The U10 Age Group

The motivation to learn basic skills is very high at this age level. Children gradually begin to change from being self-centered to being self-critical and develop the need for group and/or team games. The game itself should be central to all skills training. Small-sided games continue to be the method of choice for this age group. This is an appropriate time to introduce some of the basic Principles of play which are shown in bold below:

**Attacking Principles**

- Penetration
- Support
- Mobility
- Width
- Depth (length)
- Improvisation (deception, creativity)

**Defensive Principles**

- Recovery (Immediate Chase)
- Pressure
- Cover
- Balance
- Compactness
- Counter Attack

For more information on attacking and defensive principles please refer to Tactics page 173-177.

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U10 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods.

License Requirement

The U10/U12 State Youth Module is required. The National Youth License is recommended.
The U10 Player Characteristics

Mental/Psychological (cognitive)

Lengthened attention span
Ability to sequence thought and actions; begin to think in advance of the ball...anticipate
Ability to remember, follow more complex instructions and solve higher-level problems (i.e. simple combination play)
Developing ability to focus and stay on task
More understanding of time and space relations

Physical (psychomotor)

Gain a tremendous amount of physical strength, endurance and power; this is related to body size and muscle mass
Motor performance includes a variety of motor tasks that require speed, balance, flexibility, explosive strength and muscular endurance; pace factor is developing quite well
Gross and small fine motor skills becoming refined
Children this age are in a linear growth mode (head to toe)
Height can approach 5 feet and weight can approach 80 lbs

Socially (psychosocial)

Self-concept and body image are important
Less Sensitive...but still dislike personal failure in front of peers
Begin to initiate play on their own...they want to play
Becoming more serious about their play
Inclined more toward small group and team activities
Peer group attachment and pressure becoming significant
Adults outside the family become influential (coach, teacher, etc.)
Gender differences becoming more apparent

What to Teach U10 Players
(Game Components)

Techniques (skills):

Running with the Ball
  At speed
  Under Pressure

Passing
  With outside of the foot
  Heading

Instep Drive
  Shooting
  Crossing

Receiving Ground Balls with the Inside and Outside of Foot
  Away from pressure
  Past opponent

Receiving Air Balls
  With the Instep (cushion) and sole, inside and outside of the foot (wedge)

Throw-In
  Short and long distances

Moves in Dribbling
  Rolls, scissors-push, double scissors, step-over chop

Introduce Heading
  Juggling (alone and in small groups)
  Feet in contact with the ground
  Introduction to jumping

Tackling
  Balance foot and contact foot (block tackle)
Goalkeeping (skills)
Ready Stance for Goalkeepers
- Foot positioning
- Body posture

"W" Grip
- Positioning of thumbs
- Fingers spread

How to Hold a Ball After a Save
- Ball to chest
- Forearm protection

Catching Shots at the Keeper
- Body alignment path of ball

Punting
- Distance and accuracy

Throwing
- Bowling
- Over-arm

Goal Kicks
- Distance and accuracy

Psychology (mental and social):
- Working in groups of 3-6
- Staying focused for one entire half
- Sensitivity; learning how to win, lose or draw gracefully
- Sportsmanship
- How to handle parental involvement
- Communication; emotional management

Fitness (conditioning):
- Endurance
- Range of motion-flexibility
- Proper warm-up is now mandatory
- Introduce cool-down

Tactics (decisions):
- Roles of 1st attacker and defender
- Roles of 2nd attackers and defenders

- 2 v 1 attacking (simple combinations)
- Man-to-man defending
- Throw-ins to teammate's feet
- Introduction to the tactics of set plays/restarts (goal kicks, corner kicks, other free kicks)
- Introduction to setting up walls

Rules:
Review Fouls and Misconduct

US Youth Soccer Modifications to The Game
Playing numbers: 6v6 (with goalkeeper)
Field Dimensions:
- Length: 45-60 yards
- Width: 35-45 yards
Goal Dimensions:
- Height: 6 feet
- Width: 18 feet
Duration: two periods of 25 minutes
Ball: number 4

Possible Formations

```
1-2-3
```

```
1-3-2
```
The Training Session

- The training session should involve fun and imaginative game like activities, as well as technical and tactical repetitive activities.
- Coaching technical skills is very important at this age as well as light tactical concepts.
- The training session has a technical and/or tactical theme (focus). For example: dribbling technique, or passing and receiving, or combination play.
- Small-sided directional games such as 3 v 3, 4v3, 4 v 4, 5v4 and 5v5 should be included as well. More detailed explanations regarding shape and positions.
- Training should always conclude with a 6v6 game with goalkeepers if possible (5 field players and 1 goalkeeper on each team).
- The duration of the training session should be 75-90 minutes.

Lesson Plan Design

The U10 training session should consist of about 6-8 activities. There should be a mixture of warm-up, dynamic, dynamic competitive and cool down activities. The design would be as follows:

1. Warm-up Activities
2. Stretch Activities
3. Dynamic Activity
4. Dynamic Activity
5. Dynamic Competitive Activity
6. Dynamic Competitive Activity
7. Dynamic Competitive Activity
8. Cool Down Activities
Sample Lesson Plan

1. Interactive Dribbling at an easy pace.
2. Stretch Activities
3. Gate Dribbling (with Gate Keepers)
4. Ball Tag
5. One versus One Challenge [1 v 1]
6. Four Corner Shooting
7. The Game 6v6
8. Controlled Juggling

Warm-Up Activities: The coach can use any of the Dynamic Activities as warm-up activities. The important thing to remember is that players perform in these activities at a slower pace and gradually increase their pace and output. These activities gradually warm-up the players’ muscles and ligaments so that proper stretching activities can follow. The purpose of the warm-up is to allow the players to gradually build up to an intense training session, both physically and mentally.

Stretching Activities: There are two types of stretching that are appropriate for young players:

Static Stretching – stationary stretching where muscle groups are slowly stretched for 20-30 seconds.

Dynamic Stretching – explosive type stretching that replicates the body movement (actions) while playing the game. For example…swinging a leg front and back for 20-30 seconds.

