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# **AYSO**

# **U-8 Coach**

# **Manual**

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# Welcome!

The American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) welcomes you to the world of coaching youth soccer. The Coaching Department of the National Support & Training Center and the AYSO National Coaching Advisory Commission are pleased to present this manual to help you get started.

AYSO is a place where every child plays in an atmosphere of good sportsmanship and positive coaching. The emphasis in AYSO is on youth. AYSO is unique because we recognize the social and psychological needs of children and do our best to work toward the fulfillment of those needs in all our programs. This emphasis makes AYSO a model for other youth sports groups and is a key to our astounding growth and popularity.

Developing soccer skills, physical attributes, tactical awareness and knowledge of the game are critical to promoting self-efficacy and increasing self-esteem in players. Thus, they perform at a higher level, avoid injury, see the results of their hard work and achievement and most importantly, have fun. As a volunteer coach, your participation in the program should be fun, as well.

The content of this manual is drawn from the knowledge and experience of AYSO's National Coach and National Coaching Advisory Commission—people with vast soccer knowledge, yet volunteers of AYSO—just like you. The soccer skills and coaching techniques included in this manual have been carefully selected as appropriate for the level of your players. We encourage you to use the techniques in this manual to train young players in the skills most needed at their level of development and play. With these guidelines and recommendations, your coaching experience will be satisfying for both you and your players.

We encourage you to attend the Annual Coach Orientation Course, held in your local region, as well as other AYSO coaching courses available in your area. Your regional commissioner or coach administrator can provide you with information about what's available and how to register.

Welcome!

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We are glad that you have joined the AYSO. On behalf of the players, we thank you!

**John Ouellette**

**AYSO National Coach**

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Soccer the beautiful game!

Soccer, by any measure, is the most popular game in the world. It's easy to play, can be played almost anywhere and requires very little equipment—perhaps markers of some sort for the two goals and the four corners of the field, and, of course, a ball.

Soccer is non-stop action, played in two halves with far fewer interruptions than other team sports. For sheer exercise, it is hard to beat. In fact, it provides one of the best cardiovascular workouts in all of sport.

Now that you're excited about soccer, continue on to learn what it means to be a coach in AYSO!

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# AYSO Philosophy

This section provides a brief introduction to AYSO's vision, mission and the philosophies on which the program is based.

## **Vision Statement**

To provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives

## **Mission Statement**

To develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs, which promote a fun, family environment based on the AYSO Philosophies:

- **Everyone Plays:** Our program's goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.
- **Balanced Teams:** Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.
- **Open Registration:** Our program is open to all children between 4½ and 19 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.
- **Positive Coaching:** Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.
- **Good Sportsmanship:** We strive to create a positive environment based on mutual respect rather than a win at all costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

# The Psychology of Coaching

## Working with young athletes

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It is important as a coach that you subscribe to a philosophy that acknowledges the role of athletics in developing children as complete individuals. Remember that AYSO's vision is to provide soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

As coaches we need to recognize that each athlete is an individual with unique needs and that we treat them accordingly:

Understand that players want to enjoy attending practices and games. If they are not having fun and learning, they will lose interest and not want to return.

Organize your activities and games so that every athlete on your team has an opportunity to develop and maintain positive feelings of self-worth.

Provide positive encouragement to all players for both accomplishments and mistakes.

Play in this very young age group is meant to give a "taste" of the game, some experience in working together as a team, and, most of all, a positive introduction to the sports experience.

One of the appealing things about soccer as a youth sport is that practically no skills at all are required to play the game at its simplest level. If a youngster can run and can kick a ball, he or she can play soccer and enjoy it.

If we understand and support player development as both athletes and individuals, the players will enjoy themselves more and want to continue playing. We must help them understand that the

objective of any game is to win, but that the overall goal is to enjoy the game and strive to do their best!

## **What to Expect from Under-8 Players**

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New and exciting adventures begin to open up to the U-8 players as their coordination improves and their size and strength increase. However, new challenges are often met with a mixture of enthusiasm and frustration. U-8 players typically set unrealistically high standards for themselves, have difficulty making choices and, at times, are overwhelmed by unfamiliar situations.

At the same time, changes in their cognitive abilities enable them to see that underlying rules are often useful for understanding everyday events, objects and the behavior of others.

### **Physical/Gross Motor Development:**

- work and play hard
- exhibit significant improvement in agility, balance, endurance, timing and hand-eye coordination

### **Social/Emotional Development:**

- have definite likes and dislikes
- friendship is important
- enjoy purposeful play
- afraid of failure
- beginning to compare themselves to others
- self-esteem and self concept are big issues
- becoming more outgoing
- actions can be influenced by peer acceptance
- quick to tattle when others aren't obeying
- cooperate with adults
- like to feel like they belong to a group

### **Cognitive/Thought Development:**

- begin to grasp moral rules of the game
- problem solving skills are improving

- understand that parts make up a whole (for example, that individual players make up a team)
- need concrete reinforcement
- apply a rigid understanding of justice and fair play – even a small infraction can be a BIG deal
- beginning to rank importance of things based on real criteria

**Remember, they're still kids!**

Despite possible turmoil and trying times (for players and coach), U-8 players will experience an abundance of good times marked by a lively curiosity, an eagerness to learn, a endearing sense of humor and exuberant outbursts of affection and good will.

Traditionally, youth soccer is viewed from an adult perspective, using the 11-a-side game as a reference. **We need to remember that children:**

- must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.
- are essentially self-oriented and naturally relate only to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.
- cannot sustain prolonged activity, and can function best with frequent rest periods.
- have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.
- focus best when learning activities are fun.

# Team Management

There are off-the-field responsibilities that affect the team and the players before they ever step on the field. These activities are referred to as team management.

## Organizing the Team

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This should be your first priority!

### 1. Develop a Team Goal.

“Players having FUN while learning about soccer” is a good base for a team goal. You, the parents and players can build on that foundation.

### 2. Develop a Coaching Philosophy.

You can base your personal coaching philosophy on the AYSO Coach Pledge (see Appendix C).

### 3. Conduct a Parents’ Meeting.

- Discuss AYSO’s Five Philosophies.
- Discuss the team’s goal(s).
- Explain your coaching philosophy.
  - You can begin by explaining short-sided soccer and why we play it.
  - Do not hesitate to share your experience or lack thereof as a coach.
- Educate parents briefly on the Laws of the Game specific to this age group. Distributing the ABC’s of AYSO (contact your Regional Commissioner for copies) is a great way to introduce new parents to soccer and AYSO.
- **GET HELP – You will need:**
  - Assistant Coaches

- Team Manager: administrative duties such as phone calls, coordinating carpools, etc...
- Team Parent: develop snack schedule, plan social activities, etc...
- **Set team policies regarding:**
  - Equipment brought to practice by each player: water, ball (properly inflated), shinguards, appropriate clothing.
  - Attendance at practices and games.
  - Player and parent behavior. You can discuss expectations of players and parents based on the Player and Parent Pledges (see Appendix C).

