



Coach's Season Handbook

A guide to Play-Practice-Play

DIVISION C

Principles of this Coaching Handbook

This handbook is designed to help coaches run **simple, effective, and engaging soccer practices** that maximize **player development and enjoyment**.

Every session follows the **Play-Practice-Play (PPP) model**, ensuring players **learn through the game** while getting plenty of **touches on the ball**.

1. Engage Everyone, Actively

- ✓ No standing in lines—everyone should be involved and moving at all times.
- ✓ Small-sided games and game-like activities ensure lots of touches on the ball.

2. Make It Fun

- ✓ If the kids are smiling, they're learning.
- ✓ Practices should be high-energy and engaging, not repetitive and boring.

3. Keep It Age-Appropriate

- ✓ Younger players focus on fun, coordination, and confidence.
- ✓ Older players develop technical skills, tactics, and decision-making.

4. Use Game-Like Scenarios

- ✓ Players learn best through playing, not through isolated drills.
- ✓ Every session starts and ends with small-sided games that mirror real soccer situations.

5. Build Steady Progression, Reinforced Over Time

- ✓ Skills and concepts build week over week, reinforcing prior learning.
- ✓ Sessions follow a logical flow, so players improve consistently.

6. Make It Easy for Coaches to Implement

- ✓ Each session is simple, clear, and structured for easy execution.
- ✓ Coaches don't need to reinvent the wheel—just follow the plan and adapt as needed.

Age-Appropriate Development

Division C (1st-2nd Grade / U7-U9)

Session Duration: 80 Minutes

General Developmental Focus

Players begin to develop **greater ball control and directional awareness**. Small-group activities should emphasize **decision-making and problem-solving** in game-like situations.

Specific Skills to Develop

1. **Dribbling with purpose** – changing pace and direction with control
2. **Short, accurate passing** – using both feet where possible
3. **Basic defensive positioning** – understanding "staying between the attacker and the goal"
4. **Shooting technique** – simple mechanics of striking the ball
5. **Small-group teamwork** – supporting teammates in attack and defense

Coaching Tips for This Age Group

- Keep them active** – minimize standing around, maximize time on the ball.
- Ask questions** – encourage players to think and problem-solve.
- Reinforce good habits** – praise correct technique over speed or power.
- Balance fun with structure** – introduce small-sided games for learning.

Session Structure: Play-Practice-Play

The **Play-Practice-Play** model is designed to engage players in a **game-centered learning approach**. This method ensures that players spend as much time as possible **with the ball at their feet**, making decisions in realistic game situations.

Each practice is structured into three phases:

1. Play (Small-Sided Games) – Opening Phase (30%)

- **Purpose:** Immediately engage players in a game-like scenario.
- **Format:** Small-sided games (e.g., 3v3, 4v4, 5v5) with minimal instruction.
- **Coach's Role:** Observe and identify key focus areas for the session.

2. Practice (Skill Focus) – Development Phase (40%)

- **Purpose:** Improve specific technical or tactical skills in a structured environment.
- **Format:** Individual, partner, or small-group activities that reinforce session objectives.
- **Coach's Role:** Provide guided instruction, demonstrations, and constructive feedback.

3. Play (Game w/ Learning Emphasis) – Closing Phase (30%)

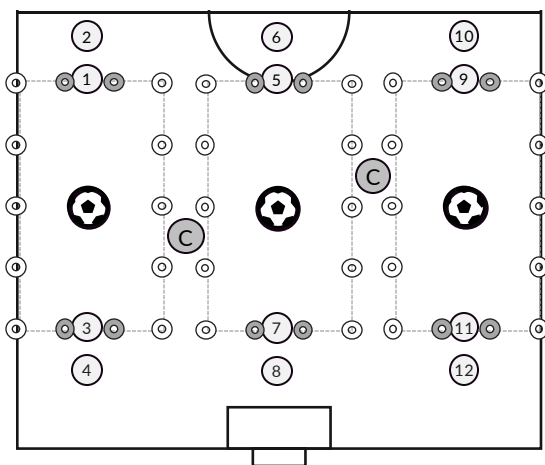
- **Purpose:** Reinforce the skills practiced in a game scenario.
- **Format:** Small-sided or modified full-field games with guided challenges.
- **Coach's Role:** Encourage players to apply learned skills while letting them play freely.

