

Coaching U5 and U6

Coaching children under six years of age presents some additional challenges due to their short attention span and less developed muscles. You will need to deal with a great variation between personalities, physical size, and abilities. Your objective should be for all of the kids to **have fun, make friends, and learn some soccer skills** that will help them should they decide to continue to the next level. Your goal is to introduce them to basic concepts like dribbling and kicking and make it enough fun that they want to keep playing as their bodies and minds mature. Go down to their level of thinking. Don't try to bring them up to yours.

What was fun when you were four years old? The kid who is watching seagulls will tell you that you are the greatest coach in the world if he is having fun. He will have fun when he kicks the ball or at least when he makes an attempt and gets praise instead of criticism.

Here are some good principles to follow:

- Keep practices and matches **fun**. Play "games" that cause kids to learn skills, not "drills."
- Maximize touches on the ball per player in practice. **Avoid lines** - the kids won't behave well while waiting for their turn to play the ball.
- Minimize lecturing - they have **very short attention spans**. You have maybe ten seconds to make your point.
- Play lots of small-sided games. 3v3 is ideal for this age. Games of **7v7 doesn't work at this age**. Imagine putting 14 six-year-olds on the field to share one toy.
- Concentrate on improving **individual skills**, i.e., dribbling, trapping, shielding the ball, shooting, getting around an opponent, etc. Passing will develop naturally if you play small-sided games, but you will get frustrated if you try to force it.
- **Bring water** to practice and games. The kids, and the parents, will forget.
- Have some **cones** (1-2 for each player is a good ratio) and **pinnies** or large t-shirts to help you separate the players into teams.
- Have **one ball for each child** plus one for yourself. You should ask the kids to bring their own balls but try to have extra.
- Try to get a couple or more parents to help with the practice. You could use the **extra help** to chase balls, tie shoes, and wipe noses so that you can move among the kids and ensure they are practicing what you instructed.

The general structure for practice

U5: A good U5 practice session should consist of a warm-up game followed by some easy stretching (more for the purpose of building structure and good habits than getting the kids limber). Once stretched out, focus on playing one or two skill games rather than running drills. Keep everyone involved and try to avoid taking turns. Since the U5 practices will be immediately prior to the actual game there is not a need to run small sided practice games (with the possible exception of the first week).

U6: The U6 sessions will be nearly the same as the U5 session, but a little longer. The additional time will allow you to run your warm ups and skill games longer. **Don't try to do more stuff**, just do the same stuff, but spend more time on it. You also have the opportunity to play a small sided game for 5 to 10 minutes at the end of each practice. This is a great way to end a practice because, above all else, most of the kids just want to play some soccer.

U5 - Week 1

Warm-up: Reaction (5 mins) This is a good exercise to warm up the brain as well as the feet.

Make a circle with enough cones so that there is one cone for each player. Place the cones about 3 feet apart. Have each player line up just to the outside of a cone (you don't want anyone tripping over the cone)

NOTE: You will be giving the players instructions to move to the left or the right. Take a moment and show the players which way is left and which is right. If they are having a lot of trouble then set up the cones in a long line instead of a circle.

Procedure: Couldn't be simpler - you just shout out instructions and have the players react.

“2 left” shuffle 2 steps to the left

“3 right, 1 left” shuffle 3 steps to the left and one to the right

“2 right, center, 1 left” shuffle 2 steps to the right then run to the middle of the circle (or toward the coach if they are formed up in a line) AND BACK

Don't use a ball the first time you run this drill since the kids will probably be bumping into each other quite a bit. If you need a bit of control, have the players sit down after completing each command. It provides a bit of structure and helps them learn how to get up quickly.

