

Coaching U6

Coaching younger kids can be a challenge by itself but it's definitely fun!

We should focus on teaching soccer fundamentals. For example, even though we should introduce the team aspect, it can take a couple more years before the start working as a team together.

Most kids come here for fun; therefore do the same, enjoy yourself and have fun too.

These are the characteristics of U6 kids:

Characteristic	Solution
Very short attention span	No lectures
No "we" in team	Individual activities working towards team effort
Loves to run, jump, skip, roll, ...	Many activities
No catching skills	No goalies
Sensitive to failure	Try to include every one, avoid sideline standing
Limited coordination but can balance	Work on skills such as dribbling with head up, ...
Give their full effort until exhaustion	Quick recuperation breaks

The Michigan Youth Soccer Association uses the following saying: **NO lectures, NO drills and NO laps**

- No lectures because the kids just aren't interested but they do come for fun. Also remember not to use coaching jargon, speak the language they understand.
- No "just-do-it" drills but activities the have the kids thinking what to do in certain situations. This can be promoted with several activities that cover the same topic such as dribbling different ways inside/outside foot, etc.
- No laps! Coming to practices shouldn't be a punishment and not all kids have the same physical running abilities.
 1. Start your practice with some fundamental activities to get them warmed-up and stretched.
 2. Afterwards have them compete against each other to add pressure and encourage the soccer thinking.
 3. Always end with a scrimmage because that's what soccer is about!
 4. Cool down

Practice Tips:

- Look at the game and see what topics you have to work on.
- Always come early for setup.
- Use rectangular grids to simulate the field.
 - The smaller the grid the more pressure you put on the kids, as the space gets tighter.
 - This can also be accomplished by adding more players.
- Create your 3-phase (see above) plan prior to practice. Before practice, layout your entire practice-grids so you can continue with minimal waiting. Therefore, think about a nice flow from one practice into another, reuse grids, have a couple different grids, add some cones/discs to add some restriction or goals, etc. Make sure you have balls ready to provide a new one when the ball goes out of bounce.
- Remember, if an activity doesn't work as anticipated, don't ponder on it but, for example, give a quick water break and try to go to the next activity you had in mind or do a different one. 30 seconds waiting is a long time for this age group.
- Use assistant coaches and involve parents to keep the entire team going at all times. Parents are their role models and practice at home is encouraged.
- If needed, split the team in little groups so each kid can touch the ball as many times as possible.

These are the 4 focus areas to work on with their coaching points. Make sure to demonstrate! Also, praise in abundance when you see something good, as a confidence builder. Don't pick on anyone special in this age group but do assist individuals. Only work on 1 topic per session, this age can only focus on 1 problem at the time. You can create your own games or reuse some of the Internet. Just make sure it makes sense with the topic you are trying to teach.

Topic	Coaching points	Games/activities
Passing Inside of foot Laces, old style shoes Outside of foot	Stand wide for balance, bend knees Foot next to ball point where to kick Kicking foot: lock ankle, follow through Quality of pass in regards to accuracy, speed, timing	Soccer bowling Cone soccer 1v1 passing Monkey in the middle Shooting through legs Marbles Hunter and Rabbits
Receiving Side of foot, never sole! Not afraid off the ball	Get in line of flight of the ball Look at the incoming ball	1v1 receiving Monkey in the middle Give and go
Dribbling Inside off foot Outside off foot Laces Sole <i>add fakes moves as appropriate</i>	Stand wide for balance and control Keep ball close Change speed/direction Keep ball away of other player, turn body	Red light/green light Simon says Follow the leader Last Man out Mexican Hat dance Sharks and minnows Monster invasion Driving school
Shooting Inside off foot Laces Never TOE!	Standing foot next ball pointing where to kick Body over ball Kicking with ankle locked Follow through and land on kicking ball	Keep your yard clean Hit the coach Egg hunt

Game Tips:

- Come early and prepared
- Try not to coach too much from the sideline, most of them won't hear you anyway as they are too wrapped up in the game.
- Observe the game so that
 - Upon substitutions you can praise each kids individually with an example of a good thing you noticed.
 - At half time, tell the team what they did well then provide 1 to 3 team tips for the 2nd half.
Remember; first U6 kids only solve 1 problem at the time before confusion sets in.
 - You notice what to focus on in the next practice.
- End the game with praise on what the team did well!

References for information and games, definitely read the first one as it starts with what you can expect!

- Coaching U6 players from by Jeff Pill at <http://www.eteamz.com/soccer/pills/u-6.htm>.
- Training the very young child at http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/Pages/very_young.html, click on the menu links for a lot more soccer tips.
- Coaching manual for U6 and U8 at <http://www.nasl.com/articles/doc/manual%20%20U6%20U8.doc>, remember some might not be appropriate for all ages.