Session Structure: Small-Sided Games

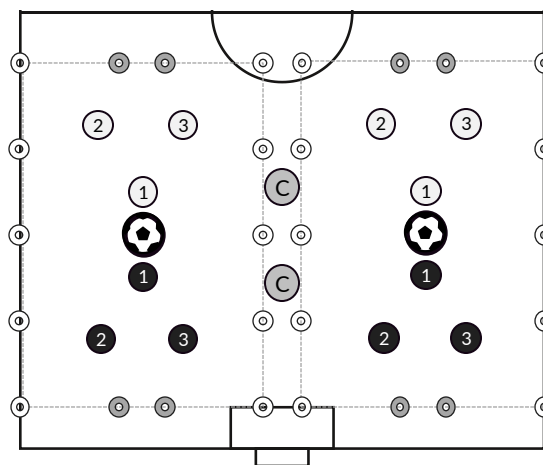
Small-sided games (e.g., 2v2, 3v3, etc.) are a core part of Play-Practice-Play because they **increase player engagement, decision-making, and touches on the ball**. These games replicate real match situations while ensuring that each player has more opportunities to develop skills in an **active, fast-paced environment**.

Small-sided games typically involve setting up smaller areas of play with boundaries and goals.

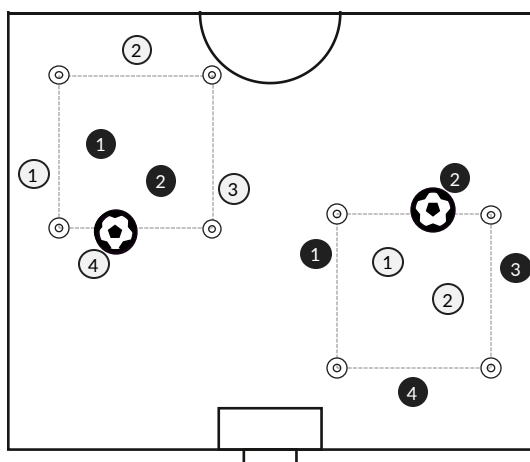
1 vs 1



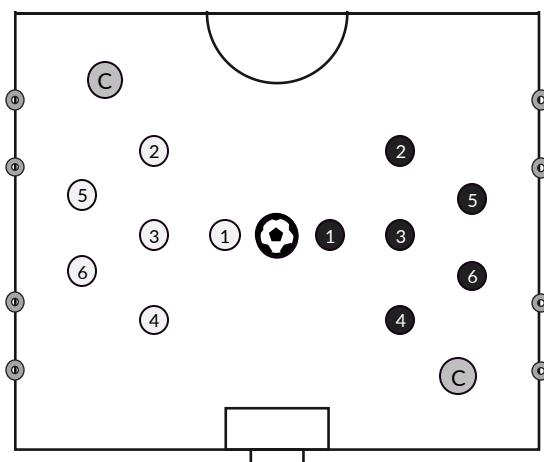
3 vs 3



Rondo 4 vs 2



6 vs 6 w/ 4 goals



Full-Season Practice Plan

Division C (1st–2nd Grade / U7-U9)

This table provides an **overview of the full-season practice plan**, outlining key areas of focus and associated drills for each session. Each practice follows the **Play-Practice-Play (PPP) model**, ensuring that players develop skills in a game-like environment.

Practice #	Focus	Drills & Activities
1	Dribbling & Ball Control	Dribbling Challenges, Shielding in Pairs
2	Short Passing	Partner Passing, Passing Gates, Pass & Move
3	Power Kicking & Shooting	1v1 Quick Fire, E2E Power Kicks, Target Practice, Rolling Ball Shot
4	Game Restarts	Throw-ins, Goal Kicks, Kick-offs

Each session builds on previous practices, reinforcing key skills while introducing new challenges. Coaches should adjust drills based on player development and engagement.

Practice 1 | Dribbling & Ball Control

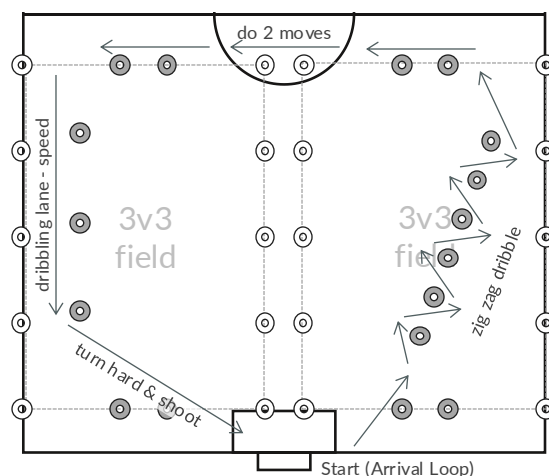
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5 min **Arrival Loop (Dribble & Shoot)**