Cool-Down Activities: These are Warm-up Activities, but are performed at the end of the training session. It’s fun for the players to be challenged with these activities. For example…a juggling contest. The purpose of the cool-down is to allow the players to gradually come down from the intense training session, both physically and mentally.
## U10 Training Activities Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dynamic</th>
<th>Dynamic Competitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interactive Dribbling</td>
<td>Ball Tag</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast Footwork</td>
<td>Bandit Ball (Keep your ball)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Line-to-Line Dribbling</td>
<td>One versus One Challenge [1 v 1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dribble and Juggle</td>
<td>Two versus Two Challenge [2 v 2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gate Passing (2's, 3's or 4's)</td>
<td>Three versus Three Challenge [3 v 3]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relay Challenge</td>
<td>Tag Team 1v2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paint the field (2's, 3's or 4's)</td>
<td>Two versus One + One [2 v 1+1]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passing by the Numbers</td>
<td>Passing by the Numbers with Bandit(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle Passing</td>
<td>Doctor-Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Short-Long Passing (Pattern Passing)</td>
<td>Timed Keep-Away (for points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve-to-Self Receiving</td>
<td>Inside-Outside with Bandit(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving Flighted Balls in Two's (2's)</td>
<td>Combat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heading and Volleying in Two's (2's)</td>
<td>Shooting 2 v 1-2 v 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside-Outside</td>
<td>Shooting with Uneven Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relay Shooting</td>
<td>Small-Sided Games with Neutral Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three-Touch Shooting (3-touch)</td>
<td>Small-Sided Games with Free Flank Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corner Kick Challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Four Corner Shooting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Game 6v6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Use any of the U6 or U8 activities that you feel are appropriate and fun for the players.

## U10 Training Activities

### Dynamic Activities

- **Interactive Dribbling**

  ![Interactive Dribbling Diagram]

  **Equipment:** One ball per player.

  **Set-up:** 15 yard x 20 yard rectangular grid.

  **Activity:** All players dribble their soccer balls inside the rectangular grid moving through each other. They try to avoid collisions with other players and their soccer balls.

  **Variations:** On the coach's command (whistle) each player must roll the ball across their body to the left with the sole of their right foot or to the right with the sole of their left foot.

  On the coach's command (whistle) each player must push the ball forward with the soles of the feet, alternating left and right, 4 times, then continue dribbling.

  On the coach's command (whistle) each player must pull the ball backwards with the soles of the feet, alternating left and right, 4 times, then continue dribbling.
On the coach’s command (whistle) the players dribble a little faster; on the next whistle the players dribble as fast as they can. Keep alternating between speeds by using the whistle or a specific command.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Fun, dribbling technique, use different surfaces of foot, keep ball close, keep head up, speed dribbling, simple decision making.

**Fast Footwork**

![Diagram of Fast Footwork]

**Equipment:** One ball per player

**Set-up:** Players set up side-by-side in horizontal lines, behind the coach/leader 4-5 players to a line. Each player has a soccer ball.

**Activity:** The coach or a player leads the group in choreographed footwork activities:

- Sole of foot ball taps (stationary).
- Inside of foot ball taps (stationary)
- Pull with sole and push with inside of same foot. Player must push the ball to his other foot and continue the same. Sole rolls forward and backward. Sole rolls side to side; left foot rolls to the right; right foot rolls to the left.

**Variations:** Add quarter turns every 10 seconds (right foot then left foot).

**Coaching Considerations:**

Repetitions; proper mechanics; quick, supple touches; head up.

**Line-to-Line Dribbling**

![Diagram of Line-to-Line Dribbling]

**Equipment:** One ball per player. Cones.

**Set-up:** Two lines made from cones approximately 20 yards apart. (Adjust distance if necessary) Players pair up and form single file lines of two. Pairs line up side-by-side behind one of the cone lines.

**Activity:** On the coach’s command, the first player in the pair dribbles to the opposite line and returns. When he returns, his partner dribbles to the other line and returns.

**Variations:** Dribble with the inside and outside of the right foot only on the way to the opposite line...dribble with the inside and outside of the left foot only on the way back to your partner.
Side rolls with the right foot only on the way to the opposite line... side rolls with the left foot only on the way back to your partner.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Repetitions; proper dribbling mechanics; quick, supple touches; head up.

**Dribble and Juggle**

**Equipment:** One ball per player.

**Set-up:** Open area; no boundaries.

**Activity:** All players dribble interactively. When the coach shouts, “Juggle!” the players must lift the ball up in the air with their feet and begin juggling for 5-10 seconds. After the juggling, the players resume dribbling.

**Variations:** Same activity, but when the coach shouts, “Three!” (or any reasonable number) and the players must attempt to juggle 3 times.

Same activity, but when the coach shouts, “Three!” 3 players join together and juggle one ball between the three of them for 15-20 seconds.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Repetitions; proper dribbling mechanics; quick, supple touches; head up while dribbling, eyes on ball while juggling.

**Gate Passing (2’s, 3’s or 4’s)**

**Equipment:** One ball for two players (pair). Cones.

**Set-up:** Open area. Gates (2 cones about 1-2 yards apart) are placed at many different angles about 10 yards apart. Set up 1 gate per pair or 1 more gate than there are pairs (i.e. 5-6 gates for 5 pairs)

**Activity:** Each pair passes their ball to each other freely through the gates. Once they pass their ball through one gate, they must find another gate to pass through.

**Variations:** Same activity in groups of three or four. As you add more players to the group, position the gates farther apart.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Fun, passing and dribbling, changing direction, simple decision making (which gate to go through next), timing (when and how hard should I pass the ball to my partner), anticipation (can I pass my ball through that gate before someone else does?).
**Relay Challenge**

**Equipment:** Soccer balls and cones.

**Set-up:** Two players in single file line face one other player opposite them 10 yards away. The ball is placed with the first player in the line of two. Set up multiple lines so that all players are participating.

**Activity:** Pass-Receive-Dribble...First player in line #1 passes the ball to the player opposite him. After he passes the ball, he must run across and replace the player he passed to. The player receiving the ball must control it and dribble to line #1, giving the ball to the player located there. The sequence continues in this manner.

**Variations:** Two-Touch Passing...Similar to the sequence above. First player in line #1 passes the ball to the player opposite him. After he passes the ball, he must run across and replace the player he passed to. The player receiving the ball must control it on his first touch and pass it to line #1 on his second touch. Each time a pass is made the passer follows his pass to the opposite line.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Passing and receiving technique (keeping the ball close); proper preparation touch; passing accuracy and appropriate pace.

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**Paint the Field (2’s, 3’s or 4’s)**

**Equipment:** Soccer balls. Pinnies (2 or 3 different colors).

**Set-up:** 20 yard x 30 yard rectangular grid. One ball per group of two, three or four. Color code the groups in different colored pinnies.

**Activity:** Players pass the ball within their group inside the grid. They pretend that their feet represent paint brushes and, as a group, they must paint the complete grid area as they pass and move.

**Coaching Consideration:**

Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, keeping appropriate individual and group shape.
Passing by the Numbers

Equipment: Soccer balls. Pinnies (2 or 3 different colors).

Set-up: One ball per group of four or five players. The players in each group number themselves from one to four or from one to five.

Activity: Players pass the ball within their group by their consecutive numbers. One passes to two, then two passes to three, then three passes to four and four passes back to one. Players must be moving and the ball can never stop.

Coaching Considerations: Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, communication.

Circle Passing

Equipment: 2-3 soccer balls.

Set-up: All the players position themselves around the center circle or a circle with a radius of 10-15 yards. One player has the soccer ball to begin the activity.

