



**INDIANOLA
SOCCER TRIBE**

Indianola Soccer Tribe U6 Curriculum Plan Version 2

Player Development Philosophy: At the grassroots level, children learn and develop their full potential through game-like experiences in an enjoyable environment that supports individual growth.

HOW TO COACH

6 important things to remember for every session you deliver:

The soccer ball is the world's most popular toy

It's great fun to play with and it's even more fun with friends. This means fun is implicit, you don't need to manufacture fun. As long as you start and end with a game, they will have a great time.

You don't need to over complicate things.

Too many practices in a session means you spend a lot of time setting things up and kids spend more time learning the session than the actual skills. Keep it simple and they'll get more time on the ball.

Make sure they get lots of opportunity to play

It's their game. Whilst you're there to teach them they need space to work things out and express themselves. Stopping things too often can be counter productive, so try to be concise with feedback

You are working with young children

You have to be encouraging and patient. Some of them might not be able to do the skills, don't worry, it's just an age thing. Also, little humans are brilliant at listening, even when you don't think they are.

If you can, try to involve the parents.

Involve all the stakeholders, they'll appreciate it. You can even send them the curriculum that you are working from, they will love that you are taking so much care of the development of their kids.

If they improve, they will want to keep coming back

There's a risk in modern coaching that we sit back and observe. If you can help a player get something right (and praise them for it), their learning will accelerate and they'll enjoy it more.

U6 Curriculum Plan

The guiding principles for this age group are simplicity and patience. Many U6 players have never played soccer or organized team sports before.

The primary job of a coach is to make the kids love the game, then they will learn it. Focus on free play, not performance. Kids don't sign up to do drills at practice, they sign up to play the game of soccer, so play soccer.

Emphasis to the kids not to use their toe to kick the ball. It's natural for them to start this way, but by saying "no toe" over and over and providing demonstrations of the proper way to move the ball at an early age, it really helps later when the kids are older. Learning soccer is all about gradual improvements over a long period of time, and this is their very first step, make it enjoyable.

U6 player objectives for the season

- Learn ball mastery skills: Toe taps, Inside/outside dribbling (both feet), outside and inside hook turns
- Learn to change direction with the ball
- Have lots of fun!