## **Equipment**

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A coach must always come to the field prepared. Below is a basic list of the minimum equipment you should have with you at practices and games:

- player medical release forms
- a basic first-aid kit
- water container (filled with water) and cups
- soccer balls
- an extra pair of shinguards
- a marking pen for labeling
- whistle

Your players should bring a soccer ball to every activity and must be wearing shinguards.

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## Practice

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### Preparation

You should always come to practice with a plan. Consider what technique you wish to work on and what activities you can use to achieve your goal. A written plan ensures smooth transitions, little down time and that you won't leave anything out.

### Sample Practice Outline

- **Warm Up & Stretch** 10 Minutes  
Keep it short, but do it. Young players must get used to warming up.
- **Introduce a Technique** 15 Minutes  
Remember to utilize the methods of instruction discussed later in the manual.
- **Skill-Based Activity or Drill** 20 Minutes  
Activities or drills that utilize the skill being taught is the most effective way for players to practice their skills.

Attempt to utilize at least two different activities or drills. This will ensure different types of experiences with the ball and keep the players from getting bored. (age-appropriate games can be found in the following section of this manual.)

- **Scrimmage** 15 Minutes  
A scrimmage is a friendly game between two halves of your own team.

Split your players in half and allow them to play largely uninterrupted. This is the time you should utilize the **See, Show, Say** technique to determine what you should work on the following week.

You should stop play a couple of times to make technical and tactical points.

This is a perfect time to reinforce points about game knowledge. For example, as the ball goes out, remind them about when the ball is and is not in play.

A short scrimmage is a good way to end a practice with these age groups. It gives them a chance to utilize the skills and knowledge they are gaining each week.

## **Warm Up**

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Keep it short, but do it. Young players must get used to warming up.

At this young age, player's muscles are not developed to a point where injuries will occur often, especially due to a lack of warming up and stretching. It is critical, however, that players be introduced to the concepts in order to prepare them for future competition in the years to come.

### **Warm Up the Muscles**

Before stretching muscles and other parts, they must be sufficiently warmed up. This requires aerobic activities that get the heart pumping and breathing above a resting rate.

Ideally, these activities should include a ball and be related to the technique you will be working on during the activity.

Activities should not be speed oriented, but they should cause players to move.

### **Stretch the Muscles**

After an aerobic warm up, players must stretch their muscles in order to avoid injury.

Stretch by slowly and evenly extending each muscle just to the point that the body naturally resists. Movements should be steady and gentle—static.

## **Game Day Basics**

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This section will provide information on the steps to follow on the days leading up to the big game. Ensuring that your players are

prepared and ready to play will ease your mind and keep everything running smoothly.

### **In Advance of Game Day**

- Remind parents of where and what time your team will meet.
- Ask parents to have players arrive 30 minutes in advance in order to account for late arrivals and preparation time.

### **Game Day**

**Check Your Equipment Before You Leave Home:** make sure you have everything you need, such as all the materials listed on page 13 in this manual.

#### **Before the Game:**

- Arrive early: at least 10 minutes before the time you expect your players.
- Gather team: preferably by the playing field; and in the shade if it is hot.
- Conduct a warm-up
- Talk: Excite them about getting ready to play.
  - Remind them to have fun and to do their best!
  - Review any important points you may determine necessary.
  - A quick reminder of the rules can be most beneficial.

#### **After the Game**

- Congratulate players on working hard.
- Individual kudos are great, but at this age, they must be given to all or none!
- Give a reminder of next practice or game (to the parents, not the players).

# Training Overview for U-8 Players

## Objectives of the game for the U-8 player

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### Attacking Objectives

- Score
- Maintain Possession

### Defending Objectives

- Prevent Scoring
- Concentration

## Principles of Play for U-8 player

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### Attacking Principles

- Penetration
- Width
- Depth

### Defending Principles

- Delay
- Concentration
- Depth

## Techniques

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- Instep kick
- Dribbling
- Throw-in
- Inside of the foot–push pass
- Inside of the foot–ball control

## Knowledge

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- What is in and out of play
- Corner kick
- Goal kick
- Don't kick or trip others
- Don't hold or push others
- No handling of the ball

# Objectives & Principles of the Game for U-8 Players

## Objectives of the Game

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Objective is defined in the dictionary as “a goal or a purpose.”

The Objectives of the Game at this age are simple:

- If your team has possession of the ball, your team is attacking, and your objectives are to MAINTAIN POSSESSION and SCORE!
- If the opposing team has possession of the ball, your team is defending, and your two objectives are to STOP them from SCORING and REGAIN POSSESSION!

## Principles of Play

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Principle is defined in the dictionary as “a fundamental origin or cause of something.” The Principles of Play are used to achieve the Objectives of the Game.

There are five attacking and five defending **Principles of Play** utilized in soccer, however for this very young age we will focus on only three attacking principles and three defending principles.

### **Attacking Principles**

**Penetration:** Advancing the ball past opposing players by dribbling, passing and shooting.

**Depth:** Supporting teammates by creating safe options for the player with the ball.

**Width:** Attacking on a broad front (players spread out) stretches the defense and creates space for players to advance.

The attacking principles of penetration, depth, and ultimately lead us to achieving our attacking objectives – **to MAINTAIN POSSESSION and SCORE!**

### **Defending Principles**

**Delay:** To slow down the attack by closing gaps and denying space for the other team to work in. Once the attack is slowed, your team can attempt to take the ball back.

**Depth:** Supporting the player(s) challenging the ball in case they are beaten.

**Concentration:** Compressing or restricting the space the attacking team has by “shepherding” them into a confined area makes it easier to defend and regain possession of the ball.

The defending principles of **delay, depth and concentration** ultimately lead us to achieving our defending objectives – **to STOP SCORING and REGAIN POSSESSION!**

(As you progress through the coaching ages, more principles will be added. All five will be learned by the U-12 level.)

# Teaching Methods

This section covers the most comprehensive and difficult aspect of coaching to master—how to develop player skills. Covered first are methods for instructing your players, followed by an explanation and discussion of the techniques necessary to perform the skills.

## **P. I. E. Positive Instruction & Encouragement**

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This concept is so important to AYSO's coaching philosophy, it was written into the National Rules and Regulations. **Positive Instruction and Encouragement** should always be used to instruct and motivate your players. They will respond better to you and it will help keep AYSO a happy, positive place for all.

## **Say, Show, Do and Review**

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This method is effective for teaching any age group. Simply follow these four steps for the technique you are working on with your team:

- **Say:** Explain the skill or technique.
- **Show:** Demonstrate the skill or technique.
- **Do:** Have players perform the skill or technique.
- **Review:** Review, correct and confirm proper technique.

**Remember to keep explanations and demonstrations brief** and that young children will only want to work on the same thing for a short period of time.

