

# Pottsgrove Soccer Club

[www.PottsgroveSoccer.com](http://www.PottsgroveSoccer.com)

## U4 Coaching Manual



Creating a Successful U4 Soccer  
Season!

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## **Congratulations! (or “What, me coach?)**

Congratulations! It seems that you have volunteered, or perhaps been asked, convinced, or maybe even coerced into coaching U4 soccer! This guide will provide you with everything you need to prepare yourself to create a successful season whether a first time coach or a seasoned veteran.

The Pottsgrove Soccer Family greatly appreciates you pledging your time and dedication as a coach in our club. As a coach you are given a great opportunity to create life-long memories for a group of young athletes and their parents and teach them the “beautiful game” of soccer. This is not a journey for the faint of heart or those who are only half committed to parenting and coaching. This is a journey for those who are looking to make a positive difference in the lives of their child and/or the children of others. Trust me you will be greatly rewarded by the smiles and energy of your players as they rapidly improve their skills and have fun throughout the season.

Using this manual and the additional aids/info provided by PSC as your guide, we will give you insight, advice, detailed practice plans, and tips and tricks to teach along the way to ensure your season is a smashing success. Have fun, have passion for your team, stay open when talking with the parents, and keep focused on the big picture – instilling a passion and love for the game of soccer in each team member!

## **Pottsgrove Soccer Club Player Development Philosophy**

At Pottsgrove Soccer, we stress a player-centered developmental approach. Our philosophy is to create an environment at the early age groups where players can begin to develop an individual mastery of the ball and the creativity that comes with it. Coaches act as a guide to instill a passion for the game of soccer, but allow each player to develop the key technical soccer skills through small sided games and fun interactive training sessions. Each session is geared around maximizing the number of touches of each player. Each touch of the ball is a learning experience toward the player’s development and ball mastery. This approach is intended to mimic in a more organized fashion the development of players in some of the powerhouse soccer nations around the world.

Many of the dominate soccer nations such as Brazil and Argentina have very little organized soccer programs for youth. Kids grow up playing soccer in their yard, on the beach or in the street with little or no coaching because of their passion for the game. Players are left to their own desire and determination to develop their soccer skills. Through playing pick-up games and maximizing the number of touches with a soccer ball, youth in these countries develop a creativity and skillfulness with the ball revered around the world. Even with this less structured environment for development, Brazil and Argentina have arguably produced the 3 greatest players ever in soccer history in Pele, Maradona and Messi. By giving the players a similar safe environment to develop their skills, it promotes decision making and creativity by the individual player that many of the players in this part of the world possess.

To foster individual ball mastery and creativity within PSC, we have developed curriculums for each age level that support our philosophy. This was done to create uniformity across the coaching ranks in the club and make it easier for new coaches to join the coaching ranks. We believe with this approach Pottsgrove Soccer will continue to develop well rounded and creative soccer players as they progress through the ranks of the club and into high school and college.

## What Did I get Myself Into? (Understanding U4 Players)

It is important to understand at the outset that players coming to any sport prior to the age of 6 years old, in general, do not do so by their own choice. As a result, their coaches need to give them something about which to get excited. Further, at this age, learning to play soccer is secondary to most other things in their lives.

Some key characteristics you can expect from U4 players are as follows:

- Short attention span.
- Can attend to only one problem at a time.
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated.
- May or may not understand or remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for. We need to be patient and laugh with them as they get 'lost' on the field.
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Positive, positive, positive
- Need generous praise, and to play without pressure. No extrinsic rewards (trophies, medals, etc.) should be given for winning.
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates. Thus, a 3v3 game is, in reality, a 1 against 5 game because they all want the ball at the same time.
- Very individually oriented (me, mine, my).
- Constantly in motion, but with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop. They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly.
- Development for boys and girls are quite similar.
- Physical coordination limited. Eye-hand and eye-foot coordination is not developed. Need to explore qualities of a rolling ball.
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc.
- Catching or throwing skills not developed.
- Can balance on their "good foot".

Based on the characteristics of the U4 player there are some things you can expect to encounter as of coach of these players during your weekly sessions:

- Most players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- No matter how loud we shout, or how much we "practice" it, they cannot or will not pass the ball. So don't worry about it.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet.
- Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet.
- Don't even consider teaching positional play.
- Twenty seconds after the start of a game, every player will be within 5 yards of the ball.
- Several players will slap at the ball with their hands, or pick it up. Several parents will yell at them not to do that.
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player's attention.
- During a season, you will end up tying at least 40-50 shoelaces.
- They will do something that is absolutely hysterical. Make sure that you laugh!

With the above assumptions, let's look at some things that we can do to energize the U4 players, and, hopefully, get them to the point where they will enthusiastically initiate the sign up for next year.

- Each session will be geared around touching the ball as many times as possible. Basic movements such as running, skipping, hopping, etc. need to be emphasized. If these can be done while kicking, catching, rolling, or dribbling a ball... all the better.
- **NO LAPS, NO LECTURES, NO LINES** during practice sessions. You will lose your team if you follow this approach.
- Training should not last for more than one hour. This is primarily due to physical fatigue and attention span considerations.
- Have as many different kinds of activities ready as you can get into one hour. The emphasis must always be on FUN. If a drill is not working for the team, do not be afraid to change it up.
- Encourage your children to bring their own size 3 ball.
- Although your children may be very much the same age chronologically speaking, their physical and/or mental maturity will vary greatly. You need to be aware of this and plan your activities accordingly.
- Team play and passing is an alien concept to these players because they know that if they pass the ball, they may never get it back. In fact, they often will steal it from their own team-mates. So don't be concerned if they won't pass, just let them dribble to their heart's content.
- Plan for at least four 90 second drink breaks, especially in warmer weather. Their "cooling system" is not as efficient as in older players

Always remember that the #1 reason why the kids quit playing soccer by the age of 13 is in their words: "It wasn't fun anymore". Keep in your mind that the #1 reason why kids participate in organized youth soccer is: "To have fun!" To be successful as a coach at this level, continue to look for opportunities to make your practice fun in the eyes of your players. Don't be afraid to ask your players and parents what the kids like and dislike about practice and give them some input on which games are played at practice. Always have a positive fun attitude during practice and do not take yourself too seriously, and your team will have a fun season.