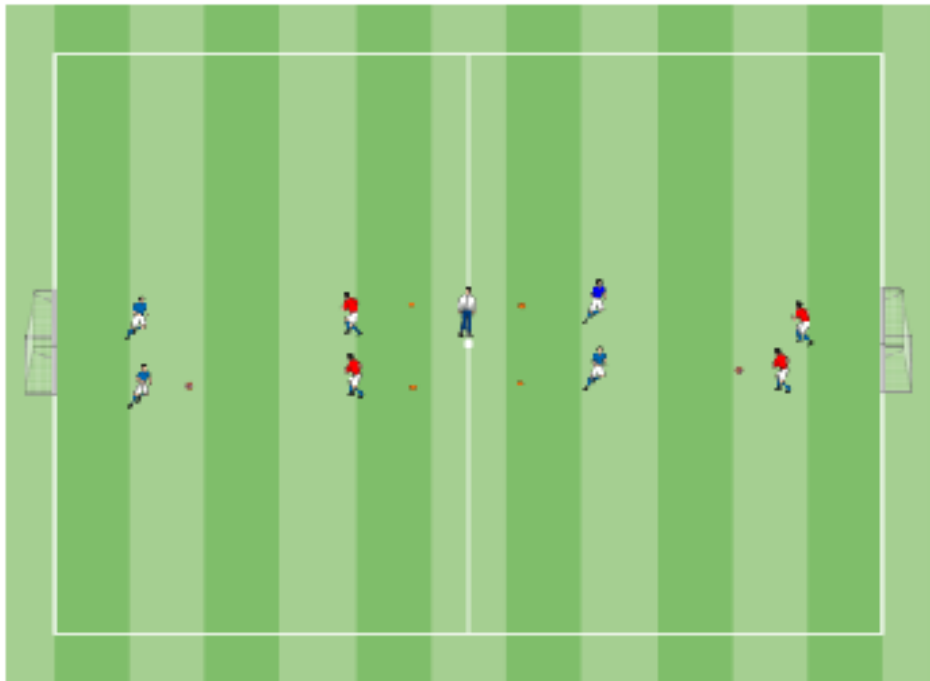
U6 Curriculum Plan

Basic format for season

- 9 week season
- 1x practice a week (45-60 mins each), 1x game each weekend
- Recommended practice format: Play 1 – Ball Mastery Skills – Practice Activity – Play 2
 - Play 1: As the kids arrive, divide them up into two small sided games (2v2) and just let them play soccer.
 - ~10 minutes, with a “half time” water break where you discuss and ask some basic questions to get them engaged and learning before playing again.
 - Ball Mastery Skills: These skills are the perfect introduction for young players because it teaches them to use the inside, outside and sole of the foot. They also start building the neural connections between the brain and the feet to help with agility, coordination and balance.
 - ~10 minutes. Pick 2-3 per practice to focus on and by the end of the season mix and match all 4 skills as desired
 - Practice activity: Use a fun activity to teach a concept and/or reinforce ball mastery skills
 - ~10-15 minutes, with a water break in between to discuss and ask questions on the concepts you trying to teach
 - Play 2: Finish practice with a 4v4 scrimmage (if able given field constraints)
 - ~10-15 minutes, with a water break in between to discuss and ask questions on the concepts you trying to teach
 - If you aren't able to do a 4v4 scrimmage, end with small sided games from Play 1 or mix in another fun practice activity

Play 1

- Have field ready when kids show up, with it divided into two halves with two goals in each half.
- You can use the goals on the field and then just set up two cones on each half for the other goal. If you only have ½ a field, divide it in half length wise and set up four goals with cones on the side so as not to shoot into the other half where another team is practicing.
 - If this makes the field too short, play end line to half line, but for the goals near the half line, put them a couple feet in front of the half line to minimize the amount of spill over into the other half.
- As players arrive, divide them into two teams on each field and have them start playing against each other, you don't need to wait for the entire team to get started. You can start with a 1v1, then make it 2v1, then 2v2.
- Coach positioned in the middle to watch both halves/help corral the balls when kicked into the other half
- Intent is to get them playing the game of soccer. Provide lots of positive reinforcement when they do something well.



Ex. Guided questions for “halftime” of Play 1

Q: What should attackers do when the path to the goal is open?

A: Dribble towards it as quickly and directly as possible

Q: How close to the goal do you need to be before shooting?

A: As close as you need to be to kick it all the way into the goal (don't need to dribble it into the goal)

Q: How do you find an opening?

A: Look up to see where the defenders are and then find the space between them

Ball Mastery

For all activities: Demo, start slow, and as they build confidence/skill, increase speed. The key is to get the technique right.

Inside/outside dribbling (one foot): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oiR2OI0NCv4>

- The keys to this activity are *small* touches, picking their heads up to not run into each other, and changing directions.
 - All three of these skills are needed in combination when playing the game.
- Set up a line of cones ~1/2 way down the field (see next slide for same set up with red light/green light).
 - The intent is to create an area big enough for them to dribble, but small enough that they need to pick their head up to not run into each other. If it's too much chaos, expand the area as needed.
- Tell the kids to dribble around in the area until you say "stop." Don't over coach and constantly provide inputs, just let them get used to dribbling with the ball with minor coaching comments like "no toe," "head up," "small touches," etc. They should naturally begin to make changes in direction to avoid each other.
- After the first few weeks, encourage your players to dribble around with their non-dominant foot at times. It will be challenging for them so provide positive reinforcement for them when they do so.

Toe taps: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VT8KF3_ssqU

- Start slow with this, they may not be able to hop quickly back and forth when first doing this. The key to this activity is *light* touches with the sole of the foot, just the toe, not the middle of the foot, as they will likely put too much weight down when doing so and it will throw them off balance. If you have some players who get decent at this, challenge them by having them do toe taps in a 360 around the ball to continue to work on balance and coordination: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhpkP_smIXQ

Outside hook turn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_Ywich-FF0w