1. Dribble through a **cone course**
2. Finish with a **shot on goal**
3. Retrieve the ball, repeat

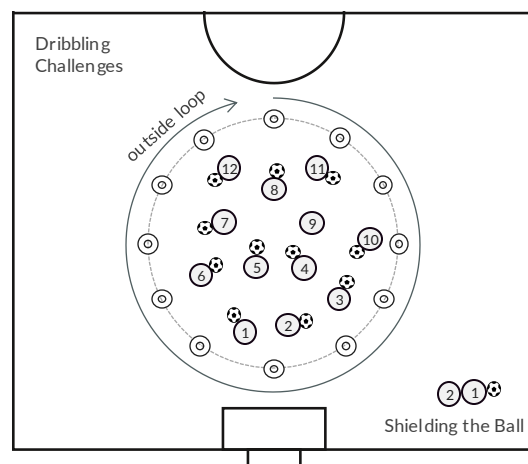
20 min **Play: 3v3 (2 fields)**

→ Small-sided free play. Encouragement.



20 min **Dribbling Challenges**

1. **Outside circle loop**, stop, change directions – slow down, speed up
2. **Inside circle** – avoid other players – challenge with various moves
3. **Traffic jam** – “red light, green light” inside the circle, continue avoiding other players – speed and direction changes

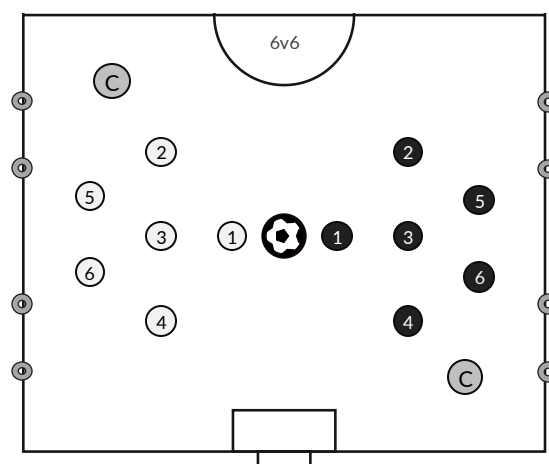


10 min **Shielding the Ball**

1. Get into **pairs**, 1 ball per pair
2. 1 partner **controls ball** with foot and **protects ball with body** – in place
3. Other player puts **pressure** on their partner
4. Change roles

25 min **Play: 6v6**

→ Encourage application of dribbling



Practice 2 | Short Passing

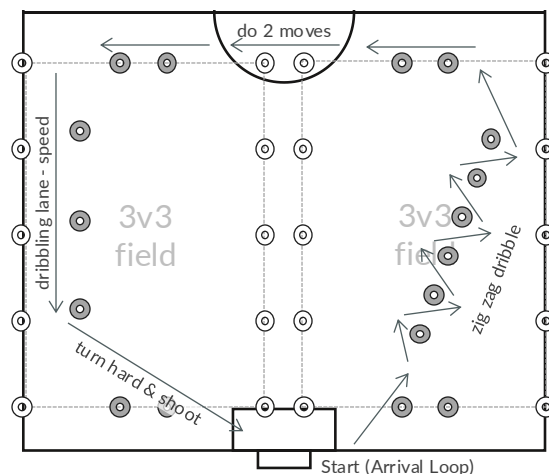
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5 min Arrival Loop (Dribble & Shoot)

1. Dribble through a **cone course**
2. Finish with a **shot on goal**
3. Retrieve the ball, repeat

20 min Play: 3v3 (2 fields)

→ Small-sided free play. Encouragement.

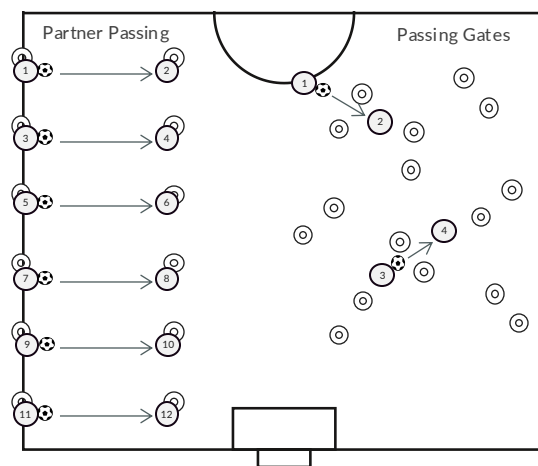


10 min Partner Passing

1. 1 ball per pair, **inside of foot** passing
2. **2-touch**, trap then pass
3. Count consecutive passes under control