Stretch: Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)

Have players stand with legs apart and roll their balls with their hands in a figure eight in and out of their legs. Then, have them place one foot in front of the other and roll the ball around the front foot ten times, then switch. Have them sit down, legs extended in front, and roll the ball towards and around their feet and return along the other side of the leg. Have them sit in a V and move the ball in an outline around their bodies, including their backs. This activity makes the players stretch without realizing it; players at this age tend to just “count” when being led through stretching exercises, they don't realize what a stretch feels like.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: Giant Crabs (10 mins)

Set up a large rectangle with some cones – this is the “Island” and the area outside of the cones is the “Ocean”. Players start at one end of the island with their soccer balls (one ball per player). The coach starts in the middle of the island in a crab position (feet forward, hands on the ground behind you - if you can't get into this position have a player's sibling or other parent be the crab). The coach is the “Giant Crab” and has to move in this position.

When the Giant Crab yells, “I'm going to eat you!” the players have to dribble the ball across the island without the ball going into the Ocean or the Giant Crab kicking the ball away and they must stop the ball on the line. If a player's ball goes into the ocean that player becomes another Giant Crab. The players will need to keep the ball close in order to maintain control and get past the Giant Crab. Repeat the game in the opposite direction until everyone is a Giant Crab.

Take a water break

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. This is a chance to make sure your team understands which way to go and where the goal is before you have your first game.

ALTERNATIVE If you would rather not play a small sided game before the first rec game, try another short skill game.

Skill Game 2: Skiing (5 mins)

Set up 5 to 7 “Gates” randomly throughout a small area (1/2 of the U5 field) with the cones. Each Gate should be about 3 feet wide. Have all the players start dribbling a ball without going through the gates. When the coach yells “Let's go skiing!” all the players try to dribble through as many gates as possible without going through any gate more than once. Have the players “Ski” for 30 seconds then tell them to stop. Ask how many gates everyone made it through. Run the exercise 3 or 4 times encouraging the players to keep the ball close to keep better control through the gates.

U5 - Week 2

(about a 20 min practice)

Warm-up: *Body Part Dribble (5 mins)*

Set up a small area and have each player start dribbling. Call out a body part and have the player stop the ball with that part (elbow, head, shoulder, etc.). Remember, it's to get them warmed up and having fun. Between stops they should be dribbling without touching each other.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury. If time is a big issue you can skip this or just do something very short.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *What's the time, Wolf? (10 mins)*

Put all the players in a line facing the coach who should be about 15-20 yards away. Have each player standing by a cone (share if need be). The coach is the "Wolf," the players are the "Little Pigs" and the cones are the "Brick Houses." Have the kids shout "What's the time, Wolf?" The Wolf shouts back a number. The players have to dribble the ball the number of steps that the Wolf calls out. Repeat until the Wolf shouts "Dinnertime" and the Little Pigs have to dribble back to their Brick Houses without having their balls kicked out by the Wolf. Let players take turns as the Wolf.

Variation: Put some cones in the field as "Trees" that the Little Pigs need to dribble around.

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice use the game below, pick a Skill Game from Week 1, the Substitute Games from Week 1, or play a small sided game.

Skill Game 2: *Mouse without cheese*

All the players are "Mice" and the balls are the "Cheese." Have one Mouse start without any Cheese. The Mice with Cheese dribble in a confined area while the Mouse without Cheese tries to kick everyone else's Cheese out of the playing area. If a Mouse has the Cheese kicked out of bounds, or dribbles out of bounds, that Mouse has to come back into the playing area, hold the Cheese over her head with her legs apart and squeak until another mouse crawls under her legs to allow her to play again. Let a few players be the Mouse without Cheese – especially anyone who didn't get to be the Wolf in Skill Game 1.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

You'll notice that there has not been any focus on passing. At this age level it is important for the players to learn some ball control before they try to pass – if you can't control the ball for yourself, you can't get it to another player. The small sided games and the regular rec games will give the kids plenty of exposure to chasing down loose balls – which is the result of most passing attempts in this age group. Passing games will show up in the practice sessions later in the season.