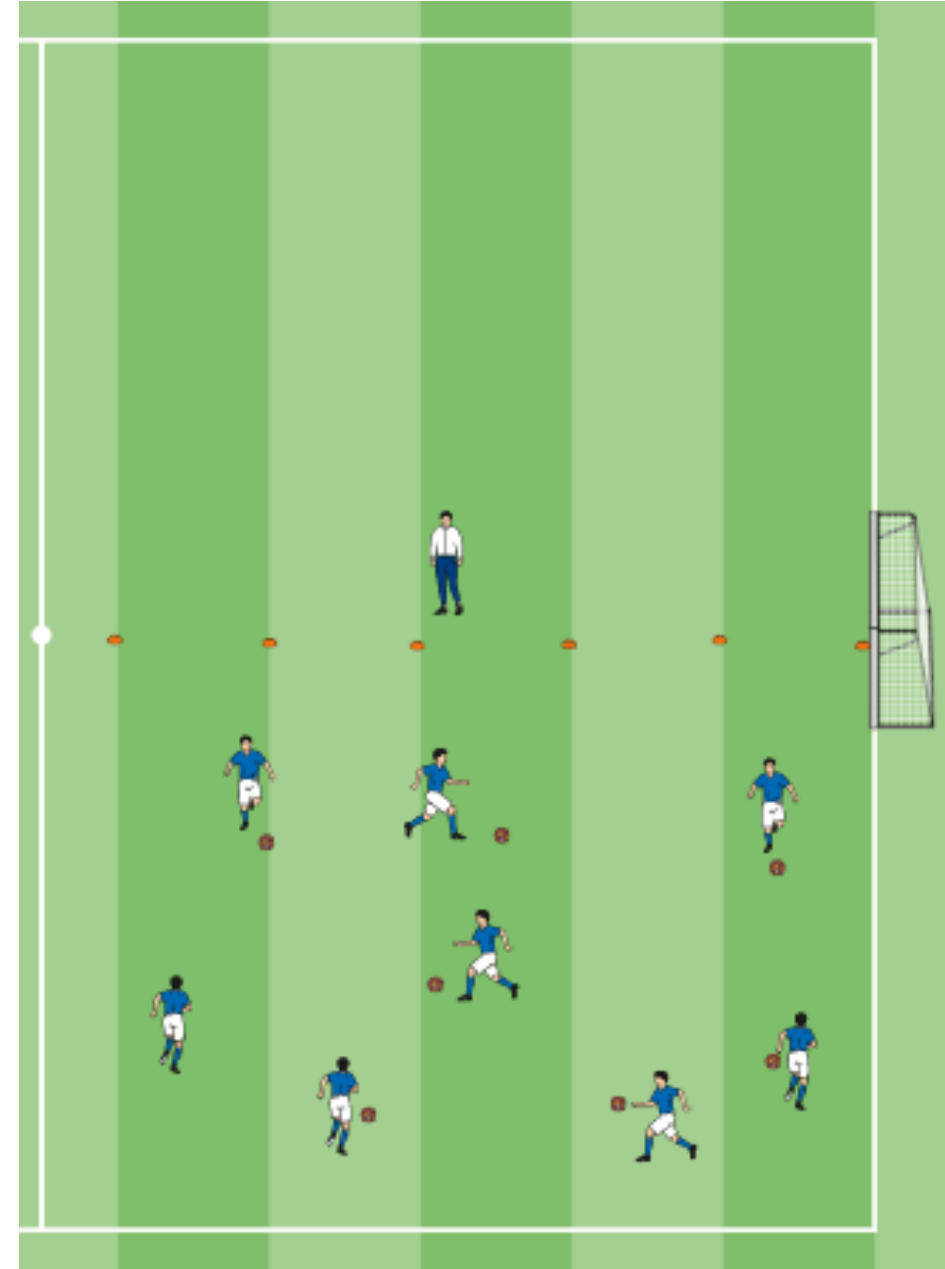
- Set up a row of cones about 5 yards from a sideline. Have the kids start on the sideline and do a hook turn every time they reach the row of cones and sideline. Pick a number (ex. 6) and tell the players to dribble back and forth making hook turns until they do so 6 times. Then pick a new number and do the same.

Inside hook turn: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e48Lpw_W6DI

- Set up a row of cones about 5 yards from a sideline. Have the kids start on the sideline and do a hook turn every time they reach the row of cones and sideline. Pick a number (ex. 6) and tell the players to dribble back and forth making hook turns until they do so 6 times. Then pick a new number and do the same.

