



**FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

# **SOCCKER COACHES MANUAL**

**U8**

**YMCA OF HARRISON COUNTY**



# **PRACTICE OUTLINE**

## **YMCA YOUTH SPORTS PRACTICE SESSION PLANS U8**

**Warm-up (5 minutes)**

**Fitness Component (5 Minutes)**

**Skills Drills (15 Minutes)**

**Game/Play (15 minutes)**

**Team Circle (10 minutes)**

# YMCA YOUTH SPORTS PRACTICE SESSION PLANS

## WEEK 1

### Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players dribble in space – that is, run with the ball keeping it within playing distance (one player per ball).
- Players dribble and turn on coach's signal.



### Fitness Component (5 Minutes) GENERAL FITNESS

#### Key Idea: General Fitness

Gather players into a group. "In soccer, running makes our hearts beat faster, and kicking helps strengthen our leg muscles so we can kick the ball farther. Spread out into your own space. Everyone run in place and I will pass the ball to some of you. If you get the ball, pass it back to me and keep running!" Continue for about 30 seconds. "Playing soccer improves our physical conditioning or fitness. We get better at running and kicking the ball, and can keep going longer before we get too tired. How can I keep from getting too tired when I'm running?" (Pacing themselves) "How about kicking?" (Practicing at home.) "It's also important to take a rest when you need one and to drink water during practice and at home. We'll talk more about the different areas of fitness in our fitness circles throughout the season."

### Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) RESTARTING / STARTING THE GAME

**Goal:** Through playing a game, players will review (or learn a new) game rules, including start and restart, throw-ins, and corner kicks.

Specific procedures are used to start a game of soccer and to restart it following the ball going out of bounds. The start is done as a center kickoff; restarts of the game, which occur after the ball goes out of bounds, can be a goal kick, a corner kick, or a throw-in, depending on the situation.

# WEEK 1

**Center Kickoff:** Soccer games begin with one team kicking the ball from the center spot. (The team is often chosen by a coin toss.) The opposing team's players are not allowed within the center circle during the kickoff, and the kicked ball must roll forward at least one complete rotation before another player may touch it. These same procedures are followed after a goal is scored. In this situation, the team that was scored against restarts the game by kicking off from the center spot, and the team that scored stands outside of the center circle in its half of the field.

**Goal Kick:** When an attacking team kicks the ball out of bounds beyond the goal line, as in a missed shot, the opposing team is awarded a free kick called a *goal kick*. This kick is made by the defending team and must be made inside the goal box on the side of the goal on which the ball went out of play. The players on the team that kicked the ball out of bounds must stay outside the penalty area until the ball clears the area.

**Corner Kick:** If a team kicks the ball beyond its own goal line, the other team is awarded a corner kick from a corner arc. During the kick, defensive players must be at least 10 yards from the player kicking the ball. The kicker's teammates may position themselves anywhere they choose.

**Throw-In:** When the ball is kicked out of bounds along the touchline, the game is restarted with a throw-in. The team that last touched the ball loses possession, and the other team gets to throw in the ball. The player putting the ball back into play must use both hands to throw the ball and keep both feet on the ground. The throwing motion should begin from behind the head and be a continuous forward thrust until the ball is released in front of the head. The throw-in should be put into play quickly, thrown to the feet of a player who is not being marked.

## **Game/Play (15 Minutes)** **ATTACKING THE GOAL**

**Goal:** Players will learn that they have to attack a goal (cone) to score in soccer. Each team attacks a different goal.

**Description:** 1 v 1 – Each player tries to hit a cone using only his or her feet, not hands. (No need for any other rules right now!)



# WEEK 1

## INTRO TO VALUES (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** YMCA Five Core Values

Gather players into a circle. "Everyone hold hands. We're going to keep holding hands as a group, trying to keep the ball in our circle. We'll pass the ball to each other and remember to hold hands at all times." Repeat for 5-10 passes. "Drop your hands. If you were just passing the ball, it would have been much easier. But when we think of working together as a team, it takes more effort. We need to put in just as much effort at being teammates, with everyone doing their part. We'll talk about five values that help us be better players: RESPECT, RESPONSIBILITY, HONESTY, CARING, & FAITH. These values are just as important as kicking and passing. Give me an example of each of the five values." Listen to their responses and discuss.

## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players get in pairs with one soccer ball per pair. Pass the ball to each other while moving around.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes) FLEXIBILITY

### Key Idea: Flexibility

Bring a rubber band and show it to the children. "This rubber band is like our muscles. Can you tell me why?" Listen for children's responses (stretches when pulled, goes back to original shape, etc.) Demonstrate how the rubber band stretches. "Your muscles work the same way as this rubber band. When your body comes back, your muscles go back to their original shape. Everyone reach down to the ground with your arms slowly and then bring your arms back up." Have children repeat three times. "Your leg muscles need to stretch because we use them the most in soccer. It makes them more flexible. When muscles are flexible, it keeps them from getting hurt and makes the muscles feel good."

## Skills/Drills

### GOAL KEEPING

#### Skill Practice 1 (10 minutes):

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *gather the ball*.
2. Practice gathering the ball.

**Description:** Players in pairs practice appropriate gathering techniques, feeding each other at low, medium, and high levels, and at different speeds.

**Gathering Ground Balls:** From the ready position, goalies should stop shots on the ground through these techniques:

- Quickly shuffle sideways to a position between the ball and the goal.
- Keep your legs straight, with your feet a few inches apart, and bend forward at the waist as the ball arrives.
- Reach your arms down with your palms forward and slightly cupped.
- Allow the ball to roll up onto your wrists and forearms.
- Return to an upright position, clutching the ball tightly to your





**Gathering Air Balls:** For a ball that arrives between a goalkeeper's ankles and waist, the proper gathering technique is as follows:

- As the ball arrives, bend forward at the waist.
- Extend arms down with palms facing forward.
- Receive the ball on the wrists and forearms, and secure it against your chest.
- For waist-height balls, jump backward a few inches to absorb its impact.

For a ball that arrives chest—or head-high, goalkeepers should use this gathering technique:

- As the ball arrives, position your hands in the diamond position, with fingers spread and thumbs almost touching.
- Extend your arms, slightly flexed at the elbows, toward the ball.
- Catch the ball with your fingertips.
- Withdraw your arms to cushion the impact and secure the ball to your chest.

For a ball that is lofted high in the air, the gathering technique is as follows:

- Move toward the ball and use a one-legged takeoff to generate maximum upward momentum.
- Bend the front leg for protection.
- Extend your arms overhead and try to catch the ball at the highest point possible.
- Secure the ball to your chest before you land.

**Coach's Cue:** "Get in line with the ball."  
"Take the ball into chest." "Hug it!"

**Coach's Point:** Go over goalkeeping rules:

- Goalkeepers may use their hands within the goal area to stop opponents' shots.
- Goalkeepers may use their hands to field a ball that has been headed or kned to them deliberately by a teammate, but they may not use their hands to field a ball that has been kicked intentionally to them by a teammate.
- Goalkeepers may not pick up a throw-in from a teammate.
- Goalkeepers must release the ball within 5 second rule now, and they may not touch the ball again before another player touches it outside of the penalty area.

# WEEK 2

## **Skill Practice 2 (15 minutes):**

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *roll the ball*.
2. Practice rolling the ball.
3. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *over arm throw the ball*.
4. Practice throwing the ball.
5. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *punt the ball*.
6. Practice punting the ball.

**Description:** Players pair up and practice the three skills.

*Collapsing on the Ball:* Goalkeepers will at times have to collapse on a ball to secure it in tight quarters. As they secure the ball, they should collapse on their side, bringing the ball in and their top leg up in a fetal position. Instruct your goalies not to lie on their back, but to stay on their side.

*Distributing the Ball:* Goalies have three choices in distributing the ball to a teammate after making a save: rolling it, throwing it, or kicking it. The goalie must release the ball within five seconds.

*Rolling the ball:* Rolling the ball is good for distances of 10 to 15 yards or less. The motion is similar to that used when bowling. Goalies should cup the ball in the palm of their hand, step toward their target with the opposite foot, and release with a bowling-type motion. They should release the ball at ground level so it doesn't bounce.

### **Coach's Cue:**

*Roll* – "Step with the opposite foot and roll."

*Throw* – "Step with the opposite foot."  
"Use a straight arm overarm throw."

*Punt*- "Take a long step." "Drop and kick the ball." "Use the laces." (as contact surface).  
"Follow through to the target."

*Throwing the ball:* To get greater distance, goalies can throw the ball, using an overhand motion similar to throwing a baseball, or a straight-arm overhand or three-quarter motion, similar to throwing a javelin. Goalies should hold the ball in the palm of their hand, step toward the target, and use a three-quarter or overhand throwing motion.

*Kicking the ball:* While kicking is less accurate than throwing, it can send the ball quickly into the opponent's end of the field. Goalies can use a *full volley punt* by holding the ball in the palm of the hand opposite their kicking foot, extending their arm so the ball is at waist level.