U5 - Week 3

(about a 20 min practice)

Warm-up: *All Hands on Deck (5 mins)* Focuses on running with the ball

Set up an area about 20 yards by 20 yards. Within that, mark off a small area (5 x 5 yards) to be the “Shark Cage.” The coach – or another player – can be in the Shark Cage to be the “Shark.” All the players dribble in the area outside of the Shark Cage – keep moving. The coach is the “Pirate Captain” and shouts out commands:

- 1) *Scrub the Deck* – roll the ball back and forth with the sole of the foot (can even dictate left or right foot)
- 2) *Walk the plank* – all the players dribble into the Shark Cage
- 3) *Hoist the Sail* – throw the ball into the air and catch it (or try to stop it close to their feet)
- 4) *Shark Attack* – the Shark leaves the cage and tries to kick balls away from players.

You can have one of the players successfully attack by the Shark go to the Shark Cage to be the next Shark.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury. If time is a big issue you can skip this or just do something very short.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Candy Thieves (10 mins)*

Mark off a 20 x 20 yard area and put everyone’s ball in the middle. The balls are the “Candy.” Split the players into even groups (2 or 3 groups) and have each group line up on a different side or corner of the play area. When the coach shouts “Candy Thief!” the first player from each group runs to the middle, gets a piece of Candy, dribbles it back to his team and tags the next player. Player 2 then steals a piece of Candy and the relay race continues until all the players have a piece of Candy.

Variations: Make the players pass the ball from the center to a member of their team instead of dribbling back. Put out extra Candy and don’t stop the relay until all the Candy is gone – see which team gets the most.

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice pick a game that everyone liked from week 1 or 2, or play a small sided game. Red Light Green Light is always an easy and fun game to fill out the end of practice.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

U5 - Week 4

(about a 20 min practice)

Warm-up: *2 Squares (5 mins)*

Set up an area about 10 yards by 20 yards, divide it in half and put a few kids in each half. Have them start dribbling around inside their own square while the coach calls out commands like “Go Left” and “Stop...” After a few moments, the coach calls out “Switch” and the players have to switch squares. You can have them bring the balls with them or have them switch without a ball and have to find a new one in the other square.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury. If time is a big issue you can skip this or just do something very short.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Duck, Duck, Goose (5 mins)*

Play Duck, Duck, Goose just like everyone always does except everyone has a ball. Have each player sitting in the circle keep their ball right next to him so it is easy to start dribbling.

Variations: You may want to start without balls just to get moving, then add the balls once the kids start playing. You may find it to be easier if all the players in the circle are standing instead of sitting.

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice try Skill Game 2 below, pick a game that everyone liked from an earlier week, or play a small sided game.

Skill Game 2: *Dog Pound (5 mins)*

Set up a larger area (10 by 10 yards) and a small area of to the side – the small area is the “Dog Pound,” the players are the “Puppies” and the coach is the “Dog Catcher.” Set out cones – 2 less than the number of players - in random spots inside the big square and have the Puppies start dribbling. When the coach shouts “It’s the Dog Catcher!” all the Puppies must stop their ball at a cone. The two Puppies left without a cone have to go to the Dog Pound and HOWL loud enough so that the Dog Catcher decides to let them go.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

NOTE for U5 Coaches: If you are having a hard time getting your kids to practice, or you think that your players need more kids around them, try teaming up with the other U5 coach for practice before the game. The kids might like having more people in the games and it could help prevent each team from standing around and watching what the other team is doing!

U5 - Week 5

(about a 20 min practice)

NOTE that this week there is an extra game on the list. Skill Game 1 and 2 are short, and of the same theme.

Warm-up: *Fox and Rabbits (5 mins)* Here is a warm up game just to get the kids moving and having fun.

Each player tucks a pinnie in the back of his shorts like a tail. The players are the “Rabbits” and the coach is the “Fox.” When the coach says “Go” the Rabbits run around the field trying to avoid having their tail yanked off by the Fox. If a Fox gets a Rabbit’s tail, the Rabbit becomes a Fox too.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Shootout (5 mins)*

Just like it sounds – take shots on goal. Start the players very near the front of the goal and have each player take a turn – one at a time – trying to make a shot. Back up a few steps and do it again. See who can get a goal from the furthest away. The coach should be showing the players how to kick from the inside of the foot.