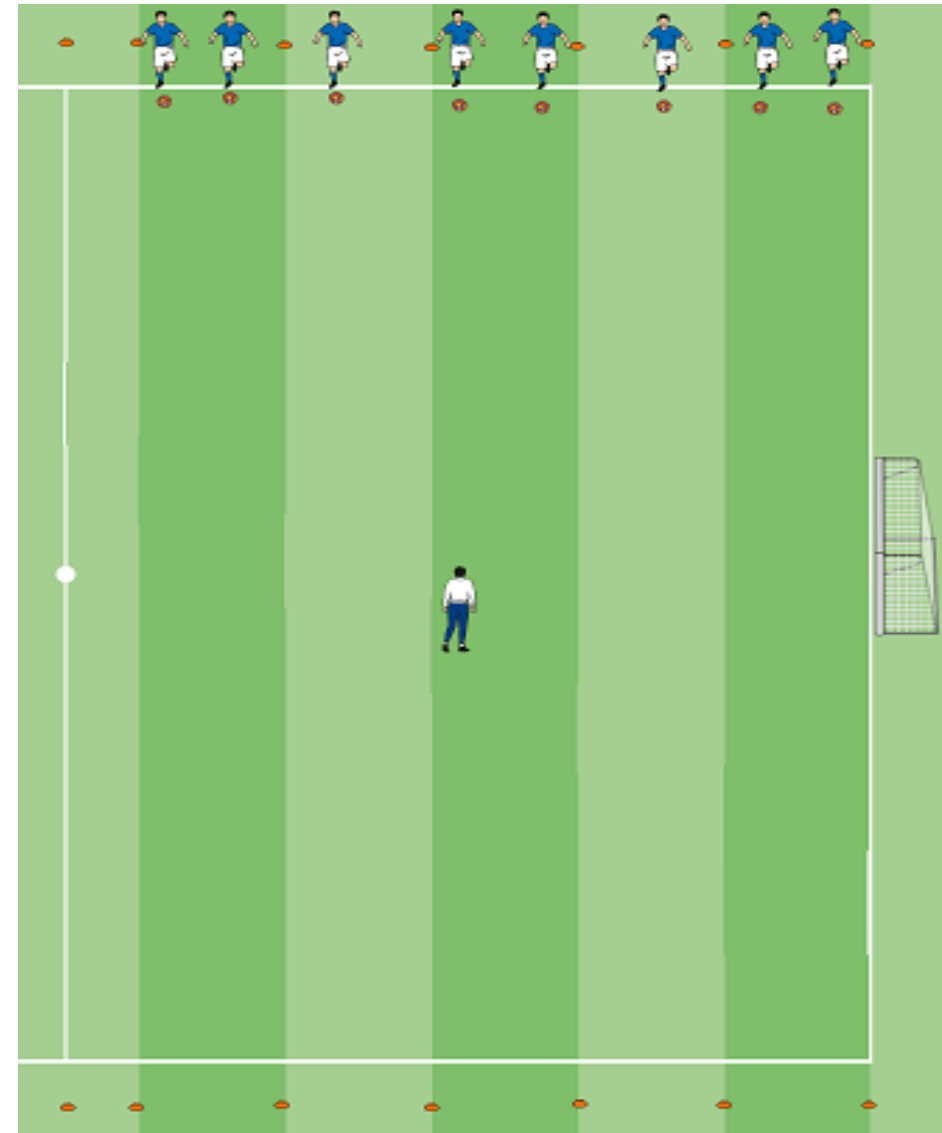
Practice Activity: Red light/Green light

- Set up a line of cones ~1/2 way down the field.
- The intent is to create an area big enough for them to dribble, but small enough that they need to pick their head up to not run into each other. If it's too much chaos, expand the area as needed.
- Stand outside the area and call out different light colors as they dribble around in the area
 - Green = go fast
 - Yellow = go slow
 - Red = stop with foot on top of the ball
 - Blue = do toe taps
 - Purple = show off your best dance moves
- The goal is for them to practice dribbling (you can reference the inside/outside ball mastery concept) while picking their head up to avoid traffic.
- Key points: Head up, small touches (using ball mastery inside/outside dribbling), change of direction, and listening skills