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## See, Show, Say Method

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This process can be used in conjunction with the Say, Show, Do and Review method described above. Once you have taught the technique, you can observe and correct your players as described below.

### See

Coaches must learn to be observers of their players' performances, looking to see if the skills, tactics and strategies they have learned are being properly utilized and executed on the field.

Observation is a silent activity. Instead of trying to coach or correct immediately, let them play uninterrupted for a time while taking notes:

- Make notes (preferably written) on what your players do.
- Make notes on the positive outcomes.
- Make a note (ONE note) on how they can improve.

Through the act of seeing (without speaking or directing), you can focus on analyzing the players and their performance. This **analysis** is the basis for the next step.

### Show

Showing consists of two complementary parts: description and demonstration.

**Description** involves briefly telling the players what you saw in terms of their execution; then provide them with attainable modifications to correct one or two deficits. This is called analysis and application. Don't try to describe every error or apply every remedy.

**Demonstration** comes after the description of what you saw, and involves showing the players what modifications they can employ to improve their technique most effectively. If you are unable to demonstrate the technique yourself, utilize a player who can.

**Say**

Once all of these steps have been followed, if the players perform the skill, tactic, or strategy effectively, it's time to let them know! Say it out loud, so everyone can hear.

That's the whole thing: **See, Show, Say** using **Positive Instruction and Encouragement**.

# Techniques for U-8 Players

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This section covers the various techniques you can teach to your players. The better grasp you have of the techniques, the better you will be able to teach them to your players. Note: all techniques should be practiced with both feet to ensure players do not develop a “strong foot” and a “weak foot.”

## Dribbling

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Dribbling is the art of using the feet to advance the ball, on the ground, under control, while moving. The two primary reasons to use dribbling skill are:

- to move the ball into a better position on the field.
- to retain possession of the ball.

**Dribbling** is one of the ways to achieve **penetration**, the Attacking Principle of Play for this age group.

The most important element of dribbling is developing a “feel” or “touch” for the ball with the feet... **BOTH OF THEM**. The key is then to **keep the ball close** by touching it softly.

### Dribbling Basics

- Use all major surfaces of the foot.
- Knees should be slightly bent and body leaning slightly over the ball for balance.

- Players should play with their head up, enabling them to see the field as well as the ball by utilizing peripheral vision as their ability progresses.
- Ball should be kept close.
  - Encourage players to touch the ball softly.
  - Close control of the ball should be emphasized.
  - Players should attempt to touch the ball every other step (or so).
  - Ball should never be more than a step or two away.

### **Common Errors and Corrections**

E Ball is played too far ahead.

C Have players move slower and remind them to touch ball softer.

E Player does not look up from ball.

C Remind players to look up, then run activity requiring players to look up while dribbling.

E Player re-positions entire body behind ball before touching.

C Encourage player to use motion of foot to direct ball, instead of re-positioning their body.

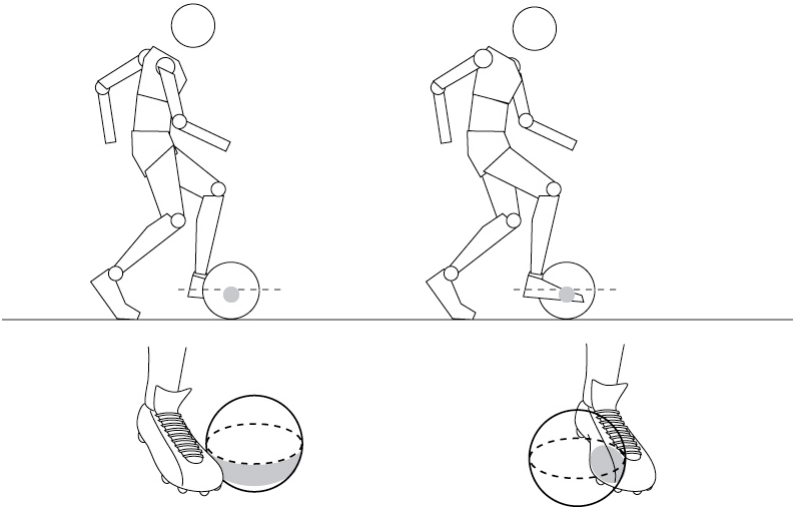
### **Dribbling Build Up**

**Stop the Ball:** Players at this age should be able to stop the ball by putting their foot on top of it.

- Balance on plant foot (foot on the ground), while keeping play foot (foot on the ball) firmly on top of the ball.
- Step past the ball with plant foot before stepping on it, keeping in mind the speed at which the ball is rolling.

**Turn the Ball:** Learning to change direction while dribbling is critical in soccer and should be introduced at this age level.

- Use motion of foot to direct the ball.
- Accelerate after changing direction.



## Instep Kick

The instep kick is used to kick the ball and, as players get older, for long passes and shots on goal.

### Instep Kick – Basics

#### Prepare Plant Leg (supporting, non-kicking foot)

- Place support foot next to the ball pointed in general direction of target (distance from ball will depend on height of the player).
- Bend knee slightly.
- All weight should be on plant foot.
- Use arms out to sides for balance.

#### Prepare Striking (kicking) Leg

- Bend knee (cock lower leg).
- Withdraw leg straight back at hip.
- Lock ankle back and down with toes pointed down.

#### Striking Movement

- Body should be over the ball, moving forward.
- Keep eyes on ball.
- Set plant knee over ball (eye-knee-ball in line).
- Move thigh of striking leg forward (whip action).
- Strike the center of the ball on the instep (“laces” of the shoes).
- Follow through—move leg straight through toward target:
- Pull leg straight through while maintaining balance.
- Lower body as leg rises.
- Follow through and lift knee.
- Step out of the kick.

### Instep Kick – Coaching Points

Before having players strike the ball:

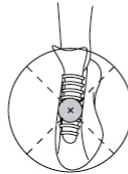
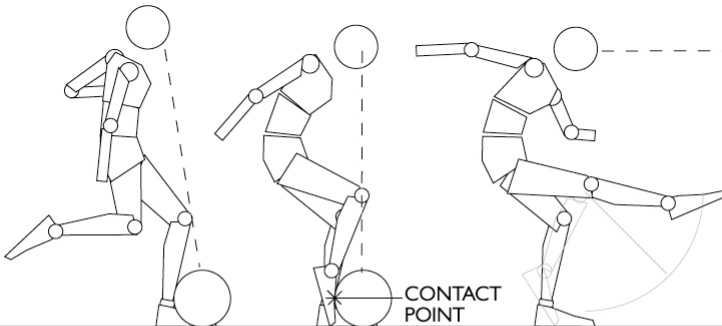
- Have them practice planting their foot in the proper place.
- Have them practice swinging their leg and foot straight back and forth, ensuring proper body and leg movement.
- Next, have a parent sit down with legs out in front and secure ball with feet. Have each player stand with plant foot in proper



position and strike lightly until they begin to hit the ball solidly (properly).