Skill Game 2: *Coconut Topple (5 mins)*

This builds on the shooting exercise. Divide your team in half and put one half on each end of a small playing field. Set up a line of cones (half as many cones as players) in the middle of the field and place a ball on top of each. The balls are the “coconuts.” Only one group of players should have a ball, these players are the “Monkeys.” Have the Monkeys dribble up to a Coconut and topple the Coconut off the cone with their own ball – they are shooting at the cone. Once the Coconuts are toppled the Moneys need to finish dribbling to the opposite side of the field. The other players now become the Monkeys and you play again. As your progress, try having the Monkeys stop a few steps from the Coconuts before they shoot. (If you don’t have the mini cones that hold a ball well just set up a regular tall cone and have the players knock the cone over with a ball.) If you have enough cones and balls you don’t need to divide your team in half.

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice try Skill Game 3 below, pick a game that everyone liked from an earlier week, or play a small sided game (although... Skill Game 3 is like a small sided game).

Skill Game 3: *Crazy goals (5 mins)*

Divide your team in half. Set up a few (3) cones at each end of a playing field and place a ball on top of each cone. These are the goals. Let the teams play a regular soccer game with one exception: instead of having to score a goal, each team is trying to shoot and knock a ball off a cone. The team with the most balls knocked off wins.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

U5 - Week 6

(about a 20 min practice)

Warm-up: *Cartoon Corner (5 mins)*

Set up a square with 4 cones. Name each corner after a cartoon or character (Sponge, Bob, Scooby, Doo, etc.). Each player has a ball. Have each player dribble around randomly in the square. When the coach shouts out a cartoon name all the players need to dribble to that corner as fast as possible.

Variation: If you just want to run around to warm up then do the game without a ball.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Race around the Track (10 mins)*

Break your players into teams of 2 (more is OK). The players are “Race Cars” Set up 2 cones for each team, a “Start” and a “Turn,” about 10 steps apart. Each pair of Cars has one ball. The first Car on each team starts on the left side of the Start and, on the coaches command, dribbles to the Turn. Once the Car has made it around the Turn she passes the ball to her teammate at the Start (if the passing is too difficult just have the Cars dribble all the way back to the Start). As soon as the next Car gets the ball it is his turn to Race Around the Track while the first Car goes to the Start to get ready for a pass. Have the Cars keep racing until one team gets 5 points. A point is scored once a successful pass is made to the Car at the Start cone.

After a team reaches 5 points you can start the game again but have the Cars line up on the right side of the Start so that they turn in the other direction. You can play this game many times with shorter or longer tracks and by mixing up the teams.

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice try Skill Game 2 below, pick a game that everyone liked from an earlier week, or play a small sided game.

Skill Game 2: *Sharks and Minnow (5 mins)*

Set up a circle (or square) and have all the players in the circle with a ball. The coach is in the circle but without a ball. The players are the “Sharks” and the coach is the “Minnow.” Have the Sharks try to hit the Minnow with a ball.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

U5 - Week 7

(about a 20 min practice)

Warm-up: *Clothespin Tag (5 mins)* You will need a bunch of clothespins for this game!

Give each player a clothespin and have him clip it to the back of his shirt. All the players run around an area trying to steal a clothespin from another players back. No pushing, pulling, grabbing, etc! When a player gets a pin the player can kneel down and attach it to her shirt – no one can steal a pin from her when she is kneeling. After a few minutes see who has the most pins.

Variation: Have the coach jump in with a bunch of pins on his shirt for players to try and steal.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Get Outta My House (5 mins)*

Set up multiple goals (2 cones) around the perimeter of the play area – these are the “Houses.” Have the players dribble around in the area and try to score goals by shooting into any House. The coach (maybe you’ll want a parent or another player to help) runs from House to House kicking the balls away while telling the players to “Get Outta My House!”