10 min Passing Gates

1. Same pairs, adding movement and targets – the gates
2. Pairs **pass the ball through each gate**
3. Only **clean passes** count – doesn't touch gate and received under control
4. Can't use same gate twice in a row

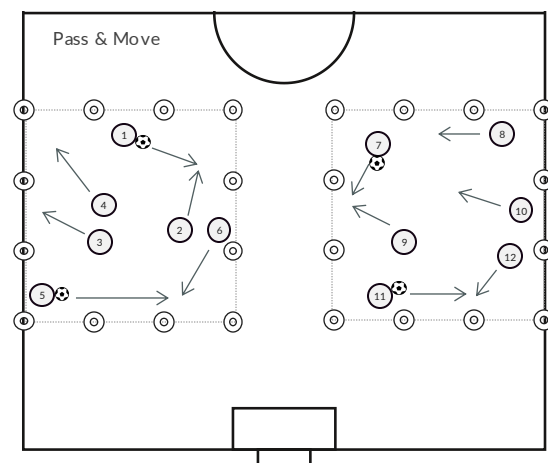


10 min Pass & Move

1. Player with ball passes to someone moving into space
2. Players without ball move into space to receive a pass

25 min Play: 6v6

→ Encourage application of passing



Practice 3 | Power Kicking & Shooting

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5 min Arrival Loop (Dribble & Shoot)

1. Dribble through a **cone course**
2. Finish with a **power shot** on goal
3. Retrieve the ball, repeat

20 min Play: 1v1 Quick Fire (3 fields)

1. Player at one end **passes** to player at other end to start, then defends
2. Receiving player **rapidly attacks and shoots** - turn is done after ball scores or goes out
3. Rotate players, each should rest between

10 min End to End (E2E) Power Kicks

1. Demonstrate kick - strike ball w/ laces
2. All players start at end line, kick as far as they can, kick again until at midfield
3. Try for fewest kicks. Turn, repeat back.

10 min Target Practice

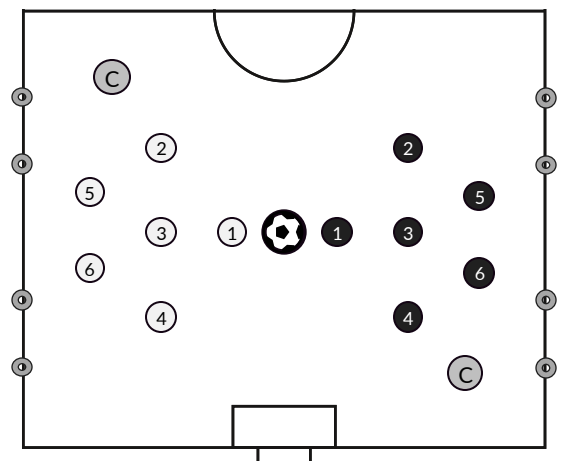
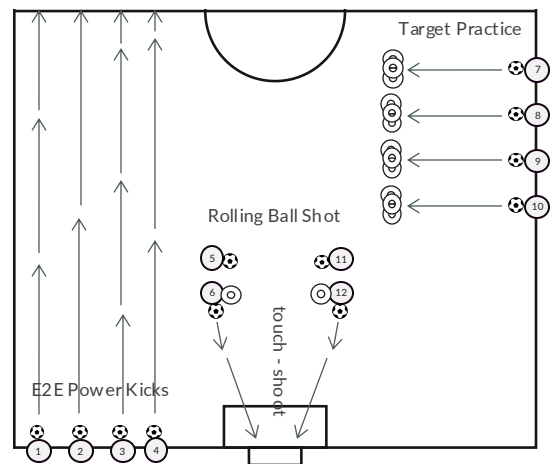
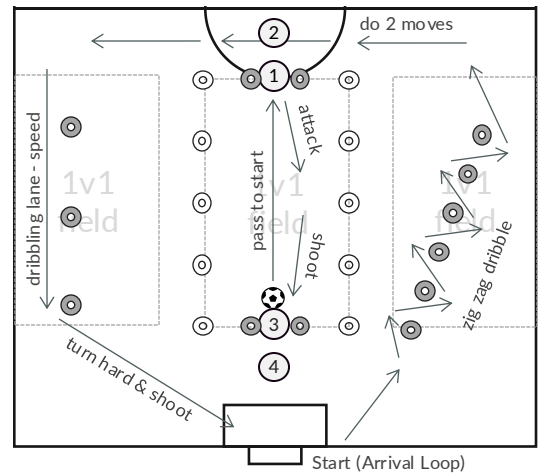
1. Tall or stacked cones 12 yards out
2. Players do laced kick from line and try to knock over the targets

