



## U12 SEASON PLAN

### Practice Format

Practices should follow the **PLAY-PRACTICE-PLAY** format. Play-Practice-Play is the optimal manner to structure a practice session for youth players, as it utilizes best practices for the learning and application of game-like scenarios.

#### **STAGE 1: PLAY (15 Min)**

As children arrive at practice, they immediately start playing small games. In the first Play phase, players engage in small-sided games with the primary focus on having fun. It is important that these pickup-style games are led by the players and facilitated by the coaches. Players can experience the game while the coach observes and guides them towards developing their own solutions rather than being directed what to do.

#### **STAGE 2: PRACTICE (30 Min)**

In the second phase of Play-Practice-Play, children are engaged in different forms of targeted learning activities to further guide their opportunities to develop. Practice activities should be of appropriate challenge (striking a balance between success and failure), resemble the game, involve the players making decisions and allow for creative problem solving. The role of the coach during this phase is to guide players while using teaching actions. While it is during this phase that targeted learning takes place, there should always be an emphasis on keeping the atmosphere fun and enjoyable for the players.

#### **STAGE 3: PLAY AGAIN! (15 Min)**

The final stage of Play-Practice-Play is the game. This phase offers players the opportunity and freedom to play, without interruption, in an environment that mirrors the actual game. The focus here is to encourage players to express themselves and demonstrate what they learned during the Practice phase. A coach should observe and guide using minimal dialogue if possible. By silently observing the application of the Practice phase in the final Play phase, the coach can check each player's understanding and ability to execute the goal of the training session.

For more information, view/download the following document published by U.S. Soccer:  
[U.S. SOCCER COACHING EDUCATION PLAY-PRACTICE-PLAY OVERVIEW](#)



## Player Development Skills

In an effort to help coaches focus on player development, we have developed a plan for coaches based on the National Grassroots Curriculum provided by US Youth Soccer. The following chart shows the skills coaches will focus on each week.

U12 DIVISION	
WEEK	SKILLS
1	Dribbling (ball control) & Possession
2	Possession & Shielding
3	Passing & Receiving Under Pressure
4	Team Defending (Pressure, Cover, Balance)
5	Small Group Defending
6	Supporting Teammates in the Attack
7	Passing from Wide Areas in the Attack
8	Scoring Under Pressure
Other	Goalkeeping



# NORTH VERMILION YOUTH ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

## Weekly Plans

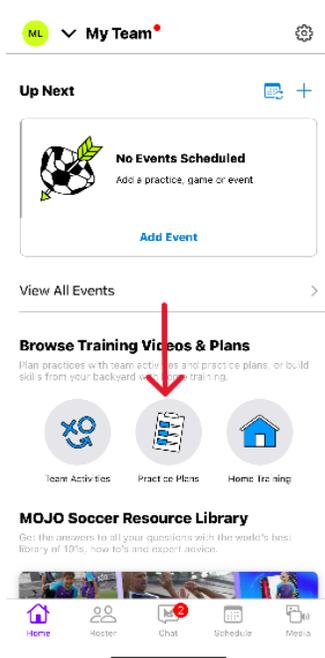
The following weekly plans provide things to look for, questions (and answers) to ask players to ensure understanding, and activities that can be used each week for coaches to introduce/teach the focus skill. Coaches are welcome to use other activities as long as they are aligned with the weekly focus skill.

The entire USYS National Grassroots Curriculum can be accessed for free via an app called “MOJO Sports.” Coaches are encouraged to download this app and access the detailed practice plans provided. Weekly practice plans provide detailed activities, short videos, and graphics for each of the focus skills.