## Creating a "Successful" Season

"Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do. " - **Pele**

The key to creating a successful soccer season involves some introspection, goal setting, building positive relationships with parents and players and approaching every interaction with your team with a positive attitude.

## What Kind of Coach Do I Want to Be?

Before the season starts you should take some time to think about what type of coach you want to be. Do you want to be known as the intense coach constantly yelling at your players or a patient coach whose team showed growth throughout the year and always had fun. In "**The Coach's Guide to Soccer Success**" by **Jerry Macnamara** from [www.TotallySoccer.com](http://www.TotallySoccer.com), they outlined the traits of successful coaches. The traits are as follows:

- **Patience** - This is probably the most important characteristic. Let's face it, 12 active boys or girls together require a lot of attention. A good coach is one who doesn't expect spectacularly gifted angels on the field.
- **Tolerance** - This quality goes hand-in-hand with patience. Kids are going to be rowdy, or moody or lazy or any combination of the three. Tolerance takes the different mind-sets and turns the focus to the tasks at hand.

- **Respect** - In so many games Coaches, and sometimes parents, berate and belittle their players for making mistakes. Sometimes they go further and will criticize the referee and even opposing team members. Remember this is U-4 soccer, not the World Cup! A good Coach never singles out a child for making a mistake and he/she does not allow parents or the other team members to do so either.
- **Acceptance** - Children are all different. Despite the obviousness of this statement, it's easily forgotten in the heat of a match or training session. Each player has varied potential and skill levels. A good coach is one who recognizes each child as an individual and he/she encourages that child to perform at his/her very best level. Perfection is not required – many of the greatest goals ever scored have been mis-hits!
- **Love of Kids** - They have the energy and enthusiasm to make every practice and match a new experience for coaches and parents alike. Without their excitement and energy, sports would be dull and monotonous. They offer a day-to-day challenge for coaches, which are contagious and should be motivation for everyone involved in athletic sports at all levels.
- **Motivation** - Soccer can be viewed as simply 11 kids kicking a ball across the field, or it can be viewed as an opportunity for growth as an individual, Coach and member of a team. The true test lies in sparking a child's interest to learn and grow and keeping that spark alive each session. Learning is a life-long journey and training and matches should be no exceptions.
- **Good Sportsmanship** - Perhaps this should have been on top of the list as it is one of the key lessons to impart, but being toward the end does not lessen the importance. A good definition of sportsmanship is to teach kids to work together as a team in order to achieve a common goal. It also means teaching kids to respect other players as well as each other. Insults are not tolerated. Mistakes are team mistakes, and they are used as teaching tools for the next game.
- **Ability to Teach** - Sounds simple, right? It's not. How many times has a parent signed up a child for a sport, only to have a well-intentioned father decide to Coach, despite not knowing the first thing about the sport. They may or may not relate well to his players and may be instructing them in matters counterproductive to the team and the players. There is a huge difference between the team whose members do what is yelled at them, and the team whose members actually understand what to do and why. A good Coach teaches his players the basic fundamentals, explains concepts and enables his/her players to think logically when making a play and make their own decisions. (See Coaching your Own Kids p. )

Developing these traits throughout your coaching career will greatly increase your chances of success. At Pottsgrove Soccer, we take coaching development very seriously and will take every step to help you develop into a successful coach. We look to get detailed feedback from players and parents to ensure we are adhering to our philosophy of player development. It's important that we are creating a positive environment where our players are showing growth in their soccer skills and a burning passion for the game of soccer.

The greatest measure of your success as a coach is when you are out in the community do your players and parents recognize you and say “hi” or do they cross to the other side of the street. Winning at this level of youth soccer is how many of your players come back to play the next season.

## Goal Setting

Once you determine the type of coach you want to be, it is important that you define “success for the season by setting some goals for what you want to accomplish during the season and articulate these goals to your team and their parents. . Whether or not your season is successful will be determined by the goals you set at the beginning of the season, how well you communicate these goals, and how well you reinforce them during the course of the season. These goals should be clear in your mind. Each practice should intentionally focus on these goals, and the team parents should understand their part in achieving success. Some seasonal goals could be developed around the following areas:

1. For the kids to have an enjoyable experience
2. For the kids to learn some basic soccer skills and rules
3. For the kids to learn about being on a team
4. For the kids to learn about competing

It is recommended that you establish and communicate your goals early in the relationship with your team and the parents. This may seem like overkill for U4, but without you dictating a clear goal, many of your team parents (and therefore their children) will have slightly different objectives. Your degree of success whether actual or perceived, (and in this case, is there a difference?) will be tempered as a result. It is better to project a clear direction, and have the team parents on your side before going down this road together. Time and again I have seen coaches attempting to create an environment for “Little Johnny” to have fun, while “Johnny’s Dad” is on the sideline yelling his head off for Johnny to score, score, score (again!). Conversely, I have also seen coaches attempting to teach the useful skill of holding one’s position while “Johnny’s Mom” is yelling at him to “Run to the ball! Why are you just standing there?” It is much better to communicate your overall goals upfront then to battle with the parents all season. The parents will also be grateful as they have a better understanding of what you are trying to accomplish and a better appreciation of the skills their child is being taught.

## Communicating with the Parents

As soon as you receive your roster from our club, you should make initial contact with the parents. Focus on the following at your initial conversation w/ parents.