10 min Rolling Ball Shot

1. Touch ball forward, shoot while rolling

25 min Play: 6v6

→ Encourage application of shooting



Practice 4 | Game Restarts

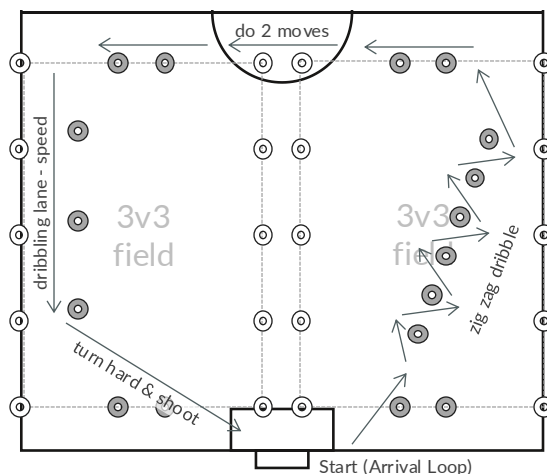
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5 min Arrival Loop (Dribble & Shoot)

1. Dribble through a **cone course**
2. Finish with a **shot on goal**
3. Retrieve the ball, repeat

20 min Play: 3v3 (2 fields)

→Small-sided free play. Encouragement.

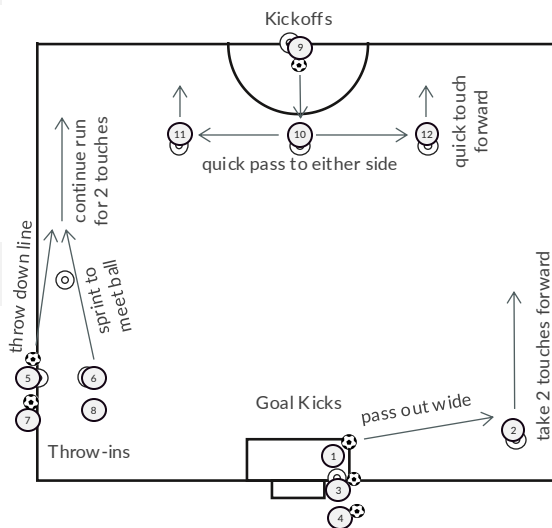


10 min Throw-ins

1. 1 player outside field w/ ball, 2nd player on field nearby
2. Player w/ ball picks up and throws down line, 2nd player times run

10 min Kick-offs

1. Kickoff to player straight behind
2. Quick pass to wide teammate
3. Immediate touch forward (attack-like)

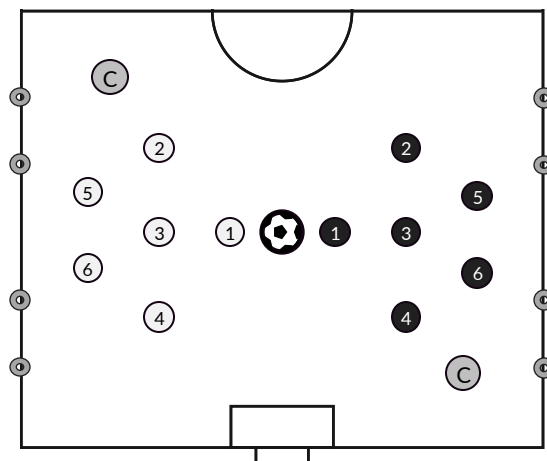


10 min Goal Kicks

1. Emphasis on getting ball wide, not down the middle
2. Immediate action forward upon receipt

25 min Play: 6v6

- Encourage application of restarts
- Get ball out wide, then down the line



Implementation Tips

Adjusting on the Fly

If drills take longer than planned – **that's okay**

- ❑ Just **drop a drill** or **shorten the final Play phase** to keep things on track

When Energy Dips

If players seem tired, distracted, or disengaged:

- ❑ Take a **quick water break and reset**
- ❑ Lighten things up with an **energizer game**

Role Splitting

One coach can **organize & demo each segment**, while the other:

1. Focuses on **individual encouragement**
2. Pulls players aside for **quick support**
3. Manages **other setup needs**

Energizers that kids love:

- ✓ Ships Across the Ocean
- ✓ Red Light, Green Light
- ✓ Sharks and Minnows
- ✓ Clean Your Backyard
- ✓ Freeze Tag (with a Ball)

Game Day Warm-ups

There are 20 minute allocated to pre-game time

- The **arrival loop** is a great way for players to engage quickly and get lots of touches on the ball
- There's typically time to run **one drill** before the game – use this to reinforce skills the team may need to focus on

Have Fun With It!

Your enjoyment will be contagious