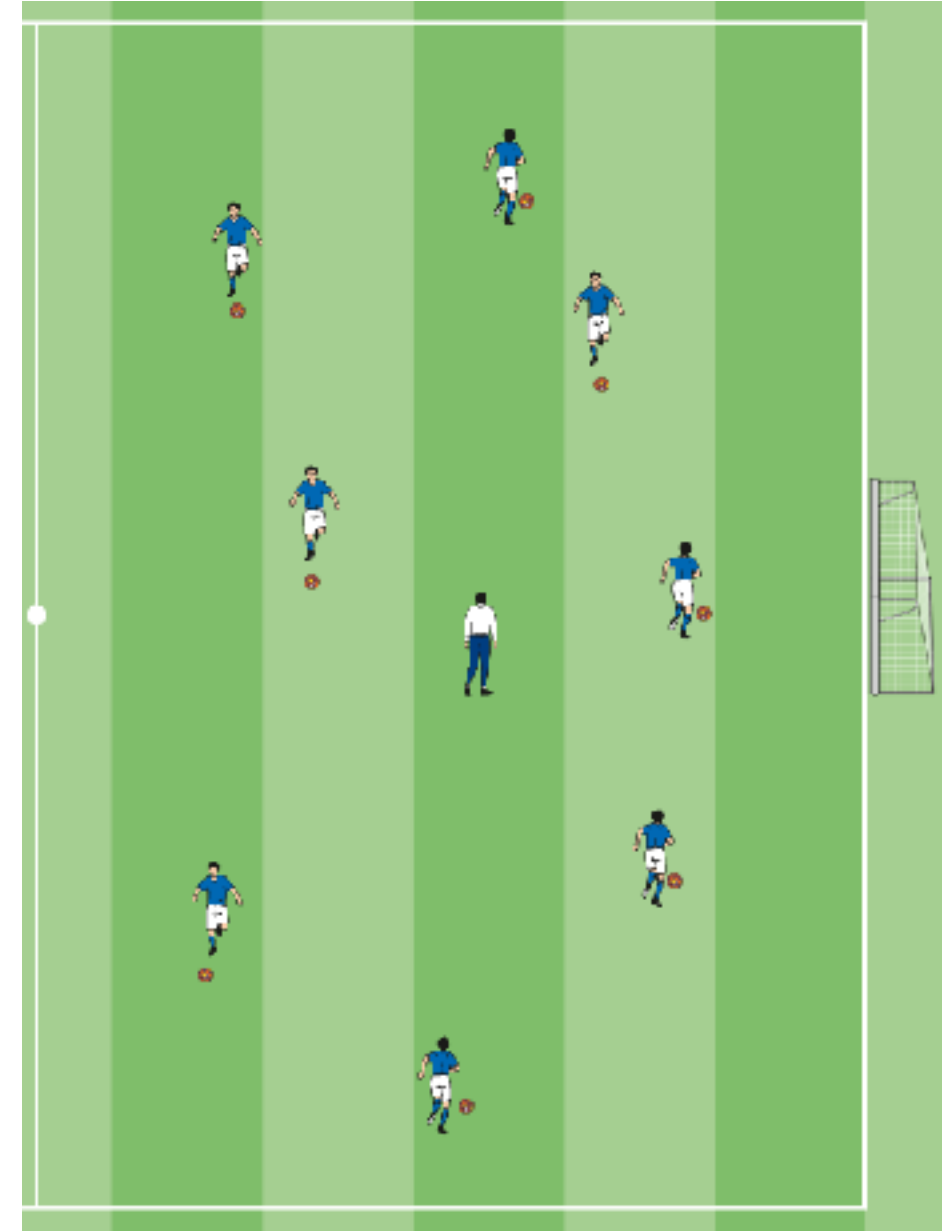
Practice Activity: Sharks and Minnows

- Everyone gets a ball and lines up on one end of the field or sideline (recommend going side to side instead of goal to midfield).
- Put a line of cones about 5 feet behind both lines they are dribbling to/from to form “end zones” that the players are trying to reach. The reason for the end zone is to help teach them to not just boot the ball all the way across the line, but to dribble it, keep it controlled, and stop it in the end zone.
- The coach starts as the shark in the middle.
- The object is to dribble to the opposite end zone without letting the shark get your ball. Let them go 1-2 rounds without getting a ball, and then get someone the next time. If a player dribbles out of bounds or out the back of the end zone, they are a shark next round as well.
- After touching their ball, that player is out for that round, and then joins as a shark the next round. Do this until no one is left. After there are 1-2 kid sharks, the coach doesn't need to be a shark.
- They usually like this one and in the games you can remind them to "be a shark" and get the ball from the other team instead of running back towards their goal.