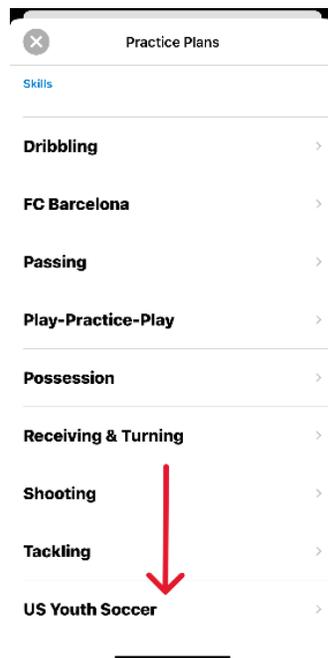
Scan this QR Code to download the app:



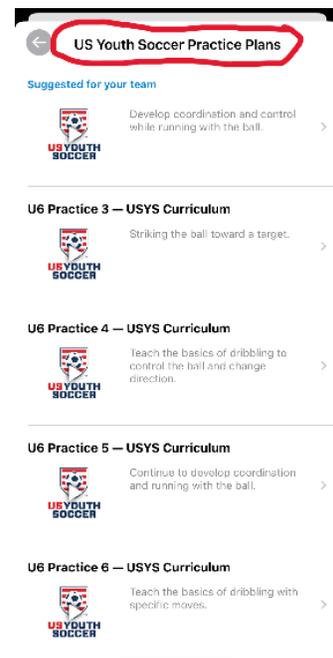
Once you download the app, the free curriculum can be found using the following steps:



From home screen click “Practice Plans”



Scroll to bottom and click “US Youth Soccer”



Scroll through to find your division/skill. Order of skills may vary slightly.



## U12 Week One – Dribbling (ball control) & Possession

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players embrace their creativity when dribbling, using different surfaces of the foot to manipulate the ball</li> <li>• Players recognize when to use soft touches in tight spaces and attack space with bigger touches</li> <li>• Players accelerate after doing a move to distance themselves from a defender</li> <li>• Players off the ball move to support and create openings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should you do when you see an opening? Pass or dribble through it</li> <li>• Why is movement off the ball important when attacking? Players can move to become passing options or their movement can create space for the person to dribble into</li> <li>• Why do we want to accelerate after we complete a dribbling move to beat a defender? It helps to create distance from the defender</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

<b>Horse</b>	<b>Free Dribbling</b>
<b>1v1 to Endlines</b>	<b>4v4 to Endlines (Attacking)</b>



## U12 Week Two – Possession & Shielding

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When shielding, players position their body between the defender and the ball</li> <li>• Extend an arm before opposition arrives and use the upper body to create space</li> <li>• The ball is controlled with the foot furthest from the defender</li> <li>• Players try to use quick movements to change direction into space or create distance from the defender so there is room to pass</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should you do when you see pressure coming? Pass or hide the ball, position yourself between the defender and the ball</li> <li>• What is a good body position to be in when shielding? Knees are bent and you are balanced, you are “side on” so you can see the defender, but shield the ball</li> <li>• What should you do when you are hiding the ball? Look for support to pass the ball. Try to keep the ball moving, so you can use a quick change of direction to create space off the defender.</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

<p><b>Shield-Steal</b></p>	<p><b>Team Shield-Steal</b></p>
<p><b>4v4 to 4 Goals (Attacking)</b></p>	<p><b>What is Shielding?</b></p>



## U12 Week Three – Passing & Receiving Under Pressure

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication (verbal and non-verbal) between players</li> <li>• Players pass the ball accurately with the inside of the foot</li> <li>• Players receive the ball with their body open to see the field</li> <li>• The player’s first touch is out from under them and toward the direction they want to go next</li> <li>• Communication (verbal and non-verbal) between players</li> <li>• Players are trying to use the inside and outside of the foot to receive and pass the ball</li> <li>• Players move into space to receive the ball and open their body to see the field</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How should you pass the ball with the inside of the foot? Plant foot points to the target, strike the middle of the ball, toe up and ankle is locked</li> <li>• How can you receive the ball and continue moving? Body is open to see the field, receive with the opposite foot from the passer, make your first touch strong enough to get the ball out from under you</li> <li>• When should you look to pass? Teammate is open. Teammate is higher up the field than you.</li> <li>• When can you use the outside of the foot to pass? As a quick touch or to redirect the ball to a teammate near you</li> <li>• How do you strike the ball with the outside of the foot? Toe down, ankle locked, knee over the ball</li> <li>• When is it better to pass than dribble? When pressure is closing in, you have no room to dribble, your teammate is closer to goal</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

	
<p><b>Triangle Goal Game</b></p>	<p><b>3v2 to Goal</b></p>
	
<p><b>Numbers Passing</b></p>	<p><b>2v2v2 Keep Away</b></p>



## U12 Week Four – Team Defending (Pressure, Cover, Balance)

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Player closest to the ball recognizes they need to pressure</li> <li>• The second closest players are at a good angle and distance of support</li> <li>• The other players on the field are in a good defensive shape and provide balance</li> <li>• The team looks to compact the field and eliminate spaces for the attack to penetrate</li> <li>• The backline is “side on” and “goal side” positions themselves between the attacker and the goal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When we lose the ball where should we recover as a team? The team should look to recover centrally to protect the goal</li> <li>• What is a safe distance of support for the covering defending? Goal side and 5 or so yards at angle to the pressuring defender (depending on the space). One attacker should not beat two defenders on the dribble.</li> <li>• Is everyone on the team responsible for defending? Why? Yes, even the forwards can help to apply immediate pressure and slow down the attack</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

	
<p><b>Team Knockout</b></p>	<p><b>2v2 to Small Goals (Defending)</b></p>
	
<p><b>4v4 to 4 Goals (Defending)</b></p>	<p><b>Liverpool</b></p>



## U12 Week Five – Small Group Defending

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defending players are constantly communicating and adjusting their positions</li> <li>Players are not chasing the ball when it is passed, but shifting from pressure to cover</li> <li>Players on the field are in a good defensive shape and provide balance</li> <li>The team looks to compact the field and eliminate spaces for the attack to penetrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What can we do as a pair to avoid getting split during Rondos? One person pressures and the other is at a good angle and distance of support</li> <li>What should happen when the ball is passed during a Rondo? The covering player should immediately step to the passer and the pressuring player should drop back to the middle</li> <li>What does it mean to be compact defensively? Defending players step up to make a space smaller or shift to keep the ball on one side of the field</li> </ul>

## ACTIVITIES

<p><b>Rondo 5v2</b></p>	<p><b>Crossing Guards</b></p>
<p><b>Team Handball</b></p>	<p><b>Half Court Soccer</b></p>



## U12 Week Six – Support Teammates in the Attack

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players body shape is open and ready</li> <li>• Players look to play in 2 or 3 touches</li> <li>• The weight of the pass varies based on distance to the player</li> <li>• Players scan the field or get a look in before they receive the ball</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What can we do to keep the ball on the ground when passing? Receive it with our knee over the ball and strike through the middle of the ball. If we hit the bottom part of the ball it will pop up.</li> <li>• How can players off the ball create space? Move to stretch the field high, wide and give depth (behind the person with the ball)</li> <li>• What is an overlapping run? How can the person on the ball help create space for the overlap? An overlap is when a player runs behind and past the person with the ball, usually to the outside of the field. The person with the ball should dribble inside toward the defender which will open up space for the person running</li> </ul>

## ACTIVITIES

<p><b>Back to You</b> (first drill in video)</p>	<p><b>Rondo 5v2</b></p>
<p><b>Upper Hand</b></p>	<p><b>Half &amp; Half</b></p>



## U12 Week Seven – Passing from Wide Areas in the Attack

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Movement off the ball to create space</li> <li>• Body position from flank players is open and ready to receive the ball</li> <li>• When crossing the ball is prepared at a 45 degree angle and players get their hips towards the goal</li> <li>• Central players shape their body to frame the goal to make scoring easier</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where should the wide player make their first touch? Down the line or on an angle to serve the ball early</li> <li>• Where should central players run to receive the cross? Try to frame the goal. Runners make runs at the near post, far post and center of the goal.</li> <li>• What is something you can do to help aim your cross or service? Take a touch toward the goal, have your plant foot aim to your target. Get your hips aligned with the target.</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

	
<p><b>Capture the Balls</b></p>	<p><b>Side Effects</b></p>
	
<p><b>Criss Cross</b></p>	<p><b>Barcelona</b></p>



## U12 Week Eight – Scoring Under Pressure

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players recognize when there is an opening and dribble at speed</li> <li>• Players take the shot as soon as they create space from the defender</li> <li>• Players frame the goal when receiving the ball from the flank</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What should we do if we do not have an opening for a shot? Pull the ball back to possess, look to find an opening for a pass</li> <li>• What do we look at when shooting? The space to either side of the goalkeeper</li> <li>• What can we do technically to increase our accuracy when shooting? Position our body to frame the goal, head over the ball, toe down and ankle locked, plant foot pointed towards the target</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

	
<p><b>Catch Me If You Can</b> (at 1:18)</p>	<p><b>Goalie Moley Finishing</b></p>
	
<p><b>The Final Boss</b></p>	<p><b>One Touch Finish</b></p>



## U12 Other – Goalkeeping

### OVERVIEW

At this age, you may have a few players that love to be goalkeepers. This session is designed for them. They can work with a coach on these activities while the team is training and then join them in the scrimmage. This session is a great introduction to basic goalkeeping concepts. Check out the videos before the session, so you know how to coach the catching and diving technique—then let the kids have fun. *Do not teach players to dive unless you are comfortable understanding how they should land.*

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Players are moving their feet to get their body behind the ball when catching; shuffle their feet with the knees bent and chest square to the ball</li> <li>• Players recognize when to use the diamond catch versus the basket catch</li> <li>• Players are not landing on their elbow when they are collapse diving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What shape should your hands make when you catch the ball chest high or above? A diamond</li> <li>• What catch do you use when the ball is waist high or below? Basket catch</li> <li>• How do we land when diving? *We have one hand on top of the ball and one hand behind the ball; we land on our side, not our elbow</li> </ul>

### ACTIVITIES

<b>Hands Warm-Up</b>	<b>Pairs Passing &amp; Catching</b>
<b>Basket Catch</b>	<b>Diamond Catch</b>
<b>Knees Diving</b>	<b>9 Essential GK Skills</b>



## FAQs

- **When do players learn the rules (throw-ins, corner kicks, etc)?**
  - Within the holistic “PPP” approach, players learn the rules of the game through playing and experiencing the moments when/where the rule occurs. The 2<sup>nd</sup> play phase of practice provides many moments within a context that most closely resembles the game.
- **When do players warm up and stretch?**
  - For players in U6-U12, there is no need to do any static stretching. *Playing soccer* is actually a great warm-up for playing soccer, therefore the first “play” phase of practice is the perfect time for players to warm up muscles. For players in the U14/U15 division, static stretching can be incorporated into practice and should be done after the first “play” phase once muscles are warmed up.
- **How do I “coach” during the game?**
  - Effective coaches don’t actually do a lot of coaching from the sideline during games. Instead of giving constant direction from the sideline, coaches should be observing to figure out which lessons stuck and what may need to be revisited. Players should be allowed to problem solve and make decisions during games. Noise from sidelines (both fans and coaches) can be overwhelming for players trying to manipulate the ball.



- **How do I measure success as a coach?**
  - Success ***IS NOT*** measured by wins and losses, we must balance winning and developing players.





## Other Helpful Videos

- *Soccer 101 Series by MOJO*
  - For coaches who are new to soccer (or even those considered veterans), this collection of 50+ one-minute videos is an amazing resource! It is filled with “How to” and “What is” videos that quickly explain and demonstrate various soccer skills.
  - Access the entire playlist [\*\*\*HERE\*\*\*](#)
- *Minute Clinic/How to Coach Kids by MOJO*
  - A collection of one to two-minute videos on various topics pertaining to coaching soccer at the youth level
  - Access the entire playlist [\*\*\*HERE\*\*\*](#)