- 1) Introduce yourself,
- 2) Establish the appropriate means of communication (such as appropriate email address and cell phone numbers)
- 3) Give an expectation of when and where practices will be held.
- 4) Communicate about an initial meeting with the parents of your players prior to the first practice.

This initial discussion at parents meeting or via a phone call can go something like this:

“Hello, my name is Coach Bob, and I am with the Pottsgrove Soccer Club and I’ll be Little Johnny’s soccer coach this season. I just wanted to introduce myself and to let you know that we will begin having practices in about *three weeks* at the Gerald Richards Park on Buchert Rd at 12:30pm (or 2pm). The field schedules are not out yet, but I wanted to introduce myself and make sure I had your correct contact information. What is the best way to communicate with you?”

Once you establish the best means of communication with each parent. I recommend that you create your own “Distribution Group” to make a single shot email for each communication. If you have parents who regularly check emails, have smart phones, this will save you loads of time. PSC will provide you access to your roster with parent e-mail addresses, but it is recommended that you create your own distribution list and make sure you have the correct information for each parent.

As soon as you have your roster and a field schedule, you should write an e-mail to the parent to introduce the season. Below is an example of an introductory letter to your parents. This letter plays a key role in setting the right expectations for a successful season.

Dear Little Johnny and Family,

Congratulations, Little Johnny and Family, you are now a member of **U4 Team** and I am Bob, your coach for the season. I'm looking forward to a fun and rewarding season where we will learn and grow our soccer skills, learn more about the game of soccer and grow as a team.

My main objective will be for the kids to have fun and learn about being on a team. We will have practice and games on Sundays at 12:30pm at Gerald Richards Park every Sunday starting on 9/10 for 8 weeks. The U4 fields are located behind the snack bar.

At the U4 level we take an "academy style" approach where each training session is focused on player development playing small sided games and drills to introduce basic soccer skills and maximize the number of touches they get with the soccer ball. Players will rotate through different stations where expert coaches will conduct the games and drills. To begin to develop a synergy with the soccer ball, I would recommend each child have their own soccer ball at practice. If they don't have one, no worry I will bring a few extra. The regulation ball we will be using will be size 3. It will also be **required that your child have shin guards** for the games and practices. If they do not have shin guards they will not be able to play or practice. It is also required that they have no jewelry of any kind.

Cleats are great, but not mandatory. Just make sure they have athletic shoes in which to practice. Baseball cleats cannot be used for soccer because of the front toe cleat. Wearing baseball cleats for soccer can result in serious injury such as tearing up a knee or ankle. If you are unsure if the cleats you have for your child are appropriate, please do not hesitate to call me and we can discuss.

It is a requirement that the teams are on one side of the field and that parents are on the other side of the field. I'll need **at least** one or two parents to help 'manage' the bench during games and to participate in some of the games during practice sessions. If you don't volunteer, don't worry, I'll recruit you.

During the practices/games I would like each kid to have their own water bottle/container that is clearly marked or identified as their own. Also I would like to have a volunteer to be a team parent to organize a snack schedule for the season. I've provided a snack signup list that can be used by our Team Parent Volunteer to have each family sign up to provide a snack and drink following the games (i.e. granola bar, fruit, and a juice box, etc.)

Prior to the first practice, I would like to have a team meeting to set goals for the season, discuss my coaching philosophy and answer any questions you have about the season or Pottsgrove Soccer. We will have our meeting on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_ pm.

If you have any questions prior to the parents meeting, please do not hesitate to contact me at 555-1234 or at this e-mail address. I look forward to meeting everyone at the meeting and having a great soccer season.

Prior to the start of the season, it is highly recommended to have a meeting with your team. This will be an opportunity to explain to the parents your philosophy in detail, discuss your goals for the season and set your expectations with the parents. At the end of the manual on page 23 we have provided a sample agenda for a parent's meeting. Depending on uniform availability, this meeting may also be necessary to distribute uniforms to your teams. (See Parents' Meeting Agenda, p. 23)

## Our Curriculum and Training Sessions for the Season

Pottsgrove Soccer always strives to continually improve our player development model and ensure we are delivering a positive soccer experience for all of our members. For the U4 players we have developed a core curriculum and corresponding weekly training sessions to ensure our players are gaining exposure to the necessary technical skills needed to move to the next age levels in the club. Development as a player in soccer is a long process where the full development of a soccer player may not be realized until their late twenties. At the U4 level, we want to introduce the basic soccer skills and ignite a passion for soccer in each player. Basic technical skills such as dribbling, passing and shooting are introduced through small sided games. We also focus on physical development in the areas of speed, coordination, balance, and basic motor skills. The curriculum was based on the recommendations set forth in the US Soccer Curriculum revealed earlier this year (See Full Curriculum on pg 18).

To execute the curriculum through the club at the U4 level, we have introduced an academy approach to training. For each week of the season, a number of activities have been selected for the academy with our Director of Coaching. These activities will be based around a weekly focus on the key components of the curriculum. Each week, all U4 players will gather with our trainer at the center of the field to learn a specific skill and then break out into the teams to run the drills. Below outlines an example of a season's areas of focus:



WEEKS	Technique	Physical
1	Dribbling	Basic Motor Skills
2	Dribbling	Basic Motor Skills
3	Dribbling	Generic Speed & Agility
4	Ball Control	Perception & Awareness
5	Passing & Receiving	Perception & Awareness
6	Ball Control & Turning	Basic Motor Skills
7	Shooting & Running w/ Ball	Generic Speed & Agility
8	Shooting & Running w/ Ball	Perception & Awareness + Basic Motor Skills

Each training session will have the following elements:

- **WARM-UP (Ball Gymnastics/Beginning Juggling):** Each training session will begin with a brief warm-up activity in order to get the players thinking about soccer and to prepare them physically for the rest of the session. In the academy approach, all teams will participate in the warm-up activity. These activities will usually involve individual body activities that may or may not involve the ball. Static stretching is also appropriate at this time, again, hopefully done with the ball.
- **INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITIES (Skill Games: 2-3 per practice):** After the warm-up, teams will disperse to their designated field. The warm-up will be followed with some kind of individual activity run by one of the rotating coaches, not a real 1 v 1 game, but some kind of activity where players act as individuals in a game environment. During these activities it is important to keep players in motion at all times. Avoid having them wait in lines. These games will stress games of "inclusion" instead of games where the "loser sits".
- **PLAY THE GAME:** At the conclusion of the individual activities, a scrimmage game will be played. During the game, coaches should allow kids to play and develop their creativity with little coaching during the game.
- **WARM-DOWN:** Finish the session with a warm down. This may involve some more stretches to do with the ball. This is the time the coach should provide a re-cap of what you reviewed during the session. Also, we will give them some homework so that they practice on their own. Such as a ball trick or dribble move we would like to see them try to do, like, bounce it off their thigh and then catch it.

It is important to finish on time. This is especially essential if the players are really into it, if you stop at this point, you will get an enthusiastic return.

## Weekly Lesson Plans

The Age Group Coordinator will provide detailed weekly lesson plans based around the curriculum, so you can conduct an organized and consistent practice for the club. The plans will be developed around the key soccer elements that have been selected as a focus for the particular week. In addition, the coaches' disk provided will also have additional drills and practice plans that you can use as needed to keep the kids engaged. It's important each week to conduct your practice around the key teaching points for each week to ensure all our players learn the important techniques which are part of the curriculum and all players get a similar experience with the club.

## Tips and Tricks to Teach Along the Way

from [www.soccerlifelessons.com](http://www.soccerlifelessons.com)

These are some additional tips and tricks that will put your team in a position to score more goals than your opponent. I know, I know, it makes no difference at all who scores the most goals because there is no score keeping at this level; it is only about fun and developing the children's skills. That is true and I agree. But let's be honest, every coach, parent, and player, given the choice would have their team score more than the opponent's team even if there is no score being kept. So, in that thought, here are some tips and tricks that will help your team better learn to "compete".

### **"Flag your Goal"**

Get a brightly colored flag or mascot to hang on the goal that you are shooting at, preferably a 'fancy' flag with the team name and color on it or a stuffed animal representing the team. This helps your team immediately know which goal to shoot at!

### **"Cross-Over"**

Teach your team to "cross-over" in front of their opponent when their opponent has the ball. Often we see players at this age "run with" their opponent down the field as if they are just watching what is going to happen. Start with one player at the end line with the ball, the other player next to them. Say "go" and let them both start down the field, tell the player without the ball to "cross-over" in front of the path of the player with the ball so that they can take it from them. The player with the greater speed has an advantage of course, but having to dribble a ball at this age takes lots of speed away, so the idea of "crossing over" become effective. You may want to give the dribbler a slight head start.

### **"Outside and Down"**

Teach your team that the best route to the goal is not always a straight line. At this age it is almost always better to teach your kids to take the ball to the outside of the field, away from in front of your goal, then down the field, moving towards your goal only when you get on your opponents side of the field. This will teach them to move away from pressure. Your verbal cue for this is to tell them "outside and down". You'll have to show them and repeat this over and over during the Kick Off times of your practices. This one tip will be a great help. Outside and Down!

## End of the Season Awards

At the last practice session, it's recommended that you give out some type of award to the players for the season. You could ask the parents for a donation toward the award at the parent's meeting or during the season. There are a number of local businesses in Pottstown which supply trophies or you could order awards online @ [www.crownawards.com](http://www.crownawards.com) or another website. Please do not wait until the last week to provide awards because it usually takes a week or two to get the awards. When giving out awards be prepared to say something about each player. Suggestions for awards are:

- ☐ Best Defense
- ☐ Best Offense
- ☐ Most Aggressive
- ☐ Best Team Player
- ☐ Most Improved
- ☐ Most Fun Player
- ☐ Best Attitude
- ☐ Leadership Award
- ☐ Mr./Ms. Speed
- ☐ The Boot!
- ☐ Mr./Ms. Power
- ☐ The Man!
- ☐ Shot Maker
- ☐ The Wall!
- ☐ Primetime!
- ☐ Super Man / Super Woman
- ☐ Best All Around
- ☐ Most Smiles
- ☐ Most Laughs
- ☐ Most Goals
- ☐ Most Passes

## Common Sense Advice

- Always insist that a parent be close by and that you are able to contact them during practice and games in case of emergency. Keep a list of names and cell phone numbers in a "coach's bag" with you at each practice.
- Never put yourself in a position that you are alone with a child unless it is your own. This may seem like a strange recommendation, but in today's day and time, you should protect yourself with this rule. Related to this is to always have their own parent or guardian be responsible for any clothes or wardrobe changes, or bathroom issues.
- Follow the rules of our club. The club is there to support and protect you. It will always be in your interest to follow our rules. It will protect you and the club.
- When in doubt, call the experts – 911. Better safe than sorry.
- In case of inclement weather, it is usually best to just call the practice or game off. At this age level, it is much more about the experience of playing soccer than the competition, so make it fun for the kids, parents, and spectators and wait until a better day. There will be plenty of time in these kids' futures in which "the game will be played as scheduled".