Take a water break

For the remainder of the practice try Skill Game 2 below, pick a game that everyone liked from an earlier week, or play a small sided game.

Skill Game 2: *Alien Attack (5 mins)*

Set up 3 squares with cones, all about 5 yards apart from each other. These are the “Planets” and the coach is the “Alien.” Split the players up so that each Planet has at least 2 players. Every player needs to have a ball. When the coach yells “Alien Attack” the players need to fly to another Planet with their ball while the Alien tries to kick the balls away. Play until only 1 player has a ball left then choose a new Alien.

Snack (if you want) and break before the game.

U5 - Week 8

This is your last week (you made it!) so have fun.

Make sure you have the players go through a Warm-Up and Stretch. After that it's all up to you.

Here are some ideas:

- 1. Parents against Kids**
- 2. Everyone's Favorite game from Week 1-7**
- 3. Silly Soccer – let each kid have a turn making up a crazy rule and try to play using that rule**
- 4. Wrong Ball – play soccer with a beach ball (or a tennis ball)**
- 5. Soccer Golf – set up cones like a golf course**

U6 - Week 1

Warm-up: *Reaction (5 mins)* This is a good exercise to warm up the brain as well as the feet.

Make a circle with enough cones so that there is one cone for each player. Place the cones about 3 feet apart. Have each player line up just to the outside of a cone (you don't want anyone tripping over the cone)

NOTE: You will be giving the players instructions to move to the left or the right. Take a moment and show the players which way is left and which is right. If they are having a lot of trouble then set up the cones in a long line instead of a circle.

Procedure: Couldn't be simpler - you just shout out instructions and have the players react.

"2 left" shuffle 2 steps to the left

"3 right, 1 left" shuffle 3 steps to the left and one to the right

"2 right, center, 1 left" shuffle 2 steps to the right then run to the middle of the circle (or toward the coach if they are formed up in a line) AND BACK

Don't use a ball the first time you run this drill since the kids will probably be bumping into each other quite a bit. If you need a bit of control, have the players sit down after completing each command. It provides a bit of structure and helps them learn how to get up quickly.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)*

Have players stand with legs apart and roll their balls with their hands in a figure eight in and out of their legs. Then, have them place one foot in front of the other and roll the ball around the front foot ten times, then switch. Have them sit down, legs extended in front, and roll the ball towards and around their feet and return along the other side of the leg. Have them sit in a V and move the ball in an outline around their bodies, including their backs. This activity makes the players stretch without realizing it; players at this age tend to just "count" when being led through stretching exercises, they don't realize what a stretch feels like.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: Giant Crabs (10-15 mins)

Set up a large rectangle with some cones – this is the "Island" and the area outside of the cones is the "Ocean". Players start at one end of the island with their soccer balls (one ball per player). The coach starts in the middle of the island in a crab position (feet forward, hands on the ground behind you - if you can't get into this position have a player's sibling or other parent be the crab). The coach is the "Giant Crab" and has to move in this position.

When the Giant Crab yells, "I'm going to eat you!" the players have to dribble the ball across the island without the ball going into the Ocean or the Giant Crab kicking the ball away and they must stop the ball on the line. If a player's ball goes into the ocean that player becomes another Giant Crab. The players will need to keep the ball close in order to maintain control and get past the Giant Crab. Repeat the game in the opposite direction until everyone is a Giant Crab.

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: Skiing (10 mins)

Set up 5 to 7 "Gates" randomly throughout a small area (1/2 of the U5 field) with the cones. Each Gate should be about 3 feet wide. Have all the players start dribbling a ball without going through the gates. When the coach yells "Let's go skiing!" all the players try to dribble through as many gates as possible without going through any gate more than once. Have the players "Ski" for 30 seconds then tell them to stop. Ask how many gates everyone made it through. Run the exercise 3 or 4 times encouraging the players to keep the ball close to keep better control through the gates.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. This is a chance to make sure your team understands which way to go and where the goal is before you have your first game. If you have enough kids, space, and **coaches** break this kids into 4 teams of 3 and have 2 small games at once. **CAUTION:** Attempting to run 2 games at one time with one coach can be difficult and frustrating.