### **Instep Kick – Common Errors And Corrections**

- E Plant foot is too far in front, behind or away from ball and/or not pointed in general direction of target.  
 C Review proper technique with player(s).
- E Knee(s) are locked, not bent.  
 C Review proper technique with player(s).
- E Ankle is not locked and toes are not pointed.  
 C Lock ankle, point toes.
- E Ball is stabbed or jabbed.  
 C Encourage player to follow through.
- E Leg is swung across the body instead of toward the target.  
 C Encourage player to withdraw leg straight back and follow through straight toward target.



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## Throw-In

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A throw-in is used to restart the game after the entire ball has crossed the touch line, whether on the ground or in the air.

### Throw-In – Basics

To execute a proper throw-in, the player must:

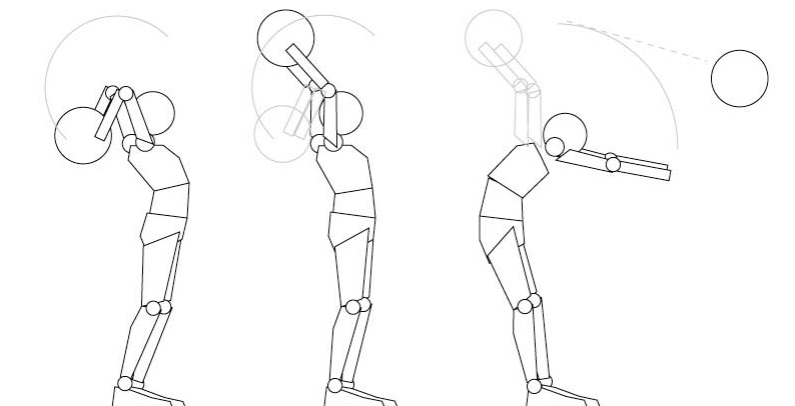
- Face the field of play.
- Have part of each foot on the ground, either on or behind the touchline when the ball is released.
- Use both hands and deliver the ball from behind and over the head in one continuous motion.
- Hold the ball evenly in both hands (hands should be slightly apart).
- Feet must be kept on the ground until ball is released.

### Throw-In – Coaching Points

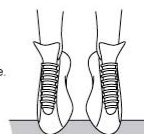
- The thrower may not play the ball a second time until it is touched by another player.
- Your team should try to maintain possession when executing a throw-in.
- Get the parents involved! Have each one of your players execute a throw-in by making a throw-in to a parent.
- Have each player continue to make throw-ins while you circulate and correct.

### Throw-In – Common Errors And Corrections

- E Foot/feet come off ground during throw.
- C Have players keep their feet together with knees bent and hold their feet down until they develop the feeling of throwing without lifting their feet.
- E Ball slips out of grasp.
- C If players hands are too small, instruct them to spread hands out until they have a solid grasp.



Make sure your feet stay on the ground ON OR BEHIND the touchline.



## **Inside of the Foot–Push Pass**

---

This technique is used to advance the ball or to maintain possession by passing to a teammate.

### **Inside of Foot–Push Pass – Basics**

#### **Prepare Plant Leg**

- Place support foot next to the ball (toe should not be past ball) pointed in general direction of target (distance from ball will depend on height of the player).
- Bend knee slightly.
- All weight should be on plant foot.
- Use arms for balance.

#### **Prepare Action Leg**

- Draw leg back from hip.
- Bend knee slightly.
- Rotate leg at hip 90 degrees outward.
- Lock ankle with toe pointed slightly up.
- Inside of foot should face the general direction of target.

#### **Striking Movement**

- Body should be over the ball, moving forward.
- Keep eyes on ball.
- Move leg straight forward.
- Strike at the center of the ball with the inside of the foot.
- Sole of foot should be off the ground with toe pointed slightly up, and perpendicular to ball (form “T” or “L” with feet).
- Follow through:
- Pull leg straight through in general direction of target while maintaining balance.
  - Lower body as leg rises.
  - Follow through and lift knee.
  - Step out of the kick.

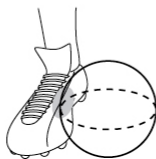
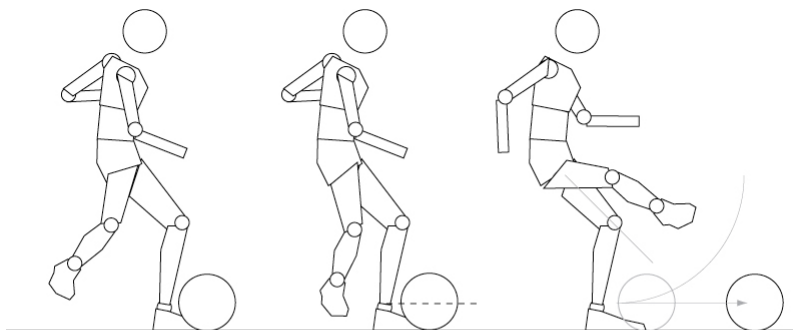
### **Inside of Foot–Push Pass – Coaching Points**

Before having players strike the ball:

- Have them practice planting their foot in the proper place.
- Have them practice swinging their leg and foot straight back and forth, ensuring proper body and leg movement.

**Inside of Foot–Push Pass – Common Errors & Corrections**

- E Plant foot is too far in front, behind or away from ball and/or not pointed in general direction of target.
- E Knee(s) are locked, not bent.
- E Ankle is not locked and sole of foot is not parallel to ground and/or facing general direction of target.
- C To correct any of these errors, refer to diagram and description, review proper technique with player(s).



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## Inside of the Foot–Ball Control

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This technique is used to control the ball using the inside of the foot in order to maintain possession and prepare for the next move.

### Inside of Foot–Ball Control – Basics

#### Prepare Plant Leg

- Place support foot next to path of the ball.
- Bend knee slightly.
- Put weight on plant leg.

#### Prepare Control Leg

- Leg forward.
- Bend knee slightly.
- Rotate leg at hip 90 degrees out.
- Lock ankle with toe pointed up to ensure solid contact point.
- Raise foot off the ground and perpendicular to ball.

#### Controlling Movement

- Keep eyes on the ball.
- Contact center of the ball with center of inside of the foot (in curve/arch).
- Withdraw action leg straight back as contact is made in order to cushion the ball.
- Prepare ball for your next move—pass, dribble, or shoot.

### Inside of Foot–Ball Control – Common Errors & Corrections

E Player misses the ball.