Activity: The player with the ball passes it to another player (it cannot be the players next to him), follows his pass and replaces the player he passed to. The player receiving the pass has two touches to control and pass the ball to someone else on the circle. He must also follow his pass and replace that player on the circle. This continues until the ball is played outside of the circle. Use Time as a challenge to the players...they must keep the ball moving, with the appropriate touches, inside the player circle for one minute!

Variations:
- Allow one touch only using one ball.
- Use 2 balls. Keep 2 balls moving for a timed period.

Coaching Considerations:
Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, communication.
**Short-Short-Long Passing (Pattern Passing)**

**Equipment:**
Soccer balls. Pinnies (2 or 3 different colors).

**Set-up:**
Open area. One ball per group of three.

**Activity:**
Players pass the ball within their group. Two of the players position themselves about 5-10 yards apart and pass the ball back and forth to each other (short passes), while the third player (long player) drifts/checks about 20-25 yards away. After 4-5 short passes, the long player calls for the ball. The ball is played into the long player. The player that played the ball to the long player stays home, while the other player joins the long player. They begin to (short) pass to each other until the new “long” player calls for the ball. The activity continues in this manner for 2-3 minutes to develop a smooth rhythm in the passing sequence. Players consistently keep themselves and the ball moving. (Develop a triangle shape)

**Variations:**
One ball per group of four. Similar to the activity described above, three players make short passes to each other, while one player drifts away. When the long ball is played, the passer stays home and the other two players join the “long” player. (Develop a “kite” type shape)

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**Serve-to-Self Receiving**

**Coaching Considerations:**
Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, keeping appropriate individual and group shape.

**Equipment:**
One ball per player.

**Set-up:**
25 yard x 30 yard rectangular grid.

**Activity:**
All players dribble their soccer balls inside the rectangular grid moving through each other. They try to avoid collisions with other players and their soccer balls. When the coach yells, “Laces”, each player picks up their soccer ball and serves it in the air to themselves. They attempt to receive the ball with their “Laces” before it touches the ground. Once they have cushioned the ball to the ground, they continue to dribble around in the area. The coach can vary the command such as “Thigh” or “Chest” to promote other receiving surfaces.
Coaching Considerations:

Fun, receiving air balls with the laces, thighs and chest; getting to the ball in the air; comfort with the ball in the air; providing receiving surfaces for the ball; cushioning the ball; keeping the ball within dribbling distance.

♦ Receiving Flighted Balls in Two’s (2’s)

Equipment: One soccer ball per two players.

Set-up: Partners face each other approximately 5 yards apart. One of the players (the server) holds the ball in his hands.

Activity: The server throws (serves) the ball (two-hand underhand) at different altitudes to the other player (the receiver). The receiver uses his chest, thigh or instep (laces) to receive the ball before it touches the ground. The receiver then passes the ball back to the server.

Variations: The coach can determine which surfaces should be used to receive the ball. The coach can stipulate that two different surfaces must be used before the ball can hit the ground. The coach can increase the distance between the partners to provide more of a challenge.

The server can use appropriate throw-in technique or punt the ball to the receiver.

Coaching Considerations:

Proper receiving technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, appropriate touch on ball (cushion or propel).

♦ Heading and Volleying in Two’s (2’s)

Equipment: One soccer ball per two players.

Set-up: Partners face each other approximately 5 yards apart. One of the players (the server) holds the ball in his hands.

Activity: The server throws (serves) the ball (two-hand underhand) at different altitudes to the other player (the receiver). The receiver heads or volleys the ball back to the server.

Variations: The coach can require that a receiving touch be made before the head or volley is made (two touch).
- The coach can increase the distance between the partners to provide more of a challenge.
- The server can use appropriate throw-in technique or punt the ball to the receiver.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Proper heading technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, tight neck, arched back (limbo), use upper forehead to strike ball.
Proper volleying technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, lock ankle, use inside of foot or instep to strike ball (pop!).

**Activity:**
The players inside the circle (Insiders) dribble about the circle freely looking for an opportunity to pass the ball to a player on the perimeter of the circle (Outsiders). The Outsider one or two touch the ball back to the Insider. The Insider then controls the ball and looks for another Outsider to pass to. After approximately two minutes, the Insiders become Outsiders and vice versa.

**Variations:**
- The Outsiders start with the ball in their hands. The Insiders move around freely inside the circle without a ball. The Insiders call for a ball from one of the Outsiders. The Outsider serves a ball (on the ground or in the air) to the Insider, who must one or two touch the ball back to the Outsider (server).

**Coaching Considerations:**

Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, keeping shape.
Proper receiving technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, appropriate touch on ball (cushion or propel).
Proper heading technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, tight neck, arched back (limbo), use upper forehead to strike ball.
Proper volleying technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, lock ankle, use inside of foot or instep to strike ball (pop!).

**Equipment:** One soccer ball per two players.

**Set-up:** Separate players into two groups. One group of players, without soccer balls, forms a circle with a diameter of about 30-35 yards. These players are the Windows. The other group of players, equipped with balls at their feet, position themselves inside the circle.
Relay Shooting

Equipment: Soccer balls and cones.

Set-up: Create goals, six yards wide, made from cones or flags, positioned side-by-side, horizontally across the field. Separate each goal by a distance of four yards. Three players are assigned to each goal. One player is positioned on one side of the goal approximately 15-20 yards away with a soccer ball (the first shooter); one player is in a similar position on the opposite side of the goal (second shooter); and one player is in the goal (the goalkeeper and third shooter). Place extra balls behind the shooters.

Activity: The first shooter prepares the ball and shoots at the goal. The first shooter becomes the goalkeeper, the goalkeeper replaces the shooter and the second shooter prepares to shoot. The second shooter shoots the ball, follows his shot and becomes the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper replaces him. The third shooter prepares to shoot, etc. If the goalkeeper saves the ball, he turns and throws the ball to the opposite (next) shooter, before replacing the last shooter.

Variations: Can assign five players to each group with 2 players on each side of the goal and one player in the goal. This allows a little more time for the players to get ready for their shot. The sequence is the same.

Three-Touch Shooting (3-touch)

Equipment: Soccer balls, cones and/or flags, one or two goals.

Set-up: Players in two single lines, approximately 15 yards apart, facing the goal, and about 20-25 yards away from the goal. The goalkeeper is in the goal. The coach is positioned near the goal with all the soccer balls. The lines should have no more than 4 players each. So, if necessary, set up two shooting areas.

Activity: The goalkeeper serves a ball to the first player in line. When this happens, the first player in both lines become teammates and attack the goal together (2 attackers versus 1 goalkeeper). They have three total touches to shoot the ball. In other words the ball must be shot on the third touch. They can share the ball or one of the players can take all three touches. If the keeper makes the save or the ball goes out of bounds, the play is over and the coach...