## In Closing

We hope you will find the manual informative and helpful in creating a successful season for your team. In the appendix to follow you will find a collection of some helpful articles and excerpts that will help you grow as a coach and handle specific situations that may occur in the season or at some point in your coaching career. In the “Youth Soccer Coaching Manifesto” by Andre Botelho, a great summary of the coaching success principles is provided which we encourage you to employ as you embark on your coaching experience this season and throughout your coaching career to always create a great environment for your team. The principles are as follows:

1. You need to learn how to make and keep practice sessions fun and enjoyable for the kids, as this is the primary reason why youth soccer coaches fail.
2. Always remember that the #1 reason why 70% of the kids quit playing soccer by the age of 13 is in their words: “It wasn’t fun anymore”.
3. Keep in your mind that #1 reason why kids participate in organized youth soccer is: “To have fun!”
4. Survey your players regularly to find out how they feel about your work and implement some of their suggestions to improve your coaching sessions.
5. Attempt to develop your own coaching philosophy based on a strong foundation of integrity values, focused on player development and involvement of all players to ensure everyone has fun and feels integrated.
6. De-emphasize winning or losing and concentrate your efforts on getting 100% out of your players by making practice sessions enjoyable and fun.
7. Remember that the 3rd reason for kids quitting soccer is because the coach was a poor teacher. Seek a mentor or outside help to improve your coaching skills and keep yourself updated and well informed.
8. Lead by example and understand the roles and responsibilities of a youth soccer coach as you’ll tend to be the model for your players.
9. Use positive reinforcement and focus on the positive things or what your players did right, and always use a positive statement followed by a constructive criticism and end with another positive statement.

If you need additional assistance with coaching this year, please do not hesitate to contact our Director of Coaching or Julee Schirmacher, the U4/U6 coordinator. We are always available to answer questions and help solve any problems that come up. Good Luck with the season and remember to have fun!

# Appendix

## Cheat Sheet to Saying, “Great Job!” from the Soccer Classroom

The link to the document is at: <http://www.soccerclassroom.com/coaching-blog/a-soccer-coachs-cheat-sheet-to-saying-great-job/>

As soccer coaches, we’re always trying to provide inspiration and encouragement to our players. Unfortunately, we can end up sounding like a broken record. Finding the right words to individually and enthusiastically tell your players that they’re on the right track can be harder than you think. We prefer to mix a bit of humor into our encouragement as it brings a smile to player’s faces too. We’d love for you to add a comment at the bottom for the creative ways you tell your players, “Great Job!”

Here’s our Soccer Classroom Cheat Sheet to Saying, “Great Job!”

1. Now that’s what I’m talking about!
2. Atta [Boy/Girl]!
3. You got it – you got it!
4. That’s awesome
5. Spot on
6. Well done
7. Keep the pace
8. You’re thinking better than Einstein today
9. Great move – you should be on [Dancing with the Stars](#)
10. Way to go – even Simon would applaud you!
11. That’s A+ work today, [insert player name].
12. Board the plane because that’s first class!
13. Does anyone know this player? Because last week, [player name] couldn’t do this – well done!
14. Amazing everyone. Simply amazing.
15. Astonishing – Have you been practicing?
16. Incredible – that’s how to make it happen
17. Marvelous – I knew you could do it
18. Miraculous – I knew going to church Sunday would bring this team around. Thank you Jesus
19. Mind-blowing how fast you’re picking this up.
20. Astounding – I don’t believe what I just saw!
21. Wondrous – the Gods have touched upon your Golden Feet
22. Outstanding – we’re on the [path](#) to success today
23. Terrific – you’re smarter than a fifth grader
24. Stupendous – best work I’ve seen from this group
25. Superior work – do you think the other team is working this hard?
26. That’s the way – Uh huh, Uh huh – I like it – Uh huh, Uh huh!
27. That’s much, much better.
28. Keep working on it – you’re making phenomenal progress
29. I like it – that’s the way it’s supposed to be done!
30. Messi couldn’t have done it better himself

## Coaching Your Own Child

from [www.soccerlifelessons.com](http://www.soccerlifelessons.com)

***“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times...”***

Coaching your own child in U4 soccer doesn't have to be like reading a Dickens novel. It is important however that you are aware that you are entering into a new dynamic with your child and that you both must be prepared for it.

Juggling the role of parent and coach can be a great experience; it can also be quite trying. Unless you have already coached your child before, this experience will create a new dynamic in your relationship and it will require some adjustment from you and your child. Handled well, it can be a very positive influence on the relationship, though every moment of the experience may not be one of bliss. Having to share your attention, your praise, and your time might not be completely comfortable for either of you at first.

The first step is to recognize this as a new dynamic so that when issues do arise you are not in a position that you will react overly emotional about it. I have seen the parent/coach scold their child harshly, “If you don't want to play just get off the field!” In this case, the parent was trying to do their best, but the child wasn't able to accept the role of their parent as coach. This left the child upset, the parent frustrated, and his coaching ineffective. You can assume there will be some issues, because inevitably there will be some. That is okay, it is all part of the process.

The second step is to prepare your child for the new roles that you both will play. You may even find it helpful to ‘ask permission’ of your child for you both to fall into the roles of Coach/Player.

You might even want to practice this at home by telling your child, “Okay, I am going to be the coach and you are going to be the player, are you ready? Okay player, run in place...” While at the fields, if you see that your child is not taking direction well, you may want to pull them aside and say, “I need you to let me be your coach right now and not your Dad/Mom. Can I be your coach right now?”

The third step is to rely on your assistant coach to help with your child if they are not responding well to your coaching. Remember, we are not talking about parenting here, but coaching. I have often seen players respond much better to the assistant's instructions than they do the instructions of their parent. This is the case when the child is having trouble seeing their parent as ‘coach’.

The fourth step is to try... try to become objective in your coaching. Parent/coaches are often overly critical of their own child and/or may not let them have equal playing time because they don't want to be seen as favoring their own child too much. I have also seen parent/coaches believe their child is the next David Beckham and keep them in as Center Forward the entire game. The trick is to find the right balance. You cannot possibly be objective, but that is your task.