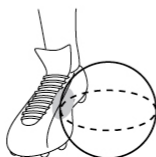
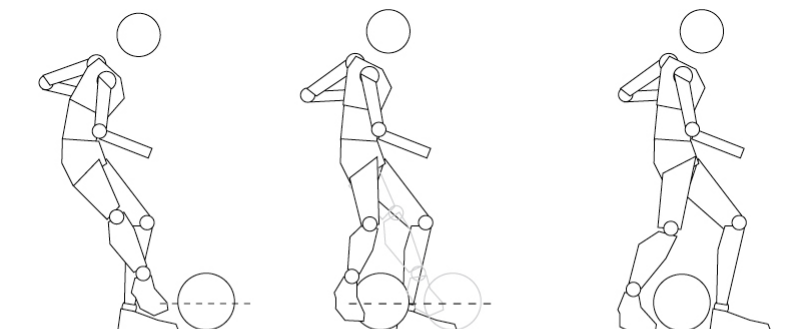
C Keep eyes on the ball and move into its path.

E Ball rolls over the controlling foot.

C Lock the ankle and point toe slightly up.

E Ball bounces off the controlling foot.

C Draw the controlling leg back as the ball arrives.



# Training Games for U-8 Players

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This section will provide you with training games recommended by the AYSO National Coaching Advisory Commission to help the players practice their skills. The games are grouped according to the skill that they will most effectively help to teach.

“The game itself is the teacher!”

Despite all of the coaching techniques that can be utilized, nothing will ever teach young players more effectively than just letting them play.

You can be creative with the names of the games and modify them. Change the speed, space, and opposition as you and your players begin to feel comfortable with them.

## Bank Robbery

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

**Equipment:** Four or more cones to mark grid, 10–12 soccer balls

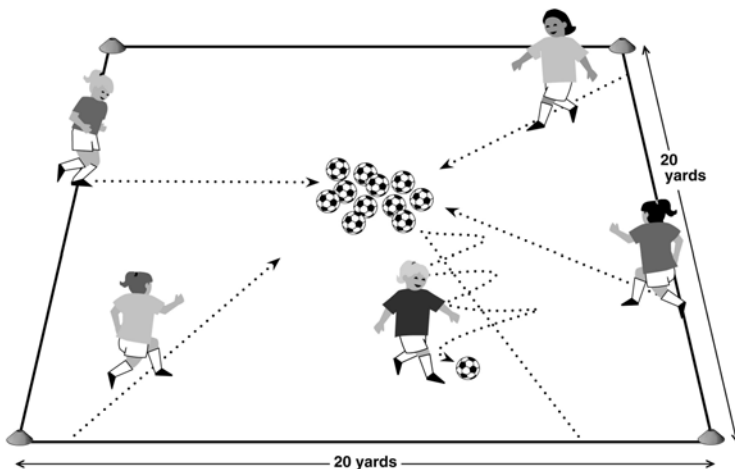
**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid or circle can be used

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones.

All players are required to play within the grid.

**How The Game Is Played:** All players are standing on a line (imaginary boundary line that marks the grid). The coach will yell “Bank Robbery.” At that time each player must sprint to the center of the grid, collect a ball with her feet, and return to the line as quickly as possible, then stop the ball on the line and return to the center to get another ball. When all the balls have been collected the player who has collected the most balls wins.

**Variations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of right or left foot, or use inside of both feet. Add more balls to the center and enlarge the grid.



## My Ball

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

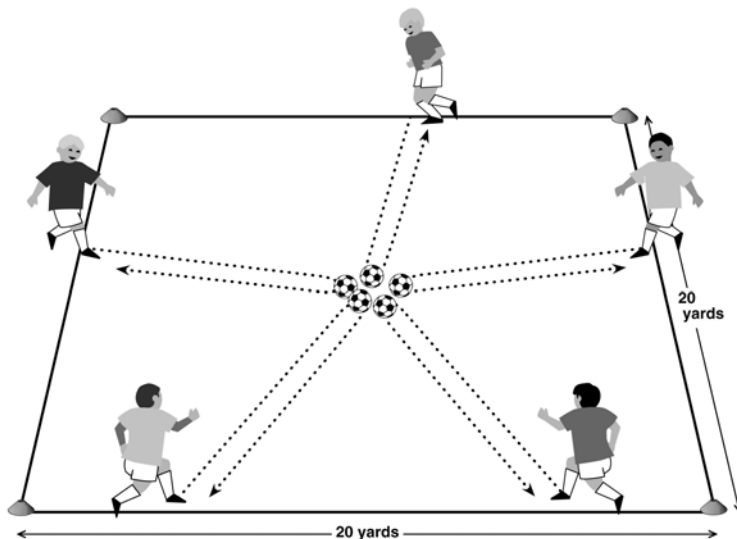
**Equipment:** Four or more cones to mark grid, one ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid (can also use a circle).

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How The Game Is Played:** All players are standing on a line (imaginary boundary line that marks the grid) The coach will call out a player's name, that player must sprint to the center of the grid, collect a ball with her feet, and return to the line as quickly as possible. The fastest player wins.

**Deviations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of right or left foot, or use inside of both feet. The coach can call two or three names at a time. Just have some fun with the game.



## Pac Woman

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

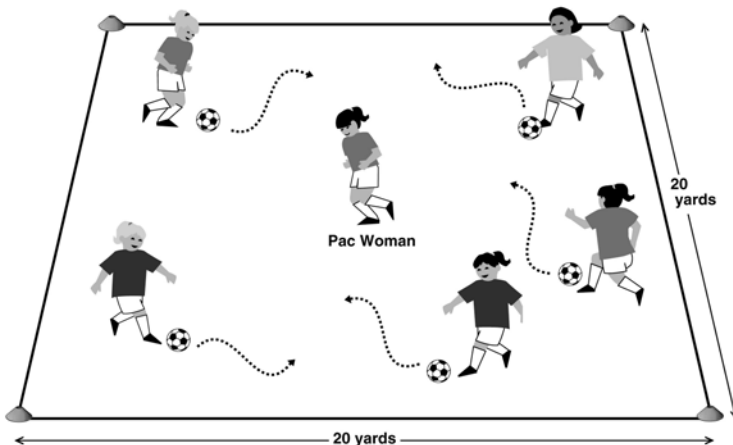
**Equipment:** Four or more cones to mark grid, one ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How The Game Is Played:** The Pac Woman chases the players. Any player that dribbles outside the grid, or has their ball kicked outside the grid by the Pac Woman, becomes the Pac Woman. The initial Pac Woman will use the ball of the player who dribbled out of the grid or whose ball was kicked out of the grid.

**Variations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, outside of right or left foot, or use inside of both feet. Ensure that the Pac Woman plays at 100-percent speed.