Coaching Considerations:
Proper technique: good body balance, appropriate preparation touch, good approach to the ball, appropriate kicking surface, eyes on ball, contact appropriate ball surface (under ball, center of ball, outside of ball, etc.), follow through, attack goal.
serves to the next pair. If the keeper deflects the ball and it stays in play, the attackers are allowed 2 more touches to finish!

**Variations:**

- The coach can call out (manipulate) the number of total touches before the goalkeeper serves the ball.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Proper technique: good body balance, appropriate preparation touch, good approach to the ball, appropriate kicking surface, eyes on ball, contact appropriate ball surface (under ball, center of ball, outside of ball, etc.), follow through, attack goal. Proper decision making: to pass or not to pass, which foot or body surface to use when shooting, where to place the ball when shooting, follow-up to goal.

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**Dynamic Competitive Activities**

- **Ball Tag**

  ![Diagram of Ball Tag]

  **Equipment:** One soccer ball per player and cones.

  **Set-up:** 15 yard x 20 yard grid (adjust for appropriate size). Two players are designated as IT. They must hold their ball in their hands. The rest of the players (dribblers) must begin with their ball at their feet.

  **Activity:** On the coach's command, the ITs must attempt to tag a dribbler with their ball (they cannot throw their ball at a dribbler). If they tag the dribbler, the dribbler becomes an IT (and must pick his ball up) and the IT becomes a dribbler. If any player leaves the grid or if their ball leaves the grid they immediately become an IT or remain an IT. When time is up each dribbler receives a point. Games should last a maximum of 2 minutes. Play multiple games so that all players have the opportunity to receive points.

  **Variations:** Set-up 2-4 safe houses within the grid (possibly in diagonal corners of the grid or all four corners of the grid). Dribblers can retreat to a safe house to avoid being tagged by an IT, but only one dribbler at a time can reside in a safe house. If another dribbler
decides to enter a safe house that is being occupied, the occupant must leave immediately to make room for the new resident.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Creative dribbling, decision making, scheming, FUN!

**Bandit Ball (Keep your ball)**

**Equipment:** One ball per player. Cones.

**Set-up:** 10 yard x 15 yard rectangular grid. 30-45 second games.

**Activity:** All players are dribbling their soccer balls inside the grid, with the exception of one or two players, who do not have soccer balls (the bandits). When the coach says, "Watch out for bandits!" the bandits try to steal someone’s ball. Once they have stolen a ball, they dribble it and try to keep possession of it; they are no longer a bandit. If a player loses a ball, he becomes a bandit and attempts to steal a ball. If a ball is kicked out of the grid, it cannot be brought back in. Start each game with new bandits. At the end of each game one point is awarded to the players who have possession of a ball.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Dribbling, individual possession (keeping the ball), shielding, constructive tackling (winning the ball), decision making, scheming.

**One v One Challenge [1 v 1]**

**Equipment:** Soccer balls, pinnies, cones, flags and/or small goals.

**Set-up:** Small rectangular fields, made with cones, approximately 15 yards long x 10 yards wide, located side-by-side. Place goals made from cones, flags or ready-made goals at each end of the field. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) groups (teams). Send two players from each team to a field. The red pair gets at one end of the field and the yellow pair gets at the other end. One red player and one yellow player step onto the field ready to play against one another. The other player from each team rests behind the goal.

**Activity:** One of the players starts with the ball at his feet. On the coach’s command, the player with the ball passes it to his opponent and the 1 v 1 competition begins. The players police themselves; in other words, they control the environment; they sort out rules, etc.
matches start at the same time and last for 30-45 seconds. After time is up, the two other players, who have rested, prepare to play the next match, while the two players, who have just played, rest.

Variations:
- Play with the goals inside the field so that there is space behind each goal to play (like ice hockey).
- When all players have played 2-3 games on a particular field, the coach can rotate a particular color pair to another field (i.e. all red pairs move to the next field).

Coaching Considerations:
Individual possession...dribbling, moves, change of pace and direction, shielding.
Individual penetration...when and how?
Individual defending...approach (speed, angle, distance)
Mentality...risky on the attack...restrained aggression on defense.

Two versus Two Challenge [2 v 2]

Equipment: Soccer balls, pinnies, cones, flags and/or small goals.
Set-up: Small rectangular fields, made with cones, approximately 20 yards long x 15 yards wide, located side-by-side. Place goals made from cones, flags or ready-made goals at each end of the field. Separate players into three color-coded (red, blue and yellow) groups (teams). Send two players from each team to a field. The red players defend one goal at one end of the field and the yellow players defend the other goal. The blue team rests while the red and yellow teams prepare to compete in a 2 v 2 game on the coach's command.

Activity:
On the coach's command, the red and yellow teams play a 2 v 2 game. The players police themselves; in other words, they control the environment; they sort out rules, etc. All matches start at the same time and last for 1.5-2 minutes. After time is up, the blue team replaces the red team. The next 2 v 2 game begins, blue versus yellow, while the red team on each field rests. Finally, the red team plays the blue team, while the yellow team rests. (This is a round-robin type of activity)

Variations:
- Play with the goals inside the field so that there is space behind each goal to play (like ice hockey).
- Play with goals located in diagonal corners of the field.
- When all three teams have played two games in the round robin format, the coach can rotate a particular color team to another field (i.e. all blue teams move to the next field).

Coaching Considerations:
Individual possession and possession in pairs (combination).
Individual and collective penetration...get in behind the opponents.
Pressure and cover on defense...defending in two's.
Mentality...risky on the attack...restrained aggression on defense.
♦ Three versus Three Challenge [3 v 3]

Equipment: Soccer balls, pinnies, cones, flags and/or small goals.

Set-up: Small rectangular fields, made with cones, approximately 25 yards long x 20 yards wide, located side-by-side. Place goals made from cones, flags or ready-made goals at each end of the field. Separate players into two color-coded (red and blue) groups (teams). Send three players from each team to a field. The red players defend one goal at one end of the field and the blue players defend the other goal.

Activity: On the coach’s command, the red and blue teams play a 3 v 3 game. The players police themselves; in other words, they control the environment; they sort out rules, etc. All matches start at the same time and last for 3-4 minutes. Play 4-5 matches.

Variations: Make the goals larger and play with goalkeepers. Play with the goals inside the field so that there is space behind each goal to play (like ice hockey). Play with goals located in diagonal corners of the field. Play with no goals, but instead have the extra players work as targets for two competing teams. The target can move freely along the horizontal end line.

Coaching Considerations:
Individual possession and possession in pairs (combination).
Individual and collective penetration; get in behind the opponents.
Pressure and cover on defense; defending in two’s.
Mentality; risky on the attack; restrained aggression on defense.

♦ Tag Team 1v2

Equipment: Soccer balls, pinnies and cones.

Set-up: Three gates (made from cones about 2 steps wide) set up about 15-20 yards apart in a triangular fashion. Three pairs of players, each pair in different color pinnies, positioned at one of the gates. One player from each pair steps in front of his gate prepared to play. One of the three players will be given the ball by the coach. The other player in the pair will rest until his teammate tags him.