U6 - Week 2

(about a 45 min practice)

Warm-up: *Body Part Dribble (5 mins)*

Set up a small area and have each player start dribbling. Call out a body part and have the player stop the ball with that part (elbow, head, shoulder, etc.). Remember, it's to get them warmed up and having fun. Between stops they should be dribbling without touching each other.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *What's the time, Wolf? (10-15 mins)*

Put all the players in a line facing the coach who should be about 15-20 yards away. Have each player standing by a cone (share if need be). The coach is the "Wolf," the players are the "Little Pigs" and the cones are the "Brick Houses." Have the kids shout "What's the time, Wolf?" The Wolf shouts back a number. The players have to dribble the ball the number of steps that the Wolf calls out. Repeat until the Wolf shouts "Dinnertime" and the Little Pigs have to dribble back to their Brick Houses without having their balls kicked out by the Wolf. Let players take turns as the Wolf.

Variation: Put some cones in the field as "Trees" that the Little Pigs need to dribble around.

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: *Mouse without cheese (10 mins)*

All the players are "Mice" and the balls are the "Cheese." Have one Mouse start without any Cheese. The Mice with Cheese dribble in a confined area while the Mouse without Cheese tries to kick everyone else's Cheese out of the playing area. If a Mouse has the Cheese kicked out of bounds, or dribbles out of bounds, that Mouse has to come back into the playing area, hold the Cheese over her head with her legs apart and squeak until another mouse crawls under her legs to allow her to play again. Let a few players be the Mouse without Cheese – especially anyone who didn't get to be the Wolf in Skill Game 1.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer.

You'll notice that there has not been any focus on passing. At this age level it is important for the players to learn some ball control before they try to pass – if you can't control the ball for yourself, you can't get it to another player. The small sided games and the regular rec games will give the kids plenty of exposure to chasing down loose balls – which is the result of most passing attempts in this age group. Passing games will show up in the practice sessions later in the season.

Remember: If you find yourself having trouble filling up the time you've allotted for practice just run each of your exercises a bit longer. You don't need to do more stuff, just work on doing the same stuff longer (and better).

U6 - Week 3

(about a 45 min practice)

Warm-up: *All Hands on Deck (10 mins)* Focuses on running with the ball

Set up an area about 20 yards by 20 yards. Within that, mark off a small area (5 x 5 yards) to be the “Shark Cage.” The coach – or another player – can be in the Shark Cage to be the “Shark.” All the players dribble in the area outside of the Shark Cage – keep moving. The coach is the “Pirate Captain” and shouts out commands:

- 5) *Scrub the Deck* – roll the ball back and forth with the sole of the foot (can even dictate left or right foot)
- 6) *Walk the plank* – all the players dribble into the Shark Cage
- 7) *Hoist the Sail* – throw the ball into the air and catch it (or try to stop it close to their feet)
- 8) *Shark Attack* – the Shark leaves the cage and tries to kick balls away from players.

You can have one of the players successfully attack by the Shark go to the Shark Cage to be the next Shark.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Candy Thieves (10 mins)*

Mark off a 20 x 20 yard area and put everyone’s ball in the middle. The balls are the “Candy.” Split the players into even groups (2 or 3 groups) and have each group line up on a different side or corner of the play area. When the coach shouts “Candy Thief!” the first player from each group runs to the middle, gets a piece of Candy, dribbles it back to his team and tags the next player. Player 2 then steals a piece of Candy and the relay race continues until all the players have a piece of Candy.

Variations: Make the players pass the ball from the center to a member of their team instead of dribbling back. Put out extra Candy and don’t stop the relay until all the Candy is gone – see which team gets the most.

