



Coaching Manual
E-F Division

Principles of EPSA Coaching

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 focused drills 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 ends with small-sided games that mirror real soccer situations.

5. 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. Easy 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 E-F

Session Duration: 100 Minutes

General Developmental Focus

Players are developing basic coordination, balance, and comfort with the ball at their feet. The focus moves from fun and engagement to increased skill development.

Specific Skills to Develop

Basic dribbling – moving the ball with different parts of the foot

Balance and coordination – running, stopping, changing direction

Basic control – stopping the ball with feet

Spatial awareness – recognizing field boundaries

Engaging with teammates – playing and sharing the ball

Coaching Tips for This Age Group

Encourage movement – no waiting in lines, maximize touches.

Limit tactical coaching – just let them play and explore.

Praise effort and participation over performance.

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 – Opening Phase (33%)

- Typically 3 vs 3 small-sided games.
- Two games/team (for total of 12 players)
- Minimal instruction.
- Purpose: Immediate player engagement.
- If an odd # of players, can play 2 vs 2 with all time offense (unique pennie color)
- Coach's Role: Observe and identify key focus areas for the session.

2. Practice (Skill Focus) – Development Phase (33%)

- Typically 2 drills (ie dribble, passing, or shooting drills).
- Purpose: Improve technical skills.
- Format: Individual, partner, or small-group activities that reinforce session objectives.
- Coach's Role: Provide guided instruction, demonstrations, and constructive feedback.

3. Play – Closing Phase (33%)

- Typically 6 vs 6 small-sided game.
- If odd # of players, can play 5 vs 5 with an all-time offense (unique color pennie)
- Purpose: Reinforce the skills practiced in a game scenario.
- Coach's Role: Encourage players to apply learned skills while letting them play freely.
- Minimal coaching – can say “two-touch soccer”, “heads-up”, or “watch your spacing”

Values

- Start practices discussing respect (teammates, coaches, other team, referees, parents...)
- Praise effort and participation over performance. (nice hustle, not nice goal...)
- Good sportsmanship (players, coaches, parents)
- Equal playing time
- Rotate positions (ideally, goalkeeper is tricky)
- Team play
 - Target everyone scores
 - Challenge 'star' players to assist - they can't shoot until others score.
- Player ownership - after drills, have 2 kids give feedback(improv.) to team.

Coaching Tips

- Review training plan in advance
- Bring energy
- Kids have short attention span – keep instructions & feedback short
- Make it fun, emphasize positive aspects/achievements
- Coach communication
- Say 'Heads up', (ie not 'shoot' or 'pass to..' specific player)
 - Target – we want players communicating with each other
- Highlight kids (parents) that bring snacks (E Division)
- Emphasize **2-touch** soccer
 - 1st touch = control ball
 - 2nd touch = dribble or pass ball

Team goals

- Players use feet only once practice begins (no hands).
- Parent involvement encouraged (req'd for volunteer org) – see above
- Rotate captains
- Coaches set out cones, players always pick up cones (quickly – count down 5,4,3,2,1)
- Every player scores (target)
- End of games - Players run/shake parents hands/fist bump (E division)

Talking to parents

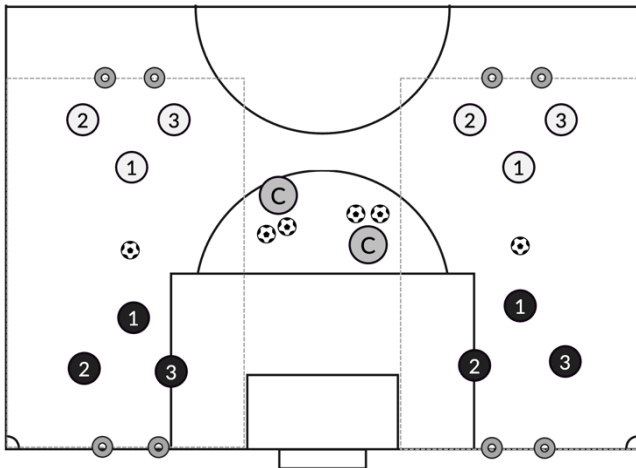
- Strongly recommended at start of 1st practice – especially E division.
- Address parents at start of first practice & end of year
- Tell parents (optional):
- Great choice to register
 - Highlight benefits of soccer to their child (fun, make friends, learn skill, improve physical fitness, learn teamwork, increase confidence, develop sense of self/capabilities)
- We are volunteer coaches
- **Soccer starts at home**
 - EPSA time is rather short, skill development will occur largely at home, ball for basement play area (ex.). Prep for school, prep for sports.
- Parents NEED to contribute:
 - Encourage parents to coordinate drink/treat schedule (if interest)
 - Ask parents to raise hand when sideline referees are needed
 - Volunteer for EPSA organization (volunteer-run organization / many needs)