# WEEK 2

They should step forward with the non-kicking foot, release the ball, and kick it with the instep, keeping their shoulders and hips square to the target. A *dropkick* is similar to a full volley punt, but the ball is dropped and is kicked immediately after it contacts the ground. The flight of a drop-kicked ball is generally lower than that of a full volley punt, making it a better choice on a blustery day.

## Coach's Cues:

"Be in a space where someone can pass to you."

## Game/Play (15 Minutes) SPACING / POSITIONS

**Goal:** Players will learn to spread out down the field so they can receive a pass.

**Description:** 4 v 4 – Review the rules, including starts and restarts, fouls, no use of hands, throw-ins, corner kicks (direct only), and goal kicks. Encourage players to spread out.

**Coach:** What is the fastest way to get the ball down the field (pass or dribble)?

**Players:** Pass

**Coach:** For Katie to pass down the field, where does Matthew need to go so she can pass to him?

**Players:** Down the field.



# WEEK 2

## RESPONSIBILITY (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Responsibility

Gather players into groups of two partners. "Everyone stand on one foot and balance yourself." Wait for everyone to get their balance. "Now one of you offer a shoulder to your teammate to lean on. If you're leaning on your partner's shoulder, try to balance on one foot again. . . change places. If you were leaning on your partner's shoulder first, let your partner lean on your shoulder while they're standing on one foot." Wait until everyone has balanced with the help of a partner. "Wasn't it easier to balance on one foot when you had your partner's shoulder to lean on? It works that way in soccer too. When you help out each other during practices and games, we work better as a team; each of you contribute. Your teammates count on you to contribute to the team. That is being responsible to your team and to yourself as a part of the team."

# WEEK 3

## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players get in pairs with one soccer ball per pair. Pass the ball hand to hand, throwing so that the hands must move to catch the ball.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

### CARDIO

#### **Key Idea:** Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Children gather in a group. "Everyone hold one hand up and make a fist. Squeeze your fist tightly, then let go. Keep tightening and letting go. "Children continue for 10 counts. "Your heart is a special muscle that tightens and relaxes just like your fist is doing. Your heart is about the size of your fist. Every time it tightens, or beats, it pumps blood all over your body. When you play soccer, your heart beats faster and you breath faster. Run in place with high knees. Feel your lungs and feel you heart beating by placing your hands over your chest. Count how many times your heart beats." Time for 15 seconds. Ask players the number they counted. "Running helps you improve your cardiorespiratory fitness – the heart and lungs working together to get blood to your whole body."



# WEEK 3

## Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

### PROVIDING SUPPORT "GETTING OPEN"

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *provide support* with the ball.
2. Practice providing support for teammates.

**Description:** Play 2 v 1 games in 10- x 10-yard areas marked by cones. Players should focus on providing good angles of support against cold, warm, and hot defenses as necessary. The goal is to get six passes. Players should learn that the supporting player should move "off the ball" so the passer always has a teammate to pass to.

**Coach's Point :** The goal is for the two players to make six passes without losing the ball. The defender must go to the ball or the games will not work. Rotate the defender every few minutes.

**Providing Support:** Essential to any soccer team's success is how players support their teammates on the field. Teaching them the triangle concept is one way you can reinforce the need to spread out, provide support, and give the dribbler more options. The triangle concept is simply that players should try to maintain a triangle formation on the field, with the dribbler usually at the apex of the triangle. The triangle formation is used in sports such as hockey and basketball, ones in which a fluid, dynamic interplay is required.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Move to open a passing lane!"

By maintaining a triangle, players will be able to spread out the defense and at the same time provide the player with the ball with more options. To teach young players proper triangle positioning, use the easiest possible explanation. One method is to position players along the outer edges by swinging both arms from behind the back around to the front until they are just visible.

In general, two or three teammates should provide support at one time; more will draw too many defenders and clog the attack. General guidelines for distance from the ball while providing support is 3 to 5 yards in close quarters and 8 to 10 yards if defenders are not challenging for possession.

# WEEK 3

**Move Continuously:** Offensive players are easy to mark if they are inactive. Encourage your players to move continuously to an open area to receive passes. If teammates are not open, the dribbler should move the ball to an open area. This tactic will put pressure on the defense and probably cause one of the defensive players to leave his or her player, leaving one offensive player open for a pass. When a pass is made, the player to whom the pass was intended should come to meet the ball.

## Game/Play (15 Minutes) PASSING

**Goal:** Players will learn to pass in the game.

**Description:** 2 v 2 cones or small goals. Place the cones or goals about 20 yards apart.

**Coach:** How can you best play as a team?

**Players:** Pass the ball to each other.

### Coach's Cue:

"Be in a space where someone can pass to you."