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: *(10-15 mins)*

Pick out a favorite game from week 1 or 2 and try some of the variations.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer.

Remember: If you find yourself having trouble filling up the time you’ve allotted for practice just run each of your exercises a bit longer. You don’t need to do more stuff, just work on doing the same stuff longer (and better).

U6 - Week 4

(about a 45 min practice)

Warm-up: *2 Squares (5 mins)*

Set up an area about 10 yards by 20 yards, divide it in half and put a few kids in each half. Have them start dribbling around inside their own square while the coach calls out commands like “Go Left” and “Stop...” After a few moments, the coach calls out “Switch” and the players have to switch squares. You can have them bring the balls with them or have them switch without a ball and have to find a new one in the other square.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Duck, Duck, Goose (10 mins)*

Play Duck, Duck, Goose just like everyone always does except everyone has a ball. Have each player sitting in the circle keep their ball right next to him so it is easy to start dribbling.

Variations: You may want to start without balls just to get moving, then add the balls once the kids start playing. You may find it to be easier if all the players in the circle are standing instead of sitting.

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: *Dog Pound (10-15 mins)*

Set up a larger area (10 by 10 yards) and a small area of to the side – the small area is the “Dog Pound,” the players are the “Puppies” and the coach is the “Dog Catcher.” Set out cones – 2 less than the number of players - in random spots inside the big square and have the Puppies start dribbling. When the coach shouts “It’s the Dog Catcher!” all the Puppies must stop their ball at a cone. The two Puppies left without a cone have to go to the Dog Pound and HOWL loud enough so that the Dog Catcher decides to let them go.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. Or... by this point you should have a pretty good list of other Skill Games that you still want to try or that you know are your player’s favorites.

U6 - Week 5

(about a 45 min practice)

NOTE that this week there is an extra game on the list. Skill Game 1 and 2 are short, and of the same theme.

Warm-up: *Fox and Rabbits (5 mins)* Here is a warm up game just to get the kids moving and having fun.

Each player tucks a pinnie in the back of his shorts like a tail. The players are the “Rabbits” and the coach is the “Fox.” When the coach says “Go” the Rabbits run around the field trying to avoid having their tail yanked off by the Fox. If a Fox gets a Rabbit’s tail, the Rabbit becomes a Fox too.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Shootout (5 mins)*

Just like it sounds – take shots on goal. Start the players very near the front of the goal and have each player take a turn – one at a time – trying to make a shot. Back up a few steps and do it again. See who can get a goal from the furthest away. The coach should be showing the players how to kick from the inside of the foot.

Skill Game 2: *Coconut Topple (5-10 mins)*

This builds on the shooting exercise. Divide your team in half and put one half on each end of a small playing field. Set up a line of cones (half as many cones as players) in the middle of the field and place a ball on top of each. The balls are the “coconuts.” Only one group of players should have a ball, these players are the “Monkeys.” Have the Monkeys dribble up to a Coconut and topple the Coconut off the cone with their own ball – they are shooting at the cone. Once the Coconuts are toppled the Moneys need to finish dribbling to the opposite side of the field. The other players now become the Monkeys and you play again. As your progress, try having the Monkeys stop a few steps from the Coconuts before they shoot. (If you don’t have the mini cones that hold a ball well just set up a regular tall cone and have the players knock the cone over with a ball.) If you have enough cones and balls you don’t need to divide your team in half.

Take a water break

Skill Game 3: *Crazy goals (10-15 mins)*

Divide your team in half. Set up a few (3) cones at each end of a playing field and place a ball on top of each cone. These are the goals. Let the teams play a regular soccer game with one exception: instead of having to score a goal, each team is trying to shoot and knock a ball off a cone. The team with the most balls knocked off wins.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. Or... by this point you should have a pretty good list of other Skill Games that you still want to try or that you know are your player’s favorites.