Session Structure: Small-Sided Games

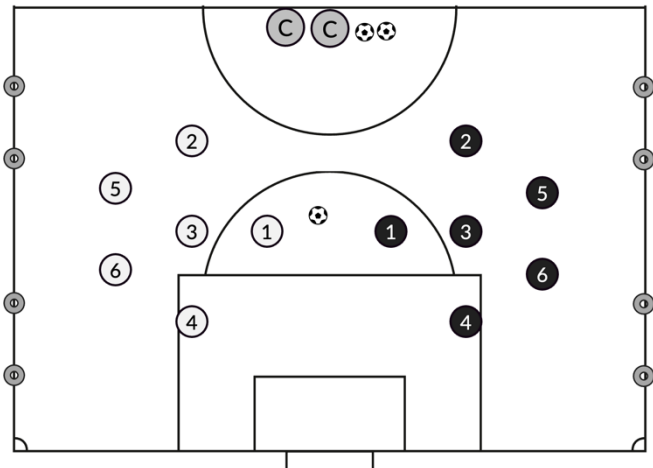
Small-sided games (e.g., 2v2, 3v3, etc.) are a core part of Play-Practice-Play because they **increase player engagement, decision-making, and touches on the ball**. These games replicate real match situations while ensuring that each player has more opportunities to develop skills in an **active, fast-paced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

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

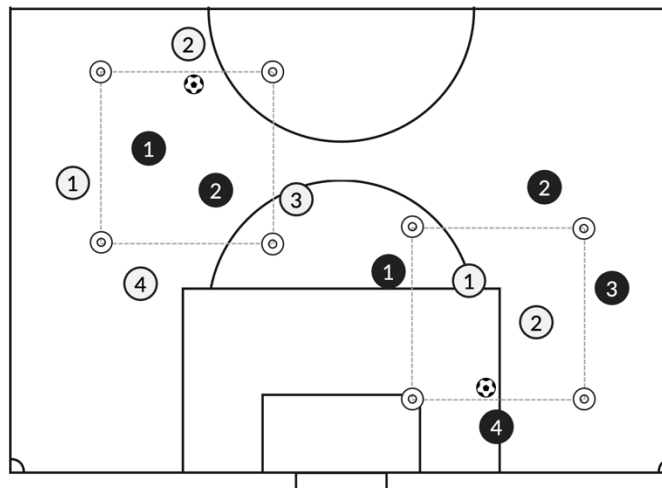
3 vs 3



6 vs 6 w/ 4 goals



Rondo 4 vs 2



Session 1 – Dribbling & Shooting

10 min Intros

Coaches and players – want everyone to be friends & talk...

30 min Play

3v3 small sided games

If one group has extra players (3v2) have one be all-time offense.

- This is easier if you give them the goalie pennie.

Goal size: 5 yds apart, to encourage scoring. Adjust goal size as appropriate.

See diagram on previous page

30 min Practice

Drill 1

1:1 passing drill

Players ~ 10 yards apart

Emphasize **2-touch** soccer

1st touch = receive & control ball (w/inside of foot)

2nd touch = pass ball (or dribble)

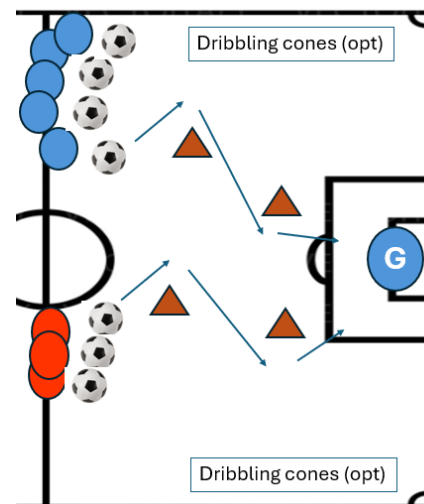
Drill 2

Dribble & shoot

Split team into two lines near midfield

Dribble between 2 cones & shoot.

Optional – have cones to dribble through on edge of field, on way back to midfield.



30 min Play

6v6 small sided game

Goal size: 5 yds apart, to encourage scoring. Adjust goal size as appropriate.

See diagram on previous page

Session 2 – Passing & Receiving

30 min Play

3v3 small sided games

30 min Practice

Drill 1

Triangle passing drill

Cones ~ 20 yards apart

Emphasize **2-touch** soccer

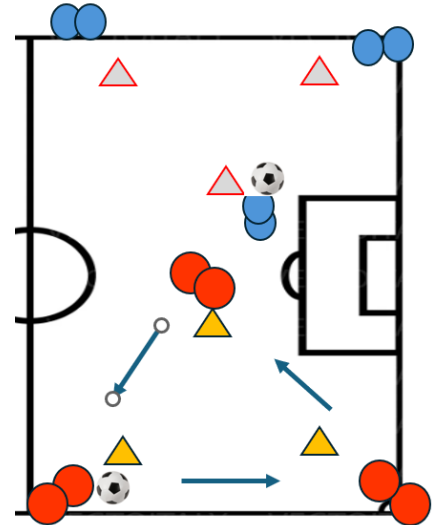
1st touch = trap & control ball

2nd touch = dribble or pass ball

Drill 2

Dribble & shoot

Same as session 1



30 min Play

6v6 small-sided game

Session 3

30 min Play

3v3 small sided games

30 min Practice

Drill 1

1:1 snake passing drill

Cones ~20 yds apart

Player with ball, dribbles from cone halfway to other cone, then passes to teammate (@ other cone).

The player that just passed goes to back of the line.

3-4 players/line

Drill 2

Dribble & shoot

Same as session 1

30 min Play

6v6 small-sided game

Can swap 6 players to play against other team sharing field

Session 4

30 min **Play**

3v3 small sided games

30 min **Practice**

Drill 1

Triangle dribble & pass

Three cones in triangle, each ~15-20 yds away from each other

Drill 2

Dribble & shoot

Same as session 1

30 min **Play**

6v6 small-sided game

Can swap 6 players to play against other team sharing field