Activity: On the coach’s command play begins. Each of the three players defends one gate, but can score on the two other gates (i.e. red can score on the yellow or blue gates). One player has the ball while the other
Two players try to steal it. A point is awarded when a player dribbles through one of the opponent's gates from inside the triangular area. Play is allowed outside the triangular area, but no points are awarded if a player dribbles through the back of the gate from outside the triangle. At any time during the competition, a player can tag their partner, who then replaces him in the competition. Teammates add their points together at the end of the competition. Each competition should last no longer than three minutes.

Coaching Considerations:

Individual possession (dribbling and shielding), aggressiveness, tough mentality, defending, (constructive tackling).

Two versus One + One [2 v 1+1]

Activity:

On the coach's command, the two red players start with the ball and attack the yellow team's end-line. The yellow field player and the yellow end-line player defend their end-line. The yellow end-line player cannot move off of the end-line, but may move horizontally along the line to prevent the red team from scoring. To score a point, the team in possession of the ball must dribble or pass the ball to their teammate over the end-line. When the red team has possession of the ball it becomes two red players versus one yellow field player and one yellow end-line player. Thus, 2 v 1+1. When a point is scored for the red team or yellow wins possession of the ball, yellow plays with two field players and red must drop one of their players back to defend (position themselves on) their end-line. The game continues in this manner until one team scores five points or until the players have played for 5 minutes.

Coaching Considerations:

Individual possession and possession in pairs (combination), Individual and collective penetration...get in behind the opponents, Intelligent pressure, fall back and delay on defense...defending in twos, Mentality...risky on the attack...restrained aggression on defense.

Equipment: Soccer balls, pinnies and cones.

Set-up: Small rectangular fields, made with cones, approximately 20 yards long x 15 yards wide, located side-by-side. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) groups (teams). Send two players from each team to a field. The red pair gets at one end of the field and the yellow pair gets at the other end. Two red players and one yellow player step onto the field ready to play. The other yellow player is positioned on his end-line.
Passing by the Numbers with Bandit(s)

**Equipment:** Soccer balls, cones and pinnies (3 different colors).

**Set-up:** 15 yard x 20 yard rectangular grids. Each group is color-coded, one group in yellow and one group in red. One ball per group of four or five players. One group per grid. The players in each group number themselves from one to four or from one to five. Select one bandit per grid who will wear blue.

**Activity:** Players pass the ball within their group by their consecutive numbers. One passes to two, then two passes to three, then three passes to four and four passes back to one. Players must be moving and the ball can never stop. Everyone in the group receives a point if the ball is passed successfully through the cycle. Once through the cycle play continues to see how many cycles the team can get through. The bandit assigned to a particular grid must try to win possession of the ball and dribble it out of the grid. If successful he gets a point and can replace the person that he stole the ball from.

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**Coaching Considerations:**

Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, positioning away from and in support of the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, communication.

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Doctor-Doctor

**Equipment:** Soccer balls, cones and pinnies.

**Set-up:** Rectangular field 25 yards x 20 yards. Two smaller grids, 5 yards x 5 yards, inside the larger field, located at diagonal (opposite) corners. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) groups (teams). Select one player, without a ball, from each team who will be called the Doctor and will reside in his hospital (one of the corner grids). All other players are equipped with a soccer ball.

**Activity:** On the coach’s command the game begins. Players from both teams dribble their soccer balls and attempt to hit an opposing player with their soccer ball by passing the ball at him below the knees. If a player gets hit by the opponent, he must stop, pick his ball up, hold it on top of his head and yell, “Doctor!”
Their Doctor can free them by running out of his hospital and tagging the player who has been injured. When the Doctor is in his hospital, no one can hit him. But the Doctor must be careful not to get hit by the opponent when he leaves the hospital or the game will be over very fast because there will be no one to free the Doctor! The game is over when all the players and the Doctor of one of the teams are injured. After each game, change the Doctors.

**Variation:**

The way to hit a player is to pass your ball so that it hits their ball (like marbles), instead of hitting the player.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Creative dribbling, passing accuracy, timing of passes, scheming, agility, balance, FUN!

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**Timed Keep-Away (for points)**

- **Equipment:** Soccer balls, cones and pinnies (2 different colors).
- **Set-up:** 15 yard x 15 yard rectangular grids. Adjust size of grid for larger numbers. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) groups (teams). Put four yellow players (attackers) and one red player (defender) in one grid (4 v 1). Put four red players (attackers) and one yellow player (defender) in the other grid (4 v 1).

**Activity:**

On the command, “Play!” the four attackers attempt to keep the ball away from the one defender in each grid. The attackers score one point by connecting three consecutive passes without losing possession to the defender. The defender scores a point if he can win possession of the ball and dribble it out of the grid. If the defender simply interrupts the possession by the attackers or if he kicks the ball out of the grid, no point is awarded. If the ball leaves the grid and goes out of play, the attacker re-starts the game immediately by retrieving a ball from outside the grid. If the attackers only connect two passes before the defender destroys it, the passing sequence starts again. Points are accumulative and play is continuous for 1 minute. At the conclusion of each 1-minute competition, the teams (red attackers and defender; yellow attackers and defender) get together and add up their points. The next game begins with a new defender in each grid. Make sure that you play at least five games so that each player works as a defender. The team with the most points at the end of the series of competitions wins.

**Variations:**

Player with different numbers: 3 v 1, 4 v 2, 5 v 2, etc.

**Coaching Considerations:**

Passing and receiving, technical and tactical speed, play under the pressures of time, space and opponent(s), anticipation, individual and group shape.
♦ Inside-Outside with Bandit(s)

Equipment: One soccer ball per two players.

Set-up: Separate players into two groups. One group of players, without soccer balls, forms a circle with a diameter of about 30-35 yards. These players are the Outsiders. The other group of players, equipped with balls at their feet, position themselves inside the circle (Insiders). Select one or two players to act as bandits (in different color pinnies).

Activity: The Insiders dribble about the circle looking for an opportunity to pass the ball to an Outsider. The Outsider can one or two touch the ball back to the Insider. The Insider then controls the ball and looks for another Outsider to pass to. The bandits try to disrupt the flow of play and/or steal a ball. If they are successful they are no longer a bandit, but are replaced by the person whose ball they stole. After approximately two minutes, the Insiders become Outsiders and vice versa.

Coaching Considerations:
Intelligent movement, head up, preparing to receive the ball, surveying the area, looking for their target early, anticipation, passing accuracy and pace, keeping shape, under pressure.

♦ Combat

Proper receiving technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, appropriate touch on ball (cushion or propel), under pressure.
Proper heading technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, tight neck, arched back (limbo), use upper forehead to strike ball, under pressure.
Proper volleying technique: good body balance, eyes on ball, body in-line with the path of the ball, movement to ball, lock ankle, use inside of foot or instep to strike ball (pop!), under pressure.