U6 - Week 6

(about a 45 min practice)

Warm-up: *Cartoon Corner (5 mins)*

Set up a square with 4 cones. Name each corner after a cartoon or character (Sponge, Bob, Scooby, Doo, etc.). Each player has a ball. Have each player dribble around randomly in the square. When the coach shouts out a cartoon name all the players need to dribble to that corner as fast as possible.

Variation: If you just want to run around to warm up then do the game without a ball.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Race around the Track (10-15 mins)*

Break your players into teams of 2 (more is OK). The players are “Race Cars” Set up 2 cones for each team, a “Start” and a “Turn,” about 10 steps apart. Each pair of Cars has one ball. The first Car on each team starts on the left side of the Start and, on the coaches command, dribbles to the Turn. Once the Car has made it around the Turn she passes the ball to her teammate at the Start (if the passing is too difficult just have the Cars dribble all the way back to the Start). As soon as the next Car gets the ball it is his turn to Race Around the Track while the first Car goes to the Start to get ready for a pass. Have the Cars keep racing until one team gets 5 points. A point is scored once a successful pass is made to the Car at the Start cone.

After a team reaches 5 points you can start the game again but have the Cars line up on the right side of the Start so that they turn in the other direction. You can play this game many times with shorter or longer tracks and by mixing up the teams.

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: *Sharks and Minnow (10 mins)*

Set up a circle (or square) and have all the players in the circle with a ball. The coach is in the circle but without a ball. The players are the “Sharks” and the coach is the “Minnow.” Have the Sharks try to hit the Minnow with a ball. Once all the Sharks have hit the Minnow let another player be the Minnow.

Variations: Make the Sharks use only the left foot or set up a smaller circle in the middle that the Minnow stays in but the Sharks have to stay out of. During the game have the coach shout out “Mutant Minnow” and let the Minnow try to kick the Sharks balls out of the play area.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. Or... by this point you should have a pretty good list of other Skill Games that you still want to try or that you know are your player’s favorites.

U6 - Week 7

(about a 45 min practice)

Warm-up: *Clothespin Tag (5 mins)* You will need a bunch of clothespins for this game!

Give each player a clothespin and have him clip it to the back of his shirt. All the players run around an area trying to steal a clothespin from another players back. No pushing, pulling, grabbing, etc! When a player gets a pin the player can kneel down and attach it to her shirt – no one can steal a pin from her when she is kneeling. After a few minutes see who has the most pins.

Variation: Have the coach jump in with a bunch of pins on his shirt for players to try and steal.

Stretch: *Ball Stretch (2-3 mins)* just like Week 1

Remember, this is for building habits more than for preventing injury.

Take a water break

Skill Game 1: *Get Outta My House (10 mins)*

Set up multiple goals (2 cones) around the perimeter of the play area – these are the “Houses.” Have the players dribble around in the area and try to score goals by shooting into any House. The coach (maybe you’ll want a parent or another player to help) runs from House to House kicking the balls away while telling the players to “Get Outta My House!”

Take a water break

Skill Game 2: *Alien Attack (10-15 mins)*

Set up 3 squares with cones, all about 5 yards apart from each other. These are the “Planets” and the coach is the “Alien.” Split the players up so that each Planet has at least 2 players. Every player needs to have a ball. When the coach yells “Alien Attack” the players need to fly to another Planet with their ball while the Alien tries to kick the balls away. Play until only 1 player has a ball left then choose a new Alien.

Small sided game: For the remainder of practice break the kids into 2 teams and let them play soccer. Or... by this point you should have a pretty good list of other Skill Games that you still want to try or that you know are your player’s favorites.

U6 - Week 8

This is your last week (you made it!) so have fun.

Make sure you have the players go through a Warm-Up and Stretch. After that it's all up to you.

Here are some ideas:

- 1. Parents against Kids**
- 2. Everyone's Favorite game from Week 1-7**
- 3. Silly Soccer – let each kid have a turn making up a crazy rule and try to play using that rule**
- 4. Wrong Ball – play soccer with a beach ball (or a tennis ball)**
- 5. Soccer Golf – set up cones like a golf course**