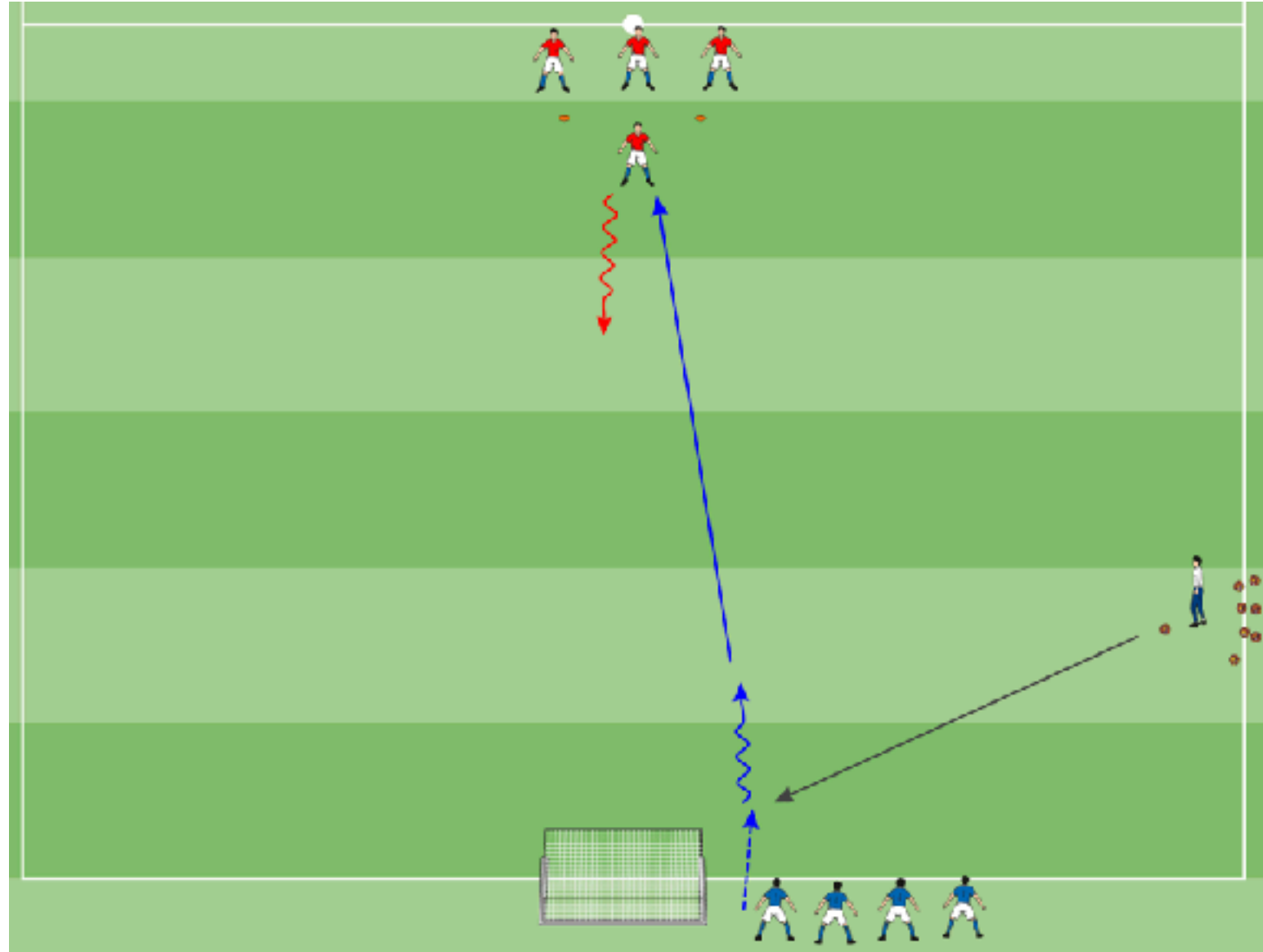
Practice Activity: Freeze Tag

- Start with the coach as "it" and the players dribbling around one half (must stay in bounds or they are frozen).
- Tag them by touching their ball. Once tagged, players have to put their hands on their head and spread their feet (making a goal with their legs).
- To get unfrozen, teammates have to kick a ball through the "goal."
- Run around catching different kids for a while and try and get them all at the end, or tell them you can't catch them all and they win.
- Subsequent rounds can have two players start as "it" instead of the coach.
- This game teaches them to look up as they are dribbling to avoid whoever is "it" and running into each other.
- Key points: Head up, small touches (using ball mastery inside/outside dribbling and hook turns), change of direction, shielding