Equipment: One ball. Scrimmage vests in two colors.

Set-up: Open area; no boundaries. Coach equipped with the soccer ball. Color-coded players lined up in two single file lines; one line on the right side of the coach and one line on the left side of the coach facing toward the open area.

Activity:
When the coach kicks the ball out into the open area, the activity begins. If, before the coach kicks the ball out, he shouts, “Yellow!”, then two players from the yellow group and one player from the red group chase the ball and we have a 2 v 1 competition in favor of the yellow team. A point is awarded to the team that gets the ball back to the coach within...
a specified amount of time. When the coach gets
the ball back, he kicks it out again for the next set of
players.

After the coach kicks out the ball, he should move
away from the other players. There are two reasons
for this. One, risk to the other players. Two, the
players in the competition will look back for their
target, anticipating how to turn on their opponent..

Variations:
The coach can manipulate the activity by making the
competition 3 v 2 or 4 v 3 simply by shouting a color
before he kicks the ball out.

Coaching Considerations:
Attacking and defending skills and decision making
with uneven numbers, shielding, dribbling to beat an
opponent, tackling, looking for a target (the coach),
passing pace and accuracy, combination play, basic
shapes.

◆ Shooting 2 v 1-2 v 1

Activity:

On the coach’s command, the first player in each
single file line play as a pair and attack the two
defenders and the goalkeeper in corridor #1. They
must stay within the corridor. If they make it past the
two defenders, they attempt a shot on goal. Whether
they are successful or not, they proceed to corridor
#2 and begin the activity again. When this happens
the next pair of players begin the activity in corridor
#1. It is a rotational, continuous activity. Be sure to
change the defenders and goalkeepers often.

Coaching Considerations:

Simple combination play, attacking mentality,
finishing.

Equipment: Soccer balls, cones and pinnies.

Set-up: Make a long grid (corridor #1) 5 yards wide x 24
yards long, separated into three consecutive grids,
each 5 yards wide x 8 yards with a goal (6ft high x 18
ft long) at one end of corridor #1. Set-up an identical
grid (corridor #2) next to the first one going in the
opposite direction with the goal at the opposite end.
Position all players, except for six, into two single file
lines at the end of one of the corridors. The other six
players are wearing pinnies and will be positioned as
follows:

✓ One on the back line of the 1st grid in
corridor #1 (front defender #1).
✓ One on the back line of the 2nd grid in
corridor #1 (back defender #1).
✓ One in the goal in corridor #1 (goalkeeper
#1).
✓ One on the back line of the 1st grid in
corridor #2 (front defender #2).
✓ One on the back line of the 2nd grid in
corridor #2 (back defender #2).
✓ One in the goal in corridor #2 (goalkeeper
#2).

The defenders can only defend on their assigned
line!
Shooting with Uneven Numbers

Equipment: Soccer balls, cones, flags, goals and pinnies.

Set-up: Rectangular grid 30 yards wide x 25 yards long (wider than long). A goal centered at one end of the field and two counter attack goals (made from flags or cones) positioned just inside the corners at the opposite end of the field. Separate your players into two groups. Put one third of the players in yellow pinnies (defenders and goalkeepers); put the remaining players in red pinnies (attackers). Select three attackers and two defenders to compete. The three attackers space themselves out at the end of the field opposite from the goal. The defenders take up positions at the other end of the field. One of the defenders acts as a goalkeeper, but must play with his feet whenever possible (3 v 2). The coach can set up two of these field spaces, if necessary, to get more player involvement.

Activity: The goalkeeper starts the competition by kicking the ball (punt or from the ground) in the direction of the attackers. The 3 v 2 begins. The three attackers attempt to score on the goal (1 point awarded). The two defenders attempt to win possession of the ball and kick it through one of the counter-attack goals (2 points awarded). Competitions should last a maximum of 2 minutes. Rotate players in appropriately.

Variations: Play with different numbers (4v3, 5v4, etc.) Adjust the field space to suit the number of players.

Coaching Considerations:
Technical speed (dribbling, receiving, passing, heading, shooting, tackling) under pressure, tactical speed under pressure (when, where, how, why?), playing with numbers up, playing with numbers down.

Small-Sided Games with Neutral Players

Equipment: Soccer balls, pinnies, cones, flags and/or small goals.

Set-up: Small rectangular field, made with cones, approximately 30 yards long x 40 yards wide, located side-by-side. Place goals made from cones, flags or ready-made goals at each end of the field. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) groups (teams). Select two players who will wear blue pinnies (neutral players). Send four players from each team to a field. The red players defend one goal at one end of the field and the yellow players defend the other goal. The two blue players join the field as neutral players. The blue players only play with the team in possession of the ball, giving them a numerical advantage [i.e. 4 v 4+2 means: six attacking players versus four defending players].
On the coach’s command, the red and yellow teams, along with the blue neutral players, play a 4 v 4+2 game. The players police themselves; in other words, they control the environment; they sort out rules, etc. All matches start at the same time and last for 3-4 minutes. Play enough games so that all players rotate in as the neutral player.

**Variations:**
Play 5 v 5+1 games. (Adjust fields appropriately)

**Coaching Considerations:**
- Individual possession and possession in pairs (combination).
- Individual and collective penetration...get in behind the opponents.
- Pressure and cover on defense...defending in two’s, three’s and four’s.
- Using the extra neutral player to your advantage.
- Mentality...risk on the attack...restrained aggression on defense.

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**Small-Sided Games with Free Flank Players**

![Diagram of small-sided game with flank players](image)

**Equipment:** Soccer balls, cones, flags, goals and pinnies.

**Set-up:** Rectangular field(s), 30 yards x 40 yards (adjust field size if necessary). Goals centered at each end of the field. Separate players into two color-coded (red and yellow) teams. Select one player from each team to be flank players and outfit them in a blue pinnie. Organize a 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 on the field of play (these numbers include the goalkeeper). Position the flank players, one on each side of the field, outside the touch lines. The flank players can move freely up and down the touch line, but cannot enter the field of play.

**Activity:**
This is a typical 4 v 4 or 5 v 5 game, except that the flank players are totally free outside the field of play (no one from either team can pressure them). Either team can pass to a flank player. Once a flank player receives the ball from a team, he must play for that team and only has a maximum of 3 touches to return the ball into play to his team.

**Variations:**
Set up special outside lanes for the free flank players. Position one red player and one yellow player on each flank to offer pressure to each other. Allow free switching of players from inside the field to the flanks, but only one player from each team is allowed in the flank at any given time.

