught simple combinations, marking, and running into space.</p> <p><b><u>Mental:</u></b> Training should develop intrinsic motivation through fun and a desire to play.</p>
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p><b><u>U8</u></b> Sessions should be split into 15 min skill building and then game of 2 x 15 min halves.</p> <p><b><u>U10</u></b> Coaches should consider holding one practice per week in addition to 2 games / week. If this is not feasible, then coaches should dedicate a minimum of 15 minutes prior to each game for skill development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NO LEAGUE STANDINGS</li> <li>- Extended jamboree format, emphasize fun!</li> <li>- Equal playing time and get to play all positions</li> <li>- 1:1 practice to game ratio for U8</li> <li>- 1:2 practice to game ratio for U10</li> </ul>



Long-Term Player Development

Game Format	Team Size (for games)	Game Length	Ball Size	Field Size		Goal Sizes
				Min/Max Width	Min/Max Length	
<b>U8</b> 4v4 <i>without</i> keepers	Ideal 8; Max 10	15 min skill development;  Game – 2 x 15 min halves	3	25-30m (30yd)	30-36m (40yd)	4'-6' pop-up goals or cones.
<b>U10</b> 7v7	Ideal 9; Max 12	2 x 25 min With a 5 minute break in between AND a 15 minute technical practice / warm-up. <b>Coaches are encouraged to hold one practice per week in addition to two games.</b>	4	30-36m (40yd)	40-55m (60yd)	6'x12'-16' goals



Long-Term Player Development

**“Training to Train”  
“Identifying the Elite Player”**

**Stage 4: Under 12 to Under 16**

<p><b>Objective</b></p>	<p>Players in this age may become interested in playing at a higher club level. Care should be taken to assist the child in toward higher level playing.</p>
<p><b>Coaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- NCCP – Youth strongly recommended.</li> <li>- NCCP – Senior preferred.</li> <li>- NCCP Theory Part A recommended.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Physical:</u></b> Optimal window for stamina training is during the adolescent growth spurt. Should include adequate warm-up, cool down, aerobic and anaerobic training, strength training and mental toughness.</p> <p><b><u>Technical:</u></b> Includes advance techniques to those who can perform them and skills presented in a more complex environment.</p> <p><b><u>Tactical:</u></b> Should emphasize team work including unit tasks of backs, midfield, and forward units both on defense and attack.</p> <p><b><u>Mental:</u></b> Pre-competition routines, mental preparation, goal setting, and coping with winning and losing.</p>



<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>Coaches should hold one practice per week in addition to scheduled games.</p> <p>U12 Developmental games may be played on a ¾ size field or on half fields currently available and used by U10.</p> <p>Coaches should hold one practice per week in addition to scheduled games.</p>	<p><b>U12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will play developmental as per ASA format.</li> <li>- NO LEAGUE STANDINGS</li> <li>- Jamboree format, emphasize fun!</li> <li>- Equal playing time and get to play all positions</li> <li>- Introduction to the offside rule</li> <li>- 1:2 practice to game ratio</li> </ul> <p><b>U14-U16</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Will play 11v11</li> <li>- League standings kept</li> <li>- Full offside rule in affect</li> <li>- May qualify for County cup leading to Tier 4 rural provincials.</li> <li>- 1:2 practice to game ratio</li> </ul>
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Game Format	Team Size (for games)	Game Length	Ball Size	Field Size		Goal Sizes
				Min/Max Width	Min/Max Length	
<b>U12</b> 8v8	Ideal 11; Max 14	2 x 30 min	4	42-55m (50-60yd)	60-75m (80 yd)	6'x12'-18'
<b>U14- U16</b> 11v11	Ideal 16; Max 18 (can go to 20).	2 x 35 min for U14 2 x 40 min for U16	5	Full field (65-70 yd)	Full Field (100 yd)	8'x24'

**Also note that this is specific to the community stream. Competitive streams should consist of a 2:1 practice to game ratio for U12 – U16 players.**



## Long-Term Player Development

### **\*\* Note:**

We have created a culture in soccer where we tend to be overly accommodating to players and parents. We are often expected to run programs for kids with little or no volunteers. To change the culture, communities should not be afraid to restrict, limit, or even cancel programs where parents refuse to help out with their child's program. In order for the Long-Term Player Development plan to be successful, we need to encourage the attitude that we learn to play soccer correctly, or not at all. Programs should not be run if the minimum standard - shown here - cannot be met.