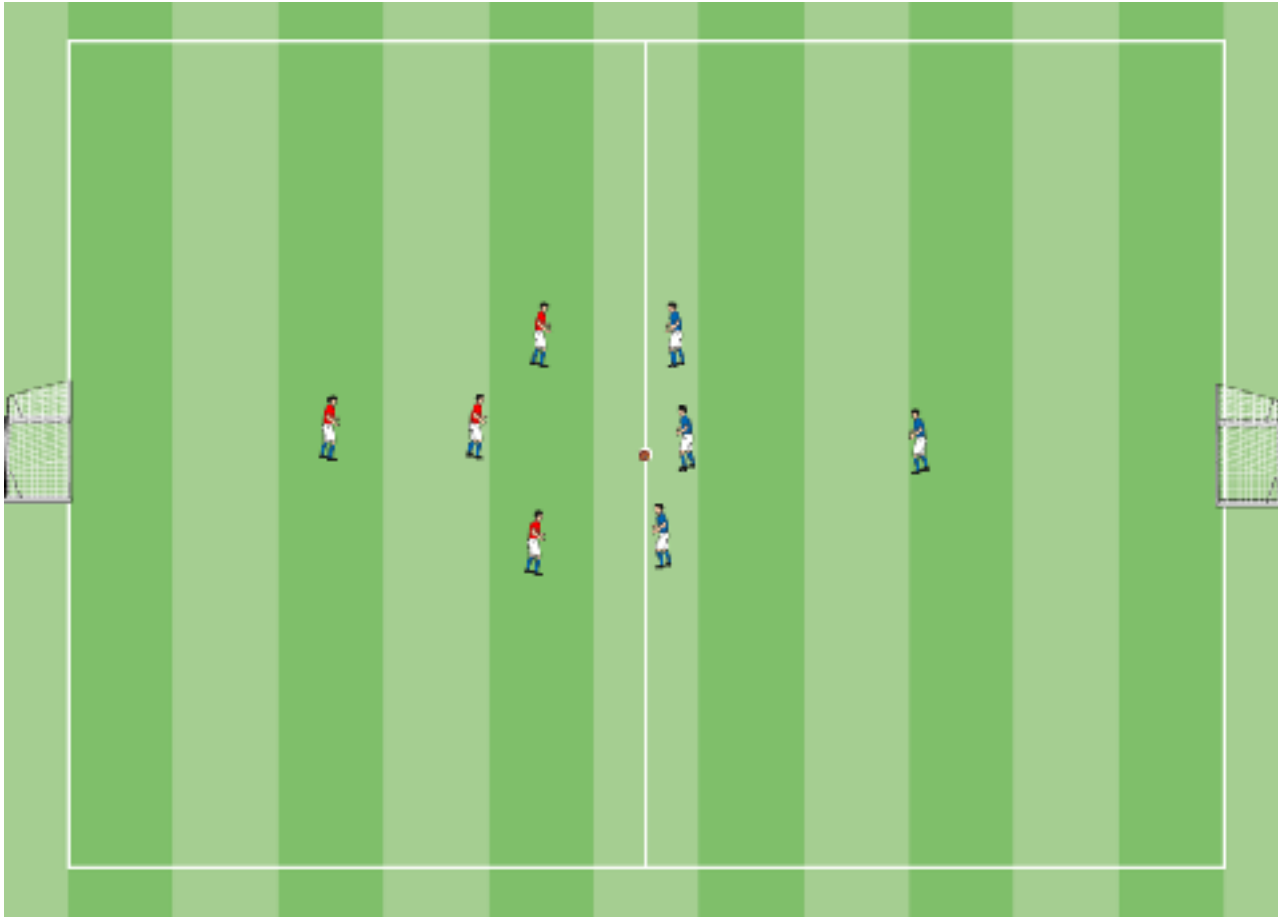
Practice Activity: 1v1

- Divide the kids into two groups, defenders by the goal, attackers by the half line
- Have the coach start with the balls along the sideline
- The coach calls out a defender and plays the ball in front of the net. The defender runs forward to receive it, takes a few small dribbles forward and then passes to the attacker at midfield. The attacker settles the ball and then goes 1v1 against the defender.
- The attacker tries to score, the defender tries to win the ball and score/pass the ball through the cone goal to the waiting attackers who are standing behind it.
- Let each player rotate through 2-3 times and then swap the attackers/defenders and repeat.
- Key points: Soft touch to receive ball (keep it close), solid pass to the attacker, and then have the attacker use change of speed and/or direction to try and get by the defender
- Progression 1: Make it a 2v1 by having two attackers.