**Coaching Considerations:**
Proper use of flank players (getting ball wide immediately), overlapping runs, crosses, shots with the head, volley and half-volley shots, defending crossed balls, playing under pressure.
Corner Kick Challenge

Equipment: Soccer balls, cones, flags, goals and pinnies.
Set-up: One end of a regulation U10 field with corners marked off and a goal centered on the end-line. Organize four teams of three or four players each. Color-code the teams so that each team is in a different color. The red team positions themselves at one corner of the field with soccer balls, the yellow team positions themselves at the other corner of the field with their balls, the blue and green teams position themselves in the penalty area or an area slightly larger than the penalty area in front of the goal. Position a goalkeeper in the goal.
Activity: The red and yellow teams alternate taking corner kicks. The blue and green teams compete against each other trying to score from the corner kick. The play stays live until a goal is scored, the ball goes out of play/area or time is up. When a goal is scored from a corner kick, the corner kicker is awarded a point, as well as the player who scored the goal.

Variations: One of the teams in the penalty area defends the corner kicks, while the other team tries to score. A defender gets a point if he successfully clears the ball out of the penalty area.

Coaching Considerations:
Corner Kick technique and repetition, timing of receiving and striking corner kicks, defending corner kicks, competitive spirit, fun!

Four Corner Shooting

Equipment: Enough balls for all players, pinnies, goals, cones and flags if available.
Set-up: 30 yard x 25 yard rectangular grid (field). Goals at each end of the field. Coach positioned outside the field at the mid-line with all of the balls. Two teams of players, in different colored pinnies; half of each team lined up in single file behind a specified corner cone (4 lines); one team at one end and one team at the other end. Goals are designated for each team and goalkeepers are positioned in each goal.
Activity: When the coach serves a ball into the field of play, the first 2 players in each of the 4 lines enters the field and a 5 v 5 competition begins (4 field players and a goalkeeper for each team). Play continues until a goal is scored or the ball goes out of bounds. When this happens, the players must get off the field quickly and get back in their line. When they are off the field, the coach sends another ball into the field, and the competition continues with the next players in each line.

Coaching Considerations:

Technique under the pressure of a game, decision making in the competitive game environment, triangular and rectangular shapes, passing and receiving, shooting, FUN!

♦ The Game 6v6

Equipment: Enough balls for all players, cones and flags if available.

Set-up: 40 yard x 50 yard rectangular grid (field). Goals at each end made out of cones or flags, approximately 5-6 steps wide. Balls are placed outside and behind the goals. 6 v 6 on the field.

Activity: Start play with a kick-off from the center of the field. Use US Youth Soccer modified rules.

The U12 Age Group

The effect of the role model is very important at this stage of development. Hero worship, identification with successful teams/players and a hunger for imaginative skills typify the mentality of this age. Players at this age can be extremely self-critical. This is the “Golden Age of Learning” and the most important age for skill development. Demonstration is very important and the players learn best by doing. This is an appropriate time to emphasize and teach the Principles of play:

Attacking Principles

Defensive Principles

Penetration

Recovery (Immediate Chase)

Support

Pressure

Mobility

Cover

Width

Balance

Depth (length)

Compactness

Improvisation (deception, creativity)

Counter Attack

For more information on attacking and defensive principles please refer to Tactics page 173-177.

Role of Coach

The role of the coach in the U12 age group is to be a patient and motivating teacher. At this level, in addition to understanding technique, coaches should be able to provide environments conducive to problem solving (decision-making) by the players utilizing guided discovery methods. Specifically, individual and small group tactics should be the focus of the training sessions.

License Requirement

The U10/U12 State Youth Module is required. The State E License and the National Youth License are recommended.
Coaching Considerations:

Technique under the pressure of a game, decision making in the competitive game environment, triangular and rectangular shapes, passing and receiving, shooting, FUN!

The Game 8v8

Equipment: Enough balls for all players, cones and flags if available.

Set-up: 50 yard x 75 yard rectangular grid (field). Goals at each end made out of cones or flags, approximately 5-6 steps wide. Balls are placed outside and behind the goals. 8v8 on the field.

Activity: Start play with a kick-off from the center of the field. Use US Youth Soccer modified rules.

Coaching Considerations

Technique

Dribbling

Low, balanced body position.
Agile lateral (left-to-right) movement for dribbling in tight spaces, change of direction and faking out opponents.
Proper use of insides and outsides of the feet and the toe to propel ball an appropriate distance.
Proper use of soles of the feet to pull, push and roll the ball.
Eyes up enough to survey the situation and to have good peripheral vision.
Keep the ball close when under pressure (lots of touches).
Propel the ball away from feet when dribbling into space away from pressure.

Receiving

Coaching Points (common to all surfaces)

Keep body relaxed.
Eyes on the ball while it is traveling and as you receive it.
Position body in-line with the in-coming ball.
Present a surface to receive the ball with.
Cushion the ball if it arrives with velocity.
Propel the ball away if it arrives slowly or if under pressure or in open field.

Coaching Points (unique to specific receiving surfaces)

Sole of the Foot

Ground Ball
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the sole of the foot at about a 45 degree angle to the ground as the ball arrives.
Wedge the in-coming ball between the sole and the ground.

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Allow the ball to hit the ground.
Just as the ball hits the ground, present the sole of the foot over the ball (wedge the ball between the sole of the foot and the ground).
Inside of the Foot

Ground Ball
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the inside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Allow the ball to hit the ground.
Just as the ball hits the ground, present the inside of foot over the ball and drag the ball away from pressure.

Line-Drive Ball (Horizontal arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the inside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Outside of the Foot

Ground Ball
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the outside of the foot to the in-coming ball.
Pull the receiving foot back or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Allow the ball to hit the ground.
Just as the ball hits the ground, present the outside of foot over the ball and drag the ball away from pressure.

Laces (In-step)

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the laces to the in-coming ball.
Lower foot (give with the foot) as ball is received.

Chest

Flighted Ball (Angled/vertical arrival)
Comfortable body position.
Straight back.
One foot on the ground.
Present the mid/upper thigh (horizontal to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
Lower thigh (give with the thigh) as ball is received.

Line-Drive Ball (Horizontal arrival)
Comfortable body position.
One foot on the ground.
Present the mid/upper thigh (perpendicular to the ground) to the in-coming ball.
Pull the receiving thigh or propel it forward depending on the velocity of the ball.
Kicking (Passing and Shooting)

Coaching Points (common to kicking low/ground balls)

Low/Ground Balls
Non-kicking foot placed comfortably next to the ball.
Non-kicking foot pointed in the direction of the target.
Body slightly over the ball.
Knee of kicking leg slightly over the ball.
Eyes on ball.
Land on the kicking foot.

Coaching Points (unique to specific kicking surfaces)

Inside of foot
Lock ankle with toe pointed up on kicking foot.
Straight kick… Strike through the center (equator) or slightly above the center of the ball with the ankle surface of the foot.
Bent kick… Strike/Slice the outside center (or slightly below center) of the ball with the inside of the foot.

Instep (laces)
Lock ankle with toe pointed down on kicking foot.
Strike ball with instep surface of the foot.