The last step is to relax; *sometimes you just won't be effective in coaching your child.* It is more important that you be an effective parent. The coaching relationship will develop over time.

## Pottsgrove Soccer Club Modified Laws of the Game for U4 (Fall 2013)

**Law 1 - The Field of Play: Dimensions:** The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line. Length: 30 yards Width: 15 yards

Field Markings: Distinctive lines not more than five (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line.

- The Goal Area: N/A
- The Penalty Area: N/A
- Flag posts: N/A
- The Corner Arc: N/A

Goals: Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The goal size is 4' X 6'. Dimensions are smaller to accommodate the four versus four game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of three and four year old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Coaching: Coaches are allowed on the field during play to provide in game direction as well as to act as referee.

**Law 2 - The Ball:** must be a size three (3). The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

**Law 3 - The Number of Players:** A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than four (4) players, with no goalkeeper. Teams and matches may be coed. In the event a game has become one sided, the coaches should adjust the number of players on the field during play to compensate (4v5). It is preferred that a team add a player rather than a team take one off.

Substitutions: Substitutions may be made at the following times:

- (1) Prior to a throw, by either team.
- (2) Prior to a goal kick, by either team.
- (3) After a goal, by either team.
- (4) After an injury, by either team.
- (5) At half time.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time.

**Law 4 - The Players' Equipment:** Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams. Players must wear shin guards to play.

**Law 5 - The Referee:** per FIFA. Both coaches should act as referees during the game.

**Law 6 - The Assistant Referees:** Not required.

**Law 7 - The Duration of the Match:** per FIFA with the exception of the halves being 15 minutes each. A running clock will be used.

**Law 8** - The Start and Restart of Play: Conform to FIFA where the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least eight (8) feet from the ball until it is in play.

**Law 9** - The Ball In and Out of Play: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 10** - The Method of Scoring: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 11** - Offside: there shall be no offside called during these games.

**Law 12** - Fouls and Misconduct: there shall be no fouls called during the game. However players must be corrected for unsportsmanlike or rough play.

**Law 13** - Free Kicks: N/A

**Law 14** - The Penalty Kick: No penalty kicks will be awarded

**Law 15** - The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA with the exception of allowing a second chance on illegal throw-ins.

**Law 16** - The Goal Kick: the ball shall be placed approximately four (4) feet in from the end line, and approximately four (4) feet out from the goal post. A goal kick is awarded to the defense when the offensive team puts the ball out of play over their offensive end line.

**Law 17** - The Corner Kick: the opponents remain at least eight (8) feet from the ball until it is in play. A corner kick is awarded to the offense when the defensive team puts the ball out of play on their own end line.

## **US Youth Soccer Under 4 Recommendations**

Opposing parent/coaches and players should shake hands after each match.

Players should sit together on the sideline and watch the game while not on the field playing.

Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.

Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field when possible.

No alcoholic beverages will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.

Coaches of U4 teams should attend the U4/U6 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course.



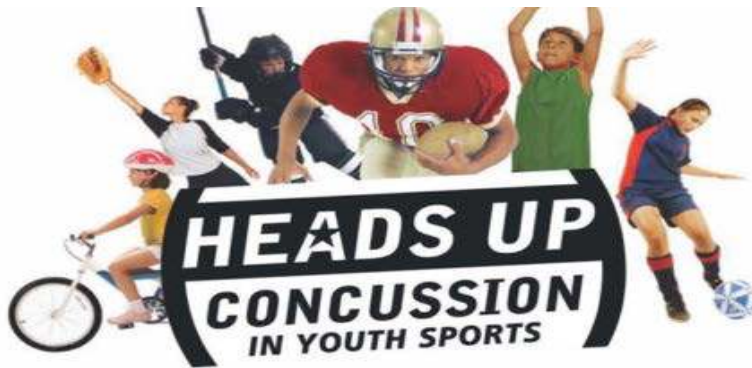
# U4

Technical/Skills	Tactical	Psychological	Physical
<b>Dribbling</b>	Introduction to goals and field of play	FUN! FUN! FUN!	Stay active! Any fitness should be as a result of playing the game
Basic introduction to dribbling			
Developing relationship with ball and ways to move it			
Soft First Touch			
Keep Ball Close			
<b>Basic Motor Skills</b>	Avoid tactical considerations at this age	Exciting & positive intro to the game. Use parents to help	
Fundamental movement skills of running (forwards, backwards and sideways), jumping, turning, twisting and bending (lowering center of gravity to form a solid base)			
<b>Catching</b>	No emphasis on positions	No emphasis on winning	Fun, interactive activities which incorporate a ball to improve balance & agility
Toss to self and catch.			
<b>Pyramid Skills</b>	Limited instruction on rules – just get them going in the right direction	Encourage trying over performing	
1. Laces Dribble, Foundation/Bell Touches, Toe Taps Forward/Back			

## SAFETY & EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

As a coach, you are ultimately responsible for the safety of your athletes. Creating a safe playing environment for your players can significantly reduce the number and severity of injuries during your practices and games. The National Center for Sports Safety has outlined a few guidelines to help you create a safe playing environment.

- Develop an emergency action plan and make sure all of your assisting coaches are familiar with the emergency procedures.
- Always have an accessible, working phone at practice and at games to ensure that emergency personnel can be contacted quickly in case of an emergency.
- Make sure that your first aid kit is with you at all practices and games.
- Always have water or sports drinks available for your athletes, giving them numerous breaks to prevent dehydration.
- Examine your playing fields, courts and other surfaces before practice and games for potentially dangerous obstacles such as holes, wet spots and sharp objects.
- Regularly check the player's safety equipment before practice to make sure it is put on correctly.
- Make sure to store unused equipment away from the playing field so that no one trips over it while playing. • Encourage your athletes to be aware of any unsafe playing conditions and report them to you.
- Lightning – Use the 30-30 Rule!
  1. If the time between lightning and thunder is 30 seconds or less, go to a safer location.
  2. If the lightning can't be seen, just hearing thunder means you should go to a safer location.
  3. WAIT at least 30 MINUTES after hearing the last thunder before leaving the safer location.
- Open picnic pavilions, dugouts and rain shelters offer absolutely no protection from lightning! Get prompt medical treatment if someone is struck. CPR could save the victim's life if their heart has stopped or they have stopped breathing.



### SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

These signs and symptoms may indicate that a concussion has occurred.

#### SIGNS OBSERVED BY COACHING STAFF

Appears dazed or stunned

Is confused about assignment or position

Forgets sports plays

Is unsure of game, score, or opponent

Moves clumsily

Answers questions slowly

Loses consciousness (even briefly)

Shows behavior or personality changes

Can't recall events prior to hit or fall

Can't recall events after hit or fall

#### SYMPTOMS REPORTED BY ATHLETE

Headache or "pressure" in head

Nausea or vomiting

Balance problems or dizziness

Double or blurry vision

Sensitivity to light

Sensitivity to noise

Feeling sluggish, hazy, foggy, or groggy

Concentration or memory problems

Confusion

Does not "feel right"

### ACTION PLAN

If you suspect that a player has a concussion, you should take the following steps:

1. Remove athlete from play.
2. Ensure athlete is evaluated by an appropriate health care professional. Do not try to judge the seriousness of the injury yourself.
3. Inform athlete's parents or guardians about the known or possible concussion and give them the fact sheet on concussion.
4. Allow athlete to return to play **only** with permission from an appropriate health care professional.

### IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

FILL IN THE NAME AND NUMBER OF YOUR LOCAL HOSPITAL(S) BELOW:

Hospital Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Hospital Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**For immediate attention, CALL 911**

*If you think your athlete has sustained a concussion... take him/her out of play, and seek the advice of a health care professional experienced in evaluating for concussion.*

For more information and to order additional materials **free-of-charge**, visit:  
[www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports](http://www.cdc.gov/ConcussionInYouthSports)

## How to Manage Soccer Parents

from [http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/how\\_to\\_manage\\_soccer\\_parents.htm#](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/how_to_manage_soccer_parents.htm#)

Parents are, obviously, necessary. Sometimes they can even be useful! You can, for example, get them to transport children, fetch balls during practice sessions and provide financial support.

There will, however, be occasions when you have difficulty with one or more parents. Some may want their child to play more while others may question your judgment as a coach. You can minimize the number of times you have to deal with an angry or upset parent by following these guidelines:

1. **Have a pre-season meeting** before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. Encourage questions from the parents and let them know that you have given a lot of thought to how you're going to coach their children.
2. **Express appreciation** for their interest and concern. This will make them more open and at ease with you.
3. **Always listen** to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
4. **Know what your objectives are** and do what you believe to be of value to the team, not to the parents. No coach can please everyone!
5. **Know the club and game rules.** Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
6. **Handle any confrontation one-on-one** and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking. Listen to their viewpoint, and then thank them for it.
7. **Resist unfair pressure.** It is your responsibility as coach to make the final decision. This doesn't mean that you can't still listen to parents.
8. **Don't discuss individual players with other parents.** The grapevine will hang you every time. Show the same respect for each player on the team that you want the parents to show toward you.
9. **Ask parents not to criticize their children in front of anyone else.** Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
10. **Don't blame the players** for their parents' actions.
11. **Be consistent!** If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
12. **Most importantly, be fair!** If you treat all your players fairly and equally, you will gain their respect as well as their parents.

Remember that your children (and their parents) are not all the same. They will have a wide variety of backgrounds, beliefs and ideals. This diversity is to be valued.

The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so that the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

## Dealing with "overly-helpful" parents

If parents have been acting as your assistants at practices, it is not uncommon for them to want to continue to participate during games. This is something which you need to watch closely, for several reasons. First, if other parents see a "non-coach" giving instructions to players on the field, they are going to be tempted to start doing this themselves. This will drive the kids crazy, because "too many cooks" really do spoil things. Secondly, most parents are going to be watching their own child - and giving most of their instructions to their own child. This can be very distracting to the child (even if the instructions are good) because it takes his attention away from the game and keeps him from using his own brain to figure things out for himself. Furthermore, many children simply want praise, praise and more praise from their parents - so any corrections will be viewed as a public statement of "Boy, you are so stupid, I hate having you as my kid." Finally, and often most importantly, the instructions being given by these "helpers" often tend to be completely wrong - and exactly opposite from what you have been working on at practice.

What to do? The key is tact - and a Preseason meeting. Explain to the parents that the kids need to be able to use the games as learning experiences - and too much criticism is going to feel to them that the parents view them as failures. Tell the parents that, on game day, the ONLY thing that you want to hear is some general praise "Nice job; good shot; unlucky; good idea; etc."). Tell your assistants that you really appreciate their help, but you need them to sit in the stands on game day, because you are afraid that other parents will be tempted to start "helping" by shouting instructions - and this will drive the kids nuts!

Then, if you have some parent who starts to give instructions, nip this in the bud early. Each time that the parent does this, smile and say "Remember the Rule, please." Be good humored about it. Make a sign which proclaims the stands as a NO COACHING ZONE. Bring a gag. But, don't permit this parent to violate your rules.

The same goes for parents who want to yell at opposing players or referees - except that you MUST leap in hard to prevent this. A very firm "George, we don't yell at the Refs" - followed by "Sorry, Ref - It won't happen again" - makes it clear to everyone that you don't like this conduct. Ditto for yelling at opposing players, but be even more forceful. It is very scary for smaller players to deal with irate adults - and you need to stop this immediately. If the parent doesn't listen, tell him to go sit in his car. Even if this means abandoning the game, or going to get a Club official to help, it is your obligation to protect these other children - just as you would want the other coach to protect your little ones. Besides, if you do not move in quickly, the next thing that you know, you will have some irate Dad from the other side coming to see your parent - and all hell could break loose. So, do what you need to do - but don't tolerate this type of behavior.