Play 2

- Play as close to a full sided game as field availability/number of players allows
- Focus on key phrases/points from earlier in the practice to reinforce them
- Take a halftime break for the kids to get water and ask them 2-3 guided questions about the concepts, then play the second half to finish practice



Ex. Guided questions for “halftime” of Play 2

Q: How do you keep the ball close?

A: Be gentle/soft with the ball

Q: How do you dribble faster?

A: Use harder touches

Q: What’s the difference between dribbling forward and dribbling to the side?

A: You have to use a different part of the foot

Sample U6 Season Plan

- Week 1: Objective- Meet new friends, have fun with lots of dribbling
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (Inside/outside dribbling and toe taps), Practice Activity (red light/green light), Play 2
- Week 2: Objective- To dribble past opponents, create chances, and score
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling and toe taps), Practice Activity (sharks and minnows), Play 2
- Week 3: Objective- To change directions/protect the ball
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling, toe taps, inside hook turn), Practice Activity (freeze tag), Play 2
- Week 4: Objective- To score goals
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling, toe taps, inside hook turn), Practice Activity (1v1), Play 2
- Week 5: Objective- To change directions and get away from pressure
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling, toe taps, outside hook turn), Practice Activity (red light/green light), Play 2
- Week 6: Objective- To dribble past opponents, create chances, and score
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling, toe taps, outside hook turn), Practice Activity (sharks and minnows), Play 2
- Week 7: Objective- To change directions/protect the ball
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (Any combination), Practice Activity (freeze tag), Play 2
- Week 8: Objective- To score goals
 - Play 1, Ball Mastery (I/O dribbling, toe taps, inside hook turn), Practice Activity (1v1), Play 2
- Week 9: Objective- Have fun at the last week of practice!
 - Last practice: Play 1, Ball Mastery (kids choice), kids vs. parents scrimmage

Coaching Games

- Don't be a puppet master and constantly direct the kids where to go/what to do (you'll have to sometime, but let them learn through playing)
- Use key words/phrases from practices to help them during the game, but let them make decisions and have fun!
- Don't park a kid in front of the goal all game. It's ok to try and get them to understand the concept of defending by having a player drop back a little, but not by standing two feet in front of the goal when the ball is on the other half.
 - At the U6 age group, normally we don't focus on defending as a position. Encourage all kids to try and be involved in the play, and that means being part of the "herd" that moves around the field wherever the ball is. We want kids to be aggressive and try and get the ball.
- Halftime
 1. Tell me something you did well
 2. Can we improve one thing in the second half? Think about (a concept from practice)...
 3. Team cheer
- End of game
 1. Positive reinforcement of things they did well, give each kid a specific area they did well
 2. Team cheer
 3. Snacks
 4. Acknowledge and thank the parents

Final Thoughts

- The overall intent of this curriculum pack is to help provide a 90% solution for coaches that provides a fun and focused soccer experience for the kids in our program. You are not required to follow it exactly, but whatever you do, please try and make sure you are working towards the U6 player development objectives of learning ball mastery, learning how to change directions, and having fun.
- When working with young kids, patience and flexibility are key qualities needed by our coaches. Adjust things as needed, cross talk with other coaches, and reach out to our coaching director with any questions or feedback.
- There are tons of great resources online for learning more about coaching
 - US Grassroots online 4v4 course
 - It's about two hours and cost \$25, which the board will refund once you complete it
 - <https://learning.ussoccer.com/coach/courses/available/26/details/10386>
 - The Coaching Manual
 - Awesome resource from England that has tons of material (requires a paid membership for the full features), but their youtube channel has a lot of good (free) videos as well
 - <https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/>
 - <https://www.youtube.com/@TheCoachingManual/videos>
- Feel free to share this curriculum pack or other resources you plan on using with your team parents. If there are specific activities (like the ball mastery ones) that have good and quick videos, ask them to show their kids. That may help them when it comes time to practice, and some kids may start practicing on their own at home once shown how to do these activities.