# WEEK 3

## RESPECT (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Respect

Gather players into two lines standing opposite each other and about five feet apart. "I want each line to walk toward each other and give each person in the other line a high-five with your hands. Imagine that the other line is your opponent for a game. Show me the way you would act toward an opponent and what you would say if it was the end of the game and they lost. Assist the players if needed. Listen to their responses to each other. "At the end of each game, it's important to show respect for your opponent. We do this by slapping the others hand and saying "good game," even if we lost the game."

# WEEK 4

## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players play a 1 on 1 game, using a full goal. One player attacks the goal and tries to score while the goalkeeper dives to save the shot. Players trade off being goalkeeper. Attacking player can try to score by throwing or shooting.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes) CARDIORESPIRATORY FITNESS

### Key Idea: Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Gather children into a group. "Everyone put your hand up in front of you and make a fist. What did we pretend our fist was at the last practice?" Wait for response (the heart). "What does our heart do?" Wait for response (pumps blood). "Everybody open and close your fist. Put your hands over your chest and feel what's happening. Now, let's run to the goal and back. Will our fist beat faster or slower?" Listen to responses (faster). "Put your hands over your chest. Is it moving faster or slower? When you run during soccer, your heart beats faster, just like the fist opening and closing, and your lungs breathe faster. They slow down when you slow down. Making your heart beat faster helps to improve your cardiorespiratory fitness."

## Skills/Drills (15 Minutes) SHOOTING FROM A TARGET PLAYER

### Skill Practice (10 minutes):

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *shoot from a target player feed*.
2. Practice shooting from a target player feed.

**Description:** Players shoot from the target player feed. They pass to the target player, provide support for the return pass, and receive and shoot the return pass.



# WEEK 4

**Shooting :** Every player likes to score goals, so your players will be highly motivated to learn proper shooting technique. Point out to them the similarities of shooting and passing; shots also come from the inside, top, and outside of the foot. Also mention some of these key differences between passing and shooting:

**Coach's Cues:**

"Pass to the target player!"  
"Provide support for the return pass!"

- Length—Shots often must travel a greater distance than passes because defenders work at keeping offensive players away from the goal.
- Speed—Shooters frequently kick the ball harder than passers do so the goalie can't react to stop the shot. Unlike the passer, the shooter doesn't need to be concerned whether a teammate can control the kick.
- Purpose—Shots are taken for one reason: to score a goal. However, players pass the ball for many different reasons, such as to get a better shot or to keep the ball away from the defense.
- Players should use their instep for shooting either a stationary or rolling ball. The mechanics are as follows:
  - Approach the ball from behind and at a slight angle.
  - Take a long step (which acts to draw your kicking leg back) and plant your balance foot beside the ball with the knee of your balance leg slightly flexed.
  - Keep your head steady and focus on the ball.
  - Extend your kicking foot; the knee of your kicking leg should be directly over the ball.
  - Whip your leg straight and contact the center of the ball with your instep; keep your foot firm and pointed down as it strikes the ball.
  - Keep your shoulders and hips square to the target.
  - Follow through completely for maximum power.

Instruct your players to shoot often.

Nothing puts greater pressure on the defense than shots on goal.

More accurate shooters should aim away from the goalie and toward corners of the goal; less accurate shooters can attempt to hit the corners also but might consider at times using the whole goal as the target.

## **Game/Play (15 Minutes)**

### **SPACING / POSITIONS**

**Goal:** Players will learn to pass and support each other in the game.

**Description:** 4 v 4 – Each team tries to pass frequently.

# WEEK 4

## HONESTY (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Honesty

Get the players into a group. "Think about the rules of soccer. I'm going to talk about a soccer rule. Raise your hand if you think it's something you should let the official know that happened." Examples of this could be: tripping, hand ball, running into the goalie, kicking the ball out of bounds, etc. "You should tell the official about all the rules being broken, even if the official doesn't see it. Raising your hand or telling the official is the honest thing to do when you break a rule, even if it happens to be an accident. It is very important to be honest when you have broken a rule during practices or games. This will make you a better person and a better player."

# WEEK 5

## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Get in pairs with one soccer ball and pass to one another.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

### CARDIORESPIRATORY FITNESS

#### **Key Idea:** Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Gather children into a group. "Everyone find your own space. Put your fist up in front of you. We pretend our fist is our..." Wait for response (heart). "The heart does what things?" Wait for responses (pumps blood and beats faster when we run or move faster). "When I say, 'go', everyone run in your own space and make your fist open and close faster at the same time. When I say 'stop', stop as fast as you can." Begin. "When you run, your heart beats faster. Every time your heart beats faster, it gets stronger because it's a muscle. Muscles get stronger when you use them. Soccer is a great way to keep your heart healthy and strong and improve your cardiorespiratory fitness."



# WEEK 5

## Skills/Drills (10 Minutes) MAKING THE LONG PASS

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make long passes.
2. Practice long passes.

**Description:** Players practice long passing in pairs.

**Long Passes :** Sometimes a game situation will call for a player to make a long pass to a teammate across the field. The best way to make a long pass is to loft the ball through the air using the top of the foot. This is the correct technique for lofting passes:

1. Plant the non-kicking foot slightly behind and to the side of the ball.
2. Point the toes of the kicking foot down, and kick the ball with the shoelace area. Kick under the ball.
3. Watch the kicking foot contact the bottom half of the ball and lift it off the ground.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Long step to the ball!".  
"Strike your foot under the ball." "Use the laces." (as the contact surface) "Follow through to the target."

## Game/Play (15 Minutes) SPACING / MOVEMENT

**Goal:** Players will learn to spread out ahead of the ball.

**Description:** 4 v 4

**Coach:** If you don't have the ball, where can you go to help your team move toward the goal with the ball?

**Players:** Move forward.

**Coach:** Is it a good idea to leave a player forward?

**Players:** Yes.



# WEEK 5

## CARING (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Caring

Put the players in groups of two with one ball for each group. Get the players to dribble and pass the ball to each other, making sure to pass the ball back to the partner. "Each one of you should say 2-3 good things about your partner's skills. Afterwards, come back to the main group. Okay, start now." Wait for them to finish the drill and come back to the main group. "What kind of comments did your teammates tell you?" Listen to their responses. "What kind of value is it when you go out of your way to say something nice about your teammate's playing?" Listen to their responses and encourage discussion. "Caring is one of the YMCA's five core values. You show you care about your teammate, or someone, when you encourage them to do their best."

# WEEK 6

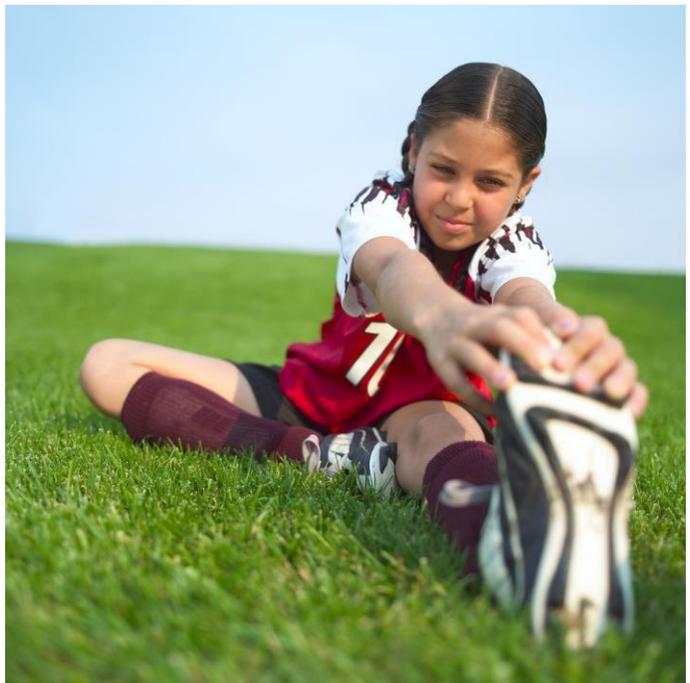
## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players play a 4 on 2 game in which their goal is to make six passes. Instruct players to move to support positions so that the passer can split (i.e., pass between) two defenders. Any pass that splits the defenders counts double.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes) FLEXIBILITY

### Key Idea: Flexibility

Gather children into a group. Show them a rubber band. "Let's pretend this rubber band is one of your muscles. See how it moves back and forth, stretching and moving. Let's move our bodies just like the rubber band. Reach and stretch up and down. It's important to stretch slowly without bouncing or jerking." Have them continue for one minute. "Our muscles help us to move and stretch. We need to stretch muscles to keep them flexible and able to move easily. When muscles can move easily, they don't get injured."



## Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

### MARKING AN OPPONENT

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *mark an opponent*.
2. Practice marking an opponent.

Description: Players learn the correct goal-side marking position. Play 1 v 1 games with two feeders in a 20 x 10 yard area. A feeder feeds player A, who is marked by player D. Player A has to get the ball to the other feeder.

# WEEK 6

**Marking:** Marking is guarding offensive players to prevent them from scoring. Defenders should try to mark the offensive player to whom they are assigned, staying near that player and between that player and the goal (this is called being "Goal-side"). From this position, defensive players will be able to gain possession of the ball off the dribble and intercept passes. Marking is used to slow down an opponent and to allow teammates to recover to their positions.

Get your players to notice opponents' habits, such as using only one leg to dribble, pass, or shoot. Then they'll be able to overplay the offensive players to whom they are assigned and perhaps block or gain possession of the ball frequently.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Run past an opponent with the ball if you can."

Teach your players to get close to the player they are marking when that player has the ball. The closer a defender is to the player with the ball, the more difficult it is for that player to pass and shoot. Thus, your players will



have a better chance of stealing or blocking the ball when the opponent passes or shoots. Remind your players that they must first be between the opponent with the ball and the goal to reduce the shooting angle.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Stay goal-side—between your opponent and the goal!"

## **Game/Play (15 Minutes)** **ATTACKING THE GOAL**

**Goal:** Players will learn to attack the goal with the ball.

**Description:** 4 v 4

**Coach:** What are some ways to get past a defender with the ball?

**Players:** Dribble , kick it past and run after it.

# WEEK 6

## FAITH (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Faith

Get your players to all get a partner. Have one partner close their eyes for several minutes. Have the remaining partner hold on to their partner's hand and lead them around on a walk. This is called the "Trust Walk." Have the players switch sides. Do this for several minutes. Ask the players how they felt when they had their eyes closed. Did they have faith in their partner to guide them in a safe direction? Ask the players how they felt when they were leading the player with closed eyes. Did they feel important because their partner had faith and trust in them to lead them in a safe direction? Faith is a very important value to have, especially when you want your team to trust and believe in you to help them out.



## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players pass and move in pairs. Increase distances and encourage players to get the ball off the ground.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes) MUSCULAR STRENGTH / ENDURANCE

### **Key Idea:** Muscular Strength / Endurance

Gather children into a group. “okay, everyone get down on the ground and do the crab walk.” Continue for 30 seconds to one minute. “Are your arms and legs getting tired? You used many of your arm and leg muscles to do the crab walk. What part of the body do you use the most for soccer? That’s right – your legs. The more you practice soccer, the stronger your leg muscles will get. Then your legs can keep going much longer before they get too tired. What things can we do to get our legs stronger for soccer?” Let them answer running and kicking. “Right. Now pretend you have a soccer ball in front of you. Pretend to kick the ball in your spot.” Have children kick for five counts. “Practicing kicking helps make your legs stronger.”

## Skills/Drills (5 Minutes) BLOCK / TACKLING

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *tackle*.
2. Practice block tackling.

**Description:** Players practice block tackling in 1 v 1 games

**Coach’s Point:** This is a cooperative practice. On the count of three both players tackle the ball and trap it between them. A good solid tackle will give them feedback they will hear and feel.

**Tackling:** Taking the ball from an offensive player is called *tackling*. Players should not be afraid to attempt to take the ball when they have a good opportunity, such as when the dribbler pushes the ball too far ahead. Defenders should, however, be prepared to reestablish position if they are unsuccessful in their take-away attempts.

Teach players to *time* their tackles; ideally, they should step in when the attacker temporarily loses control of the ball. Lunging at the ball—or “diving in”—is a dangerous tactic to teach.



A good dribbler will usually go around a defender who lunges at the ball with no trouble. When positioning to make a tackle, the defender should approach the dribbler in a sideways position. If this technique is followed, the attacker cannot push the ball between the defender's legs. And remember, tell your players to go for the ball—not the opponent.

Following are instructions for two types of tackles: the *block tackle* and the *poke tackle*.

**Block Tackle:** Players should use a block tackle when an opponent is dribbling directly at them. Instruct them to quickly close the distance to the dribbler. As they do so, they should position their feet in a staggered stance, with one foot slightly ahead of the other, and get in a slightly crouched stance. This will help to be in position to react quickly to the dribbler's move.

They should tackle the ball by blocking it with the inside surface of their foot. Tell them to position their foot sideways and keep it firm as they drive it into the ball. Remind them to play the ball, not the opponent, when tackling.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Get close to the ball." "Use the inside of the foot." "Keep your knee bent and leg firm."

**Poke Tackle:** Tell your players to use a poke tackle when they are approaching an opponent from the side or from slightly behind. As they near the dribbler they should reach in with a leg, extending the foot, and poke the ball away with their toes. Again, remind them to play the ball, not the opponent.

**Coach's Cue:**

"Shoot to score."

**Game/Play (15 Minutes)**  
**SHOOTING**

**Goal:** Players will learn the importance of having a shooting attitude. (If you don't shoot, you won't score!)

**Description:** 4 v 4.

**Coach:** What do you have to do if you want to score?

**Players:** Shoot.

**Coach:** Where should you shoot?

**Players:** At the goal. The whole goal is the target.



# WEEK 7

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT (10 Min-



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Family Involvement

Gather your players and parents together in a big group. Have them all sit in front of you. Start a discussion about family and how important it is for them. "Try to tie your shoe with one hand." Wait while the players attempt to tie their shoes with one hand. "It cannot be done, right?! Ask your teammate next to you to lend a hand and tie it with you." Wait while the players help each other tie their shoes. "You'll see that two working together can do more than one, or even two, working separately. A family works a lot like this example. When families work together they can achieve much more than if every member were to work alone. What does your family do better together than each of you do individually?"



## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Play a “tag” game, to encourage chasing opponents.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

### GENERAL FITNESS

#### **Key Idea:** General Fitness

Gather children into a circle. “What do our bodies need to do every day to keep going?” Wait for their responses. Discuss sleeping and resting, eating, and doing regular activities. “There’s one more thing that’s really important – being active and exercising. Let’s pretend it’s a day that you do not have soccer practice. Your body needs to move every day. With no soccer today, what should we do to move our bodies?” Wait for their responses. If a child suggests biking or swimming, have everyone act out that activity. Act out three activities. “It’s important to be active when you don’t have soccer practice. Your body needs to move every day.

## Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

### TOUCH PASSING

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to use a *first-touch pass* (give and go) to beat a defender.
2. Practice first-touch passing.

**Description:** Players in 2 v 1 games pass to a target player. Conditions of this game are the defender must go to the player with the ball, and two attackers must get the ball to the target player.

## Game/Play (15 Minutes)

### DEFENSE

**Goal:** Players will think about defending space and their goal.

**Description:** 2 v 2 to small goal.

**Coach:** How can you stop the other team from getting the ball? (You may need to set this up by saying “How can Katie make it harder for Matthew to get a pass from Michael?”)

**Players:** Stay close to them, mark them. *Marking* means guarding your opponent.

#### **Coach’s Cue:**

“Give the pass.” “Go for the return.”

“Return the pass behind the defender.”

“Pass to the target player.”



## **SAFETY (10 Minutes)**



### **TEAM CIRCLE**

**Key Idea:** Safety

Get the players into a group. Choose one player to act out being injured by limping. Have a second player get a coach to report the injury. "What did you see happen?" Listen to each player's response. "When you get injured, it will probably look like what was acted out. If it hurts, you should stop and let the coach know right away. Don't pretend to be injured, but don't pretend it doesn't hurt if you really are injured. Most of the time injuries aren't bad, but sometimes they can be serious. If you get hurt even the slightest bit, the coach needs to check it out. If you see another player get injured, let the coach know immediately. Telling the coach you or one of your teammates is hurt helps the



## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Play 1 on 1 games (in areas about 20 yards long, maximum) in which the defender pressures the opponent, trying to channel him or her toward the weak foot.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

### HEALTHY HABITS

#### **Key Idea:** Healthy Habits

Gather children into a circle. "Everyone is going to run in place. Let's start. Pretend that your body is going to run out of energy because you ate too many chips and drank a soda before practice. Start running slower and slower, and now stop! Now let's pretend that you ate a peanut butter sandwich and drank a glass of milk and a glass of water before practice. Let's run in place." Continue for 30 seconds. "See how you're able to run much longer and keep your energy? Eating healthy foods and drinking plenty of water are healthy habits for every day. You should drink water several times a day and drink even more when you're exercising. Also make sure to get enough sleep, exercise, brush your teeth, and say no to alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Keep your body healthy!"





## Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

### DRIBBLING UNDER PRESSURE

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *dribble* by a defender under control.
2. Practice *dribbling*.

**Description:** Play 1 v 2 games in 10 x 30 areas. Player A must beat two defenders in succession and get to the 30-yard line with the ball. Defenders can only move sideways. If a defender wins the ball from player A, he or she gives it back and player A continues, finishing by passing to the target player (T). Player T then becomes the attacker and player A becomes one of the defenders.

**Dribbling :** Dribbling is moving and controlling the ball using only the feet. Players should learn to dribble to move the ball down the field for a pass or shot, to keep the ball from the opposing team, and to change direction.

Players need to be able to use both the insides and outsides of their feet to dribble. To dribble with the inside of the foot, the player turns the foot out, then pushes the ball forward while moving. To dribble with the outside of the foot, the player turns the foot in, then pushes the ball slightly forward or to the side.

**Coach's Cue:**  
"Push and run!"

Players may have trouble dribbling at first. Have them start by walking and dribbling. Once they can do that, ask them to speed up their dribbling pace. Insist that they try to look up as they dribble and not down at the ball. If they always look down, they are likely to have the ball stolen by an opponent and are not likely to see a teammate who is open for a pass. Encourage players to use either foot to dribble—this will make it easier for them to protect the ball from opponents.

As your players improve, have them dribble against an opponent. Being marked (guarded) by a defender will require them to vary their speed, change direction, and shield the ball. Have them prepare for defensive pressure by practicing speeding up and slowing down as they dribble and by dribbling around towels or cones.

- ◆ Push the ball softly in the desired direction if you are dribbling close to defenders.

# WEEK 9

As your players improve, have them dribble against an opponent. Being marked (guarded) by a defender will require them to vary their speed, change direction, and shield the ball. Have them prepare for defensive pressure by practicing speeding up and slowing down as they dribble and by dribbling around towels or cones.

- ◆ Push the ball softly in the desired direction if you are dribbling close to defenders.
- ◆ Look up and watch for other players.
- ◆ Keep the ball close to your feet. If it is too far ahead, other players can steal it.
- ◆ Shield the ball from opponents.
- ◆ Run at a speed at which you can control the ball.
- ◆ If you are speed dribbling, push the ball out several feet ahead and sprint to the ball.



## Game/Play (15 Minutes) DEFENSE

**Goal:** Players will learn how to mark an opponent and how to apply pressure when that opponent gets the ball.

**Coach:** When your opponent gets the ball, where should you move to?

**Players:** Closer to the opponent.

**Coach's Cue:**  
"Use one-on-one marking."

# WEEK 9

## HEALTH (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Healthy Habits

Get the players into a group. "Everyone run in place for 15 seconds. Ready, set, go! . . . Now, stop! Whenever we run and kick during practice, our body starts to get warmed up. When our bodies get really warmed up, how do you think we cool them off?" Wait for the players responses. "Our bodies start to sweat. Sweat is the water that comes out of our skin through holes that are called pores. The sweat then evaporates into the air. Since your body sweats to cool itself off, what do you think we need to replace in our bodies?" Wait for someone on the team to answer "water." "That's right. Drinking plenty of water every day is a very important healthy habit. You need to drink more water if you're running and playing a lot. I want to challenge you all To drink one glass of water a day every year of Your age. How many is that? . . . Six? Seven? Eight? I know you can drink that many glasses a day, right?!"

# WEEK 10

## Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- Players get in pairs, 5 to 10 yards apart, practice quick passing, alternating passes with two touches and one touch.

## Fitness Component (5 Minutes) GENERAL FITNESS

### Key Idea: General Fitness

Gather children into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Tell them that each cone represents a different food group. "This cone is healthy foods, such as fruits, vegetables, meats, milk, and breads. This other cone is special treat foods, like chips, soda, candy, and sweet snacks. What foods can you eat to keep your body healthy, with enough energy for soccer?" As they respond, have them stand near the cone they choose. "It is important to eat more healthy foods, they give you more energy for soccer and help you grow. Special treat foods should be eaten in small amounts. Can you tell me other examples of healthy foods and special treat foods?"



## Skills/Drills (10 Minutes) SCORING FROM A CROSS

1. Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to score from a *cross*.
2. Practice scoring from a cross.

**Description:** Pair up players. The striker passes to the winger, the winger crosses, and the striker meets the cross to score.

## Game/Play (15 Minutes) DEFENSE

**Goal:** Players will learn to execute good one-on-one defense close to their own goal.

### Coach's Cues:

"Mark",  
"Pressure",  
"Tackle".

**Description:** 2 v 2 to a small goal or cones.

**Coach:** What should you do when your opponent gets close to your goal?

**Players:** Get close to the opponent so you can challenge for the ball.

# WEEK 10

## COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (10 Minutes)



### TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** Keeping Perspective

Gather the players around in a group. This is a time for reflection on the soccer season. "What did you most enjoy about this season?" Listen to their responses. Talk about teamwork, building individual soccer skills, and having fun. Ask them what are they made the most improvement and what areas they can still work on. "Did everyone have fun this season?" Have the players tell the coach what made this soccer season fun for each one of them. Talk about the values and how they fit in to the season. Ask each player to give examples of the values that they saw over the duration of the season. "The most important thing in soccer is to have fun playing with friends and to learn new skills. I think you all did that! Next year is another chance to have more fun, increase your soccer skills, and make new friends!"