Outside of the foot (for deceptive passes and shots)
Non-kicking foot placed slightly farther away from the ball than normal.
Lock ankle with toe pointed down and turned in.
Straight kick… Strike (punch) the inside center (or slightly above center) of the ball with the outside of the foot.
Bent kick… Strike/Slice the inside center (or slightly below center) of the ball with the outside of the foot.

Coaching Points (common to kicking flighted/air balls)

Flighted/Air Balls
Approach ball from slight angle.
Non-kicking foot placed comfortably next to and slightly behind the ball.
Non-kicking foot pointed in the direction of the target.
Body upright and slightly leaning back.
Eyes on ball.
Strike with faces or upper inside surface of the foot.
Strike through the bottom/center of the ball.
Land on the kicking foot.

Coaching Points (unique to specific types of kicks)

Chip
Lock ankle with toe pointed up on kicking foot.
Sharply cut the grass below the ball with the kicking foot (like a 9-iron or wedge shot in golf).
The ball should travel with backspin.

Long/Driven ball
Big power step (step right before the kick is taken).
Lock ankle with toe pointed down on kicking foot.
Strike ball with instep surface of the foot.

Outside of the foot (for deceptive passes and shots)
Non-kicking foot placed slightly farther away from the ball than normal.
Lock ankle with toe pointed down and turned in.
Bent kick… Strike/Slice the ball below the inside center with the outside of the foot.
Heading

Square the body to the ball (body in line with the in-coming ball).
Eyes on ball.
Time the jump if one is necessary.
Tighten the neck muscles.
Arch the back.
Arms out and forward for balance.
Thrust upper body forward.
Contact the ball with the top of the forehead.
The head strikes the ball! (like the hammer hits the nail)

To drive the ball down...strike the upper half of the ball.
To drive the ball up...strike the lower half of the ball.

Tackling

Block tackle

Maintain a comfortable playing distance from the opponent.
Do not telegraph your intent.
Shepard the opponent to one side or the other.
Do not commit yourself too early (do not dive in)...time your execution.
Throw stabbing fakes at the opponent to force mistakes.
Keep your eyes on the ball.
Keep a low center of gravity.
One foot slightly angled in front of the other with bent knees;
back foot is the tackling foot; front foot is the plant/balancing foot.
When tackling, place the front foot to the side of the ball (as if
to make an inside of the foot pass).
Use the inside of the back foot to drag through the ball
keeping the ankle locked, toe up and knee bent.
Lower same side shoulder (as tackling foot) thrusting it
forward to provide the necessary forward momentum and
velocity to handle the impact of the opponent’s force.
Drag the ball through and into the space behind the opponent
and start the attack!

Toe Poke

Same as Block Tackling with the following exception:

Use the toe of the front foot to poke the ball away!

Tactics

There are three moments in the game of soccer:

When your team has possession of the ball (attacking)...
When your team does not have possession of the ball (defending)...
When your team is changing from one to the other (transition)...

Tactics refers to the decisions that players make in the heat of the competition in each of these moments.

The progression in teaching tactics to our players must be gradual and proceed from simple to complex. This is best achieved by providing playing environments that train:

Individual tactics
Small group tactics
Team tactics

Coaches must understand the Principles of the game to effectively teach tactics:

Attacking Principles
Defending Principles
Transition

Important player terminology:

1st Attack...player in possession of the ball; responsible for penetration.
2nd Attackers...players near the 1st Attacker; responsible for support.
3rd Attackers...players away from the 1st attacker; responsible for mobility and providing width and length.
Attacking Principles

Penetration

Advancing the ball forward into the space behind the defending team.
Responsibility of the 1st attacker (player in possession of the ball).

This is accomplished by dribbling, passing or shooting the ball:

Recognize that there is space behind the defending team to exploit.
Dribble by an opponent(s) using deceptive moves, change of speed and direction.
Passing to a teammate in a forward position or running into the space behind the defending team.
Shooting at the opponents goal.

Support

Providing help to the 1st attacker in the area around the ball.
Responsibility of the 2nd attackers (attacking players in close proximity to the ball).

This is accomplished by:

Recognizing that the 1st attacker needs help.
Communicating with the 1st attacker... alerting the 1st attacker that you are available and where you are or will be.
Timing your runs... moving to a supporting position at the right time... not to early... not too late.
Being at the right angle and distance to support the 1st attacker... behind, square or in advance of the ball.
Providing good body shape... positioning your body so that you can keep the attack moving in a positive direction (forward toward the opposing goal).

Mobility

Team movement provided by the attacking players close to the ball (2nd attackers) and away from the ball (3rd attackers).

This is accomplished with:

Short, explosive runs (angled and lateral).
Checking runs... away from the ball, then quickly back to the ball.
Deceptive, long runs out of the back.
Overlapping runs.

Shape

The attacking look or make-up of the team at any point in time with regards to positioning. Determined by where the ball is and where & how pressure is being applied by the defending team.

The attacking team must provide width, length and connection:

Width... players moving into positions that widen the field. Players moving into positions that allow them to use as much of the field as possible. Opening the field up laterally (from East to West).

Length... players moving into positions that lengthen the field. Players moving into positions that allow them to use as much of the field as possible. Opening the field up vertically (from North to South).

Connection... players in positions to link or connect players from East to West and North to South. Usually midfield players.

Improvisation

The innate ability by a player or players to solve a soccer problem with flair and creativity.
Defending Principles

Pressure

The action of the 1st defender (defender closest to the ball).

The responsibilities include:

To intercept the ball and win possession for his team.
To tackle the opponent and win possession for his team.
To delay the forward progress by the 1st attacker and thus for the attacking team.

Cover

Providing help to the 1st defender in the area around the ball.
Responsibility of the 2nd defenders (defending players in close proximity to the ball).

This is accomplished by:

Taking a position at an appropriate angle and distance behind the 1st defender to:

Prevent penetration by the 1st attacker with the pass (prevent splitting the 1st and 2nd defenders)
Become the pressuring defender if the 1st defender gets beat
Match up with (track and/or mark) the 2nd attacker

The tighter the pressure being applied by the 1st defender...the tighter (closer) the cover by the 2nd defender.

The looser the pressure being applied by the 1st defender...the looser (farther away) the cover by the 2nd defender.

Balance

Providing defensive help and safety at a distance away from the ball.

This is the responsibility of the 3rd defenders (players away from the ball). They must:

Track (keep an eye on) attackers away from the ball.
Position themselves so that they can squeeze space centrally, making the field smaller for the attacking team.
Position themselves so that they can become the 1st or 2nd defender immediately if a pass is made by the attacking team.

Shape

The defensive look or make-up of the team at any point in time with regards to positioning. Determined by where the ball is and how the attacking shape is organized.

The defending team must be compact (concentrated) between the ball and their goal. This will help to prevent penetration by the attacking team.

Transition

This is the moment in the game when players must change their mentality (their roles) from attacking to defending or defending to attacking. Teams that can accomplish this with speed and organization are successful.