## State Game

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

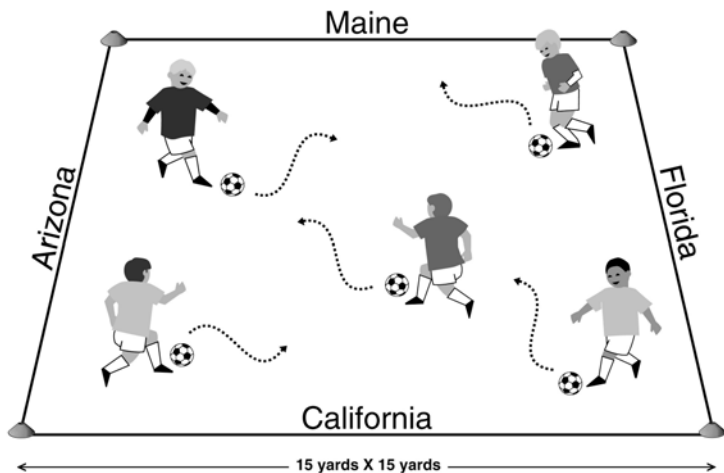
**Equipment:** Four or more cones to mark grid, one ball for each player

**Grid Requirement:** 15 X 15 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 15 X 15 yard grid marked with cones. All players are required to play within the grid and each player must have a soccer ball.

**How The Game Is Played:** The coach will give every line on the grid a state name, California, Arizona, Florida, or Maine. The coach can change the name of the line anytime she wants too. After the players are told the name of the lines, the players will dribble around the grid until the coach tells them what state to visit. When the coach yells the state, the players must dribble to the correct line and stop the ball on the line that represents the state that was called.

**Variations:** Change the name from states to National Parks. Use the player's names for a line (just be sure to use every player's name by the end of the training session).



## The Big Bad Bear

**Skill:** Dribbling

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

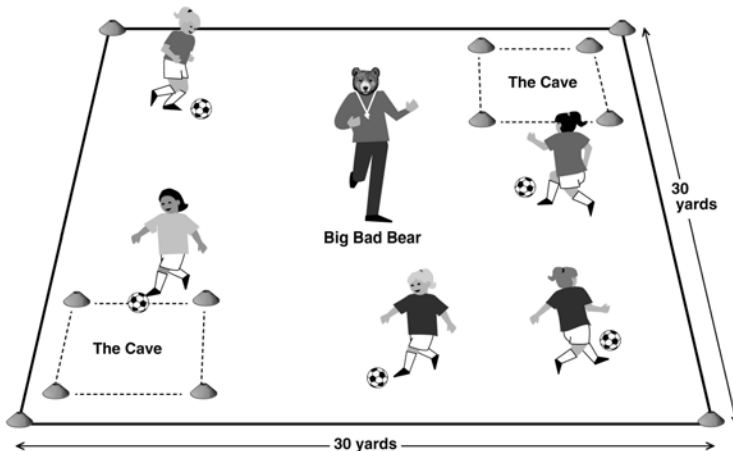
**Equipment:** 12 cones – four cones to mark grid the grid, eight cones to make two caves and one ball for each player.

**Grid Requirement:** 30 X 30 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 30 X 30 yard grid marked with cones. Players must stay within the grid.

**How The Game Is Played:** The coach is the “Big Bad Bear” and the bear must try to capture the players. The players dribble around the area while the bear tries to capture them. The bear cannot capture the players if they hide in the cave. The players can only stay in the cave for 10 seconds and must go to the other cave to avoid capture. If a player is captured they become a bear and help the Big Bad Bear capture the remaining players. Last player to be captured is the winner.

**Variations:** All bears must hold hands while trying to capture the remaining players. Bears must always be growling.



## Knock It Off

**Skill:** Passing/Shooting

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

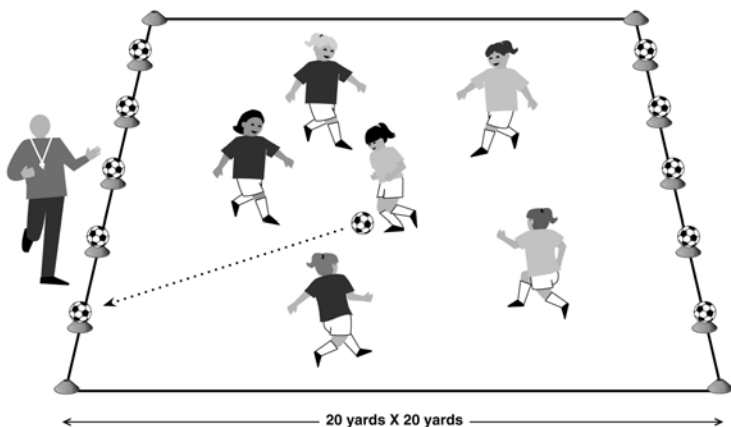
**Equipment:** 14 or more cones: 4 to mark grid and 10 to place balls on; 11 soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. Place five cones with a ball on each one along each end line.

**How The Game Is Played:** The coach will roll a ball into the grid and say “go!” Each team fights for possession. The team that gains possession attacks and the other team tries to regain possession. The game is won when all the balls on the end line that a team is attacking are knocked off the cones. If the ball goes out of play, the coach will roll it back into the grid. Coach determines which team attacks.

**Variations:** Can only shoot with the foot the coach designates. Let any team attack any ball, team that knock off the most balls wins. Have players on the same team alternate knocking off the ball (one player can't knock off two in a row).



## One Pin Bowling

**Skill:** Passing/Shooting

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

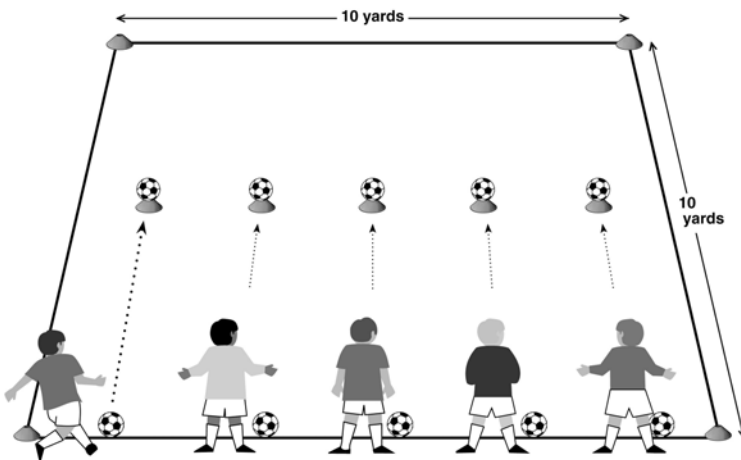
**Equipment:** 10 or more cones to mark grid, two balls for each player and a cone for each player.

**Grid Requirement:** 10 X 10 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 10 X 10 yard grid marked with cones. Place each player across from a cone with a ball placed on the cone located at the mid point of the grid.

**How The Game Is Played:** One at a time each player tries to knock the ball off the cone directly in line with her. Let each player try it once before you start over from player one. After each player has attempted five shots, the player who has knocked the most balls off the cone is the winner.

**Variations:** Have players strike the ball with the left and right foot. Change the distance that the balls are away from the players. Try to get all five balls at the end of the grid by the end of the training session.



## Target Practice

**Skill:** Passing/Shooting

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

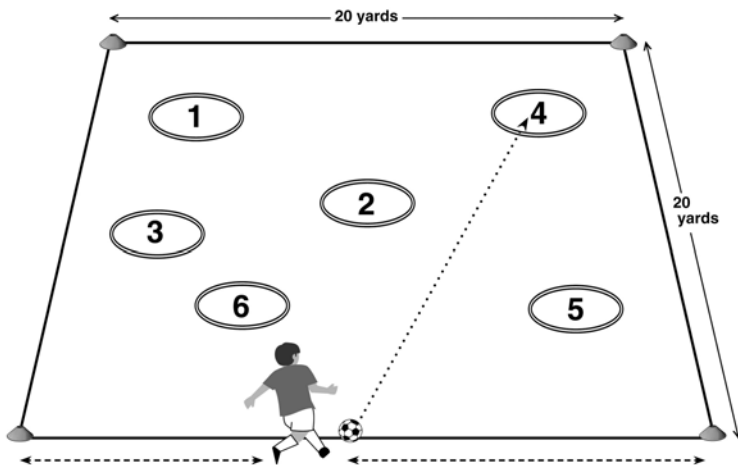
**Equipment:** Four cones to mark grid, six or more hoops, and one ball for each player.

**Grid Requirement:** 20 X 20 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 20 X 20 yard grid marked with cones. Place five or six hoops (hula-hoops work well) randomly within the grid.

**How The Game Is Played:** One at a time each player tries to kick and have his or her ball stop within the hoop. The first player to keep a ball within all the hoops is the winner. After a miss, the next player is up. Players can shoot from any place on the line.

**Variations:** Allow players to only use left foot, right foot, or the outside of right or left foot.



## Target Practice Two

**Skill:** Passing/Shooting

**Number Of Players Required:** Full U-8 team

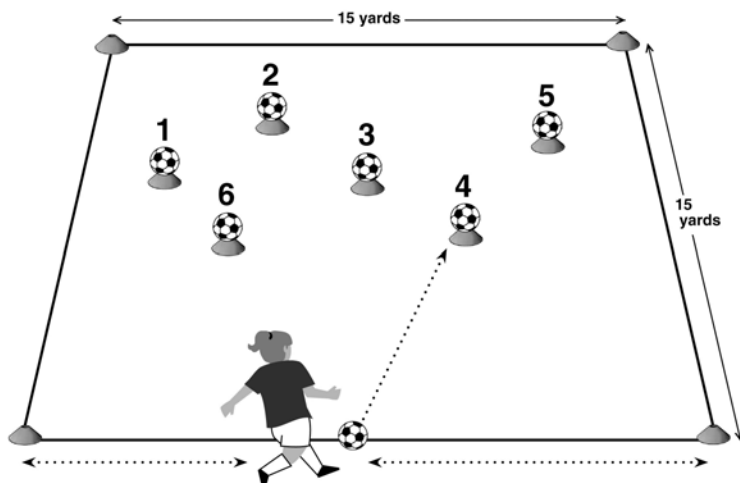
**Equipment:** Four cones to mark grid and six cones to place soccer balls on, seven or eight soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** 15 X 15 yard grid

**Organization:** Create a 15 X 15 yard grid marked with cones. Place five or six cones with soccer balls on top of each randomly within the grid.

**How The Game Is Played:** One at a time, each player tries to knock a ball off the cones, one ball at a time. After a miss, the coach resets the balls and next player is up. Players can shoot from any place on the line. The first player to knock all six balls of the cones is the winner.

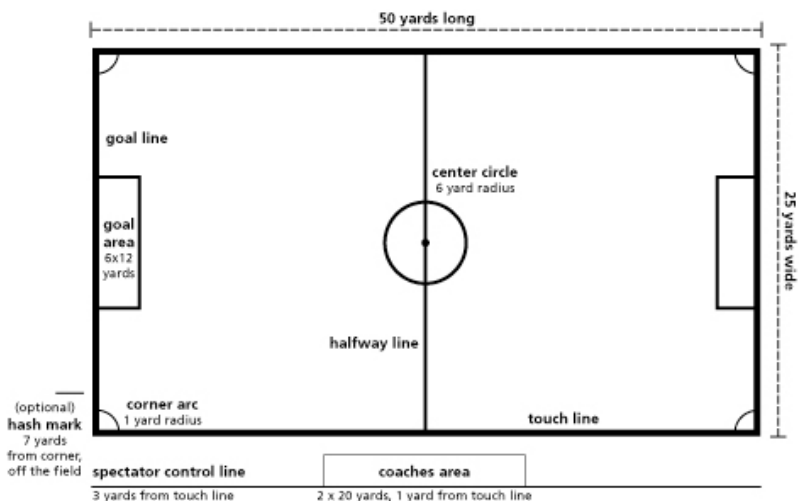
**Variations:** Direct the players to only use left foot or right foot.



# Appendix A: Under-8 Program Guidelines

## Field

- **Dimensions:** 50 yards long, 25 yards wide.
- **Markings:** Distinctive lines recommended.
  - Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines.
  - Center circle with a six-yard radius in the center of the field.
  - Corner arcs with a one-yard radius at each corner of the field.
  - Goal area in front of each goal measuring 6 x 12 yards.
- **Goals:** Maximum six feet high and six yards wide.



**Ball**

- Size 3

**Players**

- **Number:** Five per team on field; no goalkeepers. Seven maximum on roster.
- **Substitutions:** Between periods, at halftime and for injuries.
- **Playing time:** Minimum of two periods per game and no player should play four periods until everyone has played three.
- **Teams:** Separate girls and boys teams should be promoted at all levels of play.

**Players' Equipment**

- **Footwear:** Soccer shoes, tennis shoes or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.
- **Shinguards:** MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks.

**Duration of Game**

- Four 10-minute periods
- Halftime break of five minutes

**Official**

AYSO-certified U-8 officials or higher are required for U-8 games. The U-8 official should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and encourage proper play and sporting behavior. As with all games, every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

**Assistant Referees/Club Linesmen**

If available, qualified assistant referees who have completed Assistant Referee Certification may be used to assist the referee.

This is an opportunity for new assistant referees to begin getting experience.

If qualified assistant referees are not available, club linesmen (untrained volunteers who may be affiliated with one of the teams/clubs) may be recruited from the spectators, to assist the referee with calling the ball in and out of play only. This is an opportunity for parents to get involved.

# Appendix B: Knowledge of the U-8 game

## **The Start of Play**

To start the first and second halves and following each goal in all age group games, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the center of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

## **The Kick-off**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least six yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent always be six yards from the ball, as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

## **Ball In and Out of Play**

The ball is out of play in all age group games when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line), either on the ground or in the air.

## **Method of Scoring**

A goal, in all age group games, is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal.