## Dealing with parental complaints

Almost every parent occasionally disagrees with your decisions as a coach (whether or not you hear about it). Usually, the parent is simply putting the interests of the child first - and seeing things from the child's point of view. Most parents don't complain, and are more likely to leave the team if they are unhappy with how things are handled. So, it is good to have parents who will bother to give you feedback (even if it can be painful to hear). Most of the time, this feedback is well-intentioned - and the parent simply wants an explanation for what has happened or wants to offer some suggestions about alternate ways to do things. Most of the time, this advice is well-intentioned (and the parent had no desire whatsoever to take over the team - or to try to order you around).

Most parents have 2 objectives when they sign the child up: for the child to succeed and for the child to be happy. If you praise the child in front of the parent, you can rest assured that the child will give you a big grin - and you earn points in both columns. Do these as often as you can - and you will keep gripes to a minimum? Any time that you start resenting the time that it takes to give this positive feedback, tell yourself that you could easily be spending double this time - and a lot less happily - talking to just one upset parent! In short, a good coach makes the parents believe that they have

wonderful, successful and happy offspring - which causes the parents to believe that the coach must be an absolutely brilliant judge of children.

But, of course, you cannot please all of the people all of the time - and you may end up with a complainer or advice-giver despite your best efforts. If this happens, listen briefly to find out what the problem is, and then schedule a time to talk about it. NEVER discuss any serious problem right before a practice (or right before a game). You have work to do, and don't need the distractions (and certainly don't need to be upset yourself if any harsh things are said). Furthermore, if the parent is really upset, you don't want any confrontation to occur in front of your players or other parents. So, set the discussion for the end of practice - or schedule a time to call the parent later (if this is something where the child does not need to hear the conversation).

NEVER discuss any problems or complaints right after a game. If a parent comes to you with a complaint right after a game, make up any excuse that you can and get out of there. Usually, these complaints come after a hard game and a hard loss, when everyone is upset. Give everyone time to cool off - so that things are not said which are regretted later.

When you do talk to the parent, listen carefully to the parent's problem. Be calm. Try to get them to see things from your point of view. If at all possible, lavish some praise on the child during the meeting (remember parental objectives). Try to verify their reports that the child is unhappy (for instance, some parents want their child to be the goal-scoring star, while the child truly is happiest as a keeper or sweeper). Volunteer to have a meeting with them and the child to talk about the situation. If the child truly is upset (for instance, he wants to be a forward, while you have rotated him to the back because he sorely needs to develop some defensive skills), talk about why you think that this is best. Usually you will be able to resolve complaints by open communication, and a calm approach to the problem.

However, some parents simply will not be satisfied, no matter what you do. This happens quite commonly with parents who were athletes, and ended up with non-athletic children, where it is easier to cast blame than to face reality about the child's lack of talent. If it is clear that you are not getting anywhere, suggest that you set up a joint meeting with Club officials to talk about the problem. In the meantime, call the Club to give them a "heads-up" that they might hear from this parent, if it appears that the parent is truly irate.

If worse comes to worse, take heart that "parents-from-hell" tend to stick around for only a short time. Usually, you will find that they have been very unhappy with every coach whom their child has ever had - so they go back in the pool every season. In fact, don't be surprised if, when you call the Club, you hear a large sigh come out of the phone - along with a comment of "Oh, no. Not them again."

### Soccer Parents' Meeting Agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a preseason meeting, which addresses the common topics to be covered in the meeting.

1. Introductions
2. Introduce yourself and your assistants (if any) to the parents. Briefly outline your previous background and your philosophy of coaching, etc.
3. Ask parents to introduce themselves and say which player they're related to. Some of the parents may know one another well, others may not, and they'll be seeing quite a bit of one another!
4. Pass around a sign-in sheet and ask people to put their name and phone number on it; Also ask for e-mail addresses and discuss what is the best method to contact them about the team activities
5. Discussion your plans for the team outlining to the parents areas of focus you will be working on weekly
6. Stress the need for every player to do soccer homework between practices.
7. Expectations for player development by end of season. Can discuss core curriculum for U6
8. Need by team for volunteers (Team Mother/Father, assistants if not already determined, etc.).
9. Team Kits (Uniforms)/Team Name
10. Review Rules of Pottsgrove Soccer for U6. Emphasize reason for small side games, difference from Adult Soccer

11. Review equipment needs for players (shin guards, ball, cleats (no baseball cleats))
  12. Review Parents Code of Conduct
  13. Questions/Answers
- 

## Tips On Making The Parent's Meeting Run Smoothly

From [http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/pre\\_season\\_meeting.htm](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/pre_season_meeting.htm)

Many parents will want to go ahead and fill out the questionnaires at the meeting, so bring plenty of pencils/pens. Young players tend to get fidgety, so try to talk to them as much as you can. Bring a sack of candy or little treats (pencils, stickers, etc.), and start asking questions like "Why do you suppose that I want you to call me if you cannot come to practice?" - and toss a piece of candy to the people who answer correctly. Don't hesitate to reward parents, as well - they will get a kick out of this.

If kits are to be purchased by the team, try to get some samples (for sizes) from your kit provider - and have a signup sheet for kits once you have selected which ones you want. Some coaches like to pick the team kit and name ahead of time - but kids enjoy this part so much that it really is a good idea to let them participate.

Some parents may be divorced, so bring extra questionnaires, rosters and game schedules to the meeting for the other parent. If you note that the parents are divorced, make a mental note to check with the parent attending the meeting with the child about custody problems (including who is allowