



U8 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.

U8 DIVISION	
WEEK	SKILLS
1	Dribbling (ball control) & Changing Direction
2	Passing & Ability to Create Openings
3	Scoring & Attacking
4	Ball Control & Shielding Basics
5	Basic Defending & 1v1 Defending
6	Passing Skills/Working in Pairs
7	Attacking & Goal Scoring
8	Shielding & Dribbling in Order to Keep Possession



NORTH VERMILION YOUTH ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION

Weekly Plans

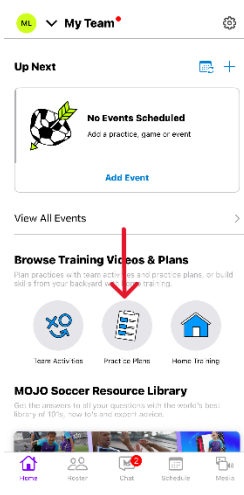
The following weekly plans provide things to look for, questions (and answers) to ask players to ensure understanding, and activities that can be used each week for coaches to introduce/teach the focus skill. Coaches are welcome to use other activities as long as they are aligned with the weekly focus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

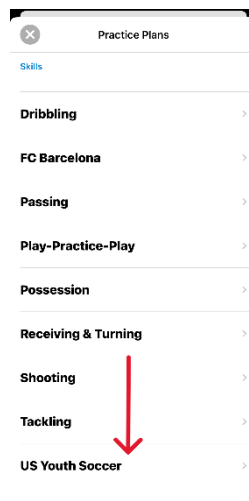
Scan this QR Code to download the app:



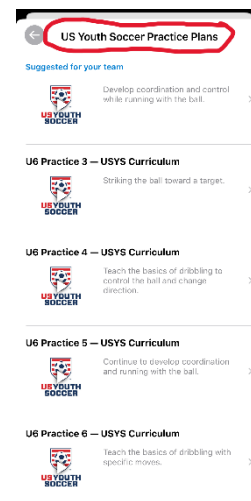
Once you download the app, the free curriculum can be found using the following steps:



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.



U8 Week One – Dribbling (ball control) & Changing Direction

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players balanced movements when hopping, skipping, and dribbling • Players accelerate through the gates or after they do a move in 1v1 (to create space after beating a defender) • Players recognize when a gate is crowded and they can change direction or speed to avoid the crowd • Players are bending their knees and getting low to change direction • Players pick up the head to see the field and find open goals • Players use their body to shield the ball from the defender 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What parts of the foot can you dribble with? Inside, outside, bottom, and laces • Why do we want to accelerate after we do a move? It helps us to create space from the person we just beat • Why should we try to take a player on 1v1 at pace? It is harder for the defender to stop someone who is going at them fast • What can you do to help change direction? Stay low and keep the ball close • What can you do to help prevent the wizard from hitting your ball? Turn and put your body between the wizard and the ball • What can you do if there is space in front of you? Dribble forward

ACTIVITIES

	
<p>Around the World</p>	<p>Gates Dribbling</p>
	
<p>Shadow Dribbling</p>	<p>Dinosaur Tag</p>



U8 Week Two – Passing & Ability to Create Openings

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players communicate with each other during Gates Passing and other activities • Players use proper technique for passing: Use the inside of the passing foot, toe up, plant foot (non-passing foot) points toward target • Players try to move away from a teammate to create space • Players are using proper passing technique: Non-passing foot (plant foot) points to target, toe up on passing foot when using the inside of that foot • Players are positively communicating to ask for the ball • Players are moving to support the person with the ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When do we pass the ball instead of dribble? When we don't have space to dribble and someone is open • How can you let a teammate know that you are open and want the ball? Communicate and call for the ball • Why do we sometimes pass the ball instead of dribble it? The ball can move faster • Where can we move to support the person with the ball? In a space where they can see us and we are close enough to get the pass • Why don't we want to be very close to our teammate when they have the ball? It makes it easy for the other team to defend two people. We crowd them which makes it harder for them to move • What can we do if we can't pass a ball forward? We can play to a teammate behind us and they can look for an opening

ACTIVITIES

	
<p>Gates Passing</p>	<p>Team Handball</p>
	
<p>2v1 to Goal</p>	



U8 Week Three – Scoring & Attacking

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players start to recognize how hard they need to strike the ball at different distances to hit the target • Players try use the inside of their foot to pass and aim with their plant foot (non-striking foot) • Players are having fun and know it's OK if they miss the target sometimes • Players open their body to pass the ball with the inside of their foot (if they use inside toe the ball may pop up) • Plant foot points to where they want to pass • Players are communicating during Gates Passing • Players are passing and moving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the best part of the foot to strike the ball with when you are near the target? The inside of the foot • Where should your plant foot face when you are trying to aim for a target? Toward the target • What should be do if we want to hit the ball with more power? Point our toe down and strike the ball with our laces • Where should our plant foot point when we are passing? Toward our target • What can we do during Gates Passing to have success? Communicate with partner, receive the ball toward the space you want to go • How can we move the ball quickly through an opening? Pass with the inside of our foot • What can players off the ball do to create an opening? Move into space, and spread out

ACTIVITIES



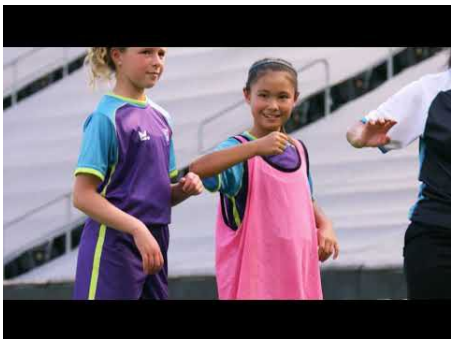

<p>Moving Goal</p>	<p>Hawaii</p>
<p>2v2 to Small Goals(Attacking)</p>	<p>Mosquitos</p>



U8 Week Four – Ball Control & Shielding Basics

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Players keep the ball moving even when their backs are turned to the defender• Players take a low and wide body stance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is a good stance to have when shielding the ball? Knees bent with a wide stance; arm out closest to their opponent (like they are holding a shield)• Which foot do you want to keep the ball on? The one farthest from the opponent• Where do you want to position your body when shielding? Put your body between the defender and the ball

ACTIVITIES

	
Pattern Dribbling	The Octopus
	
Shield-Steal	Knockout



U8 Week Five – Basic Defending & 1v1 Defending

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure the player with the ball • Win the ball • Protect the goal... and have FUN! • Players should try to sprint to the ball and then take smaller steps and get closer as they get near the person with the ball • Players should angle their body to force the attacker toward a sideline or into another defender • Players do not have tackle to win the ball, but should try to keep the attacker in front of them • In the game can players recognize who is closest to the ball to pressure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should you do if you see an opening to your goal? Move to block your goal • What is a good moment to steal the ball? When the attacker lets it get too far away • What is pressure? Running to the person with the ball. You do not always have to try and win the ball • How should we run to the ball? Start as fast as you can and as you get closer take smaller steps and try to stay low so you can change direction easily • What does our body position look like when we pressure the ball? We are an arm's length away and angle our body to try and force the player to a side

ACTIVITIES

2v2 to Small Goals(Defending)	2v2 to 4 Small Goals(Defending)
Liverpool	Sharks & Minnows



U8 Week Six – Passing Skills/Working in Pairs

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players use their plant foot to aim when passing • Players experiment to see the difference between using the inside and outside of the foot when passing • Players are moving to create passing lanes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we know we are in a good passing space? The person with the ball can see us. (There is no defender between me and the ball) • Where should we strike the ball to keep it on the ground? In the middle of the ball • How can we let the person with the ball know we want it? Communicate by calling for it, signaling with our hands, or making eye contact

ACTIVITIES

	
<p>Team Ball Tag</p>	<p>Minions</p>
	
<p>2v2 to Endlines (Attacking)</p>	<p>Triangle Goal Game</p>



U8 Week Seven – Attacking & Goal Scoring

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players recognize openings to shoot or pass to create chances • When shooting with the laces is a player’s head over the ball, toe pointing down and ankle locked? • Movement off the ball to create openings to shoot • Communication • Players are having fun • Players are using the inside of the foot for closer shots and the laces for father away shots • Players are getting the head up to find the goal and shoot. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What should we look like when shooting with the laces? Head over the ball, toe down, ankle locked • When near the goal, what surface of the foot should you use to be more accurate? Inside of the foot and use the plant foot to aim at the target • What can you do if there is not an opening to shoot? Pass the ball to another player • Where do we put our plant foot when finishing or passing? Next to the ball and aiming at our target • When should we look to shoot? When we have an opening are close enough to score • Why are mistakes OK? Because they are part of learning

ACTIVITIES

<p>More to Score</p>	<p>2v2 to 4 Goals (Attacking)</p>
<p>Clean Your Backyard</p>	<p>Moving Goal Pairs</p>



U8 Week Eight – Shielding & Dribbling in Order to Keep Possession

WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT TO SAY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players use dribbling moves to keep possession and shield the ball from the Octopus or defenders • Players are trying to use different parts of the foot to manipulate the ball • Players are communicating with each other 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why do we accelerate after we do a move to get passed a defender? To create more space and make it harder for them to win the ball back • What moves can we do to change direction and put our body between the defender and the ball? Pullback, inside cut, outside cut • If our ball is knocked out in Team Knockout, how can we help our teammates? Communicate when you are a passing option. Let players know when there is pressure coming

ACTIVITIES

<p>Knockout</p>	<p>Shrinking Field</p>
<p>Team Knockout</p>	<p>101 Dalmatians</p>



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 2nd 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](#)