## **Fouls**

The opposing team must be at least six yards from the ball when free kicks are taken in U-8 games. Since there are no goalkeepers in U-8, there are no fouls to or by goalkeepers. The following, if deliberately done, are the fouls most likely to occur in U-8 games: kicking, tripping, pushing, holding, handling the ball and dangerous play (the most frequent call in U-8 games). Officials must remember that there is no need to stop play for technical violations

that do not interrupt the flow of the game. It's a player's game and not a game of how many infractions can be identified, so keep the fun going and let them play.

### **Misconduct**

Misconduct should be rare in U-8 games. There is no need for the public cautioning and sending off of young players (leave your red and yellow cards home). Officials should work cooperatively with the coach when a U-8 player may need a "time out."

### **Free Kicks**

All free kicks in U-8 games are direct free kicks. Opponents must be at least six yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks. Free kicks awarded the attacking team inside the defending team's goal area are to be taken from the nearest point on the goal area line parallel to the goal line.

### **Offside**

The concept of offside is too complicated for U-8 players and should not be a consideration for officials in U-8 games.

### **Throw-in**

A second throw-in should be allowed in U-8 games if the first attempt was improperly done. If the second attempt is still improper, let it go. Proper technique can be reinforced later by the coach. Keep the game moving and minimize interruptions.

### **Goal Kick**

A goal kick is awarded to the opposing team, in U-8 and older, when the attacking team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area. The opposing team must be at least six yards from the ball when the goal kick is taken in U-8 games.

### **Corner Kick**

A corner kick is awarded to the opposing team, in U-8 and older, when the defending team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The opposing team must be at least six yards from the ball when the corner kick is taken in U-8 games.

**Hand Ball**

A hand ball infraction occurs when a player handles the ball deliberately. The “hand” includes the entire arm up to the top of the shoulder. Instinctive, self-protective reactions are not penalized at this young age. Accidental contact (ball striking hand or arm with no intent by the player) is not an offense and should not be penalized.

# Appendix C: Pledges

## **AYSO Coach Pledge:**

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In my words and action, I pledge to:

1. Enthusiastically support and practice the AYSO Philosophies of: Everyone Plays, Open Registration, Balanced Teams, Positive Coaching and Good Sportsmanship.
2. Stay informed about sound principles of coaching and child development.
3. Respect the game and know the Laws.
4. Emphasize to my players that they must abide by the Laws of the Game at all times.
5. Develop a true respect for the judgment of all referees.
6. Develop a team respect for the ability of our opponents.
7. Ensure a safe environment for my players.
8. Never yell at or ridicule a player.
9. Always set a good example.
10. Remember that soccer is a game and all games should be fun.

## **AYSO Player Pledge:**

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In my words and action, I pledge to:

AYSO Parent Pledge:

1. Play for the sake of playing a game, not just to please a parent or coach.
2. Always give my best effort and work as hard for my teammates as I do for myself.
3. Treat all players as I would like to be treated.
4. Be a team player and not show off or hog the ball.
5. Be a good sport and acknowledge good plays whether they are made by my team or my opponents.
6. Abide by the Laws of the Game.
7. Cooperate with my coaches, teammates, opponents and the referee.
8. Never argue with or complain about referee calls or decisions.
9. Control my temper when I feel I have been wronged.
10. Remember that the object of the game is to win, but the goal is to enjoy myself.

## **AYSO Parent Pledge:**

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In my words and action, I pledge to:

1. Attend and participate in team parent meetings.
2. Be on time or early when dropping off or picking up my child for a practice or game.
3. Ensure my child is supported and encouraged by family or loved ones at games.
4. Encourage my child to have fun and keep sport in its proper perspective.

5. Define winning for my child as doing his/her very best.
6. Endeavor to learn the Laws (rules) of soccer and support the efforts of referees.
7. Honor the game and show respect for all involved including coaches, players, opponents, spectators and referees.
8. Applaud and encourage players from both teams and not yell out instructions.
9. Not make negative comments about the game, coaches, referees or players in my child's presence.
10. Encourage others to refrain from negative or abusive sideline behavior.

# Appendix D: VIP

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## **Integrating the “VIP” Player into Your Region**

A VIP (Very Important Player) is a player who’s physical and/or mental challenges make it difficult to successfully participate on a mainstream soccer team.

What is successful participation? It should be defined by the player’s enjoyment and the safety of all team members.

The player who has only a physical disability is likely to have many of the expectations and capabilities of a non-disabled player and should be coached accordingly. Every effort should be made to integrate these players into mainstream teams, as much as safety allows.

VIP is an AYSO program designed to provide a quality soccer experience for VIP players. VIP teams offer many players with disabilities the least-restrictive and safest environment in which to learn and enjoy the game of soccer. Contact your Regional Commissioner, Regional Coach Administrator, Regional VIP Administrator or the National Support & Training Center to obtain AYSO’s special VIP training materials and information on how to begin a VIP program.

**everyone plays<sup>®</sup>**

# Glossary of Terms

**Balanced Teams:** Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.

**Concentration:** Compressing or restricting the space the attacking team has by “shepherding” them into a confined area makes it easier to defend and regain possession of the ball.

**Delay:** Slowing down the attack by closing the gap and denying space to allow the defense to get organized.

**Depth:** Supporting teammates by creating safe options for the player with the ball (attacking), or supporting the player(s) challenging the ball in case they are beaten (defending).

**Dribbling:** The skill of using the feet to advance the ball on the ground when opponents are near.

**Everyone Plays:** Our program’s goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.

**Goal Kick:** A goal kick is awarded to the opposing team, in U-8 and older, when the attacking team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area. The opposing team must be at least six yards from the ball when the goal kick is taken in U-8 games.

**Good Sportsmanship:** We strive to create a positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude. All our programs must be designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.

**In and out of play:** The ball is out of play when the entire ball has completely crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air.

**Inside of the Foot – Push Pass:** This technique is used to advance the ball or to maintain possession by passing to a teammate.

**Inside of the Foot – Ball Control:** This technique is used to control the ball using the inside of the foot in order to maintain possession and prepare for the next move.

**Instep kick:** This skill is used for long passes and strong shots on goal using the instep of the foot.

**Kick-off:** A kick-off is a way of starting and restarting play—at the start of the match, after a goal has been scored, at the start of the second half of the match, and at the start of each period.

**Open Registration:** Our program is open to all children between 4½ and 19 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.

**Penetration:** Advancement, moving the ball and/or players past an opponent in order to get into position to shoot and/or score, and is achieved by shooting, dribbling, and passing.

**Positive Coaching:** Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.

**Principles of Play:** There are five attacking and five defending Principles of Play utilized in soccer. At the U-6 level, however, we will focus on only three attacking principles (penetration, width and depth) and three defending principles (delay, concentration and depth).

**Throw-in:** The throw-in is used to restart the game after the entire ball has crossed the sideline, whether on the ground or in the air.

**Warm-up:** Keep it short, but do it. Young players must get used to warming up and stretching their muscles.

**Width:** Attacking on a broad front (players spread out) stretches the defense and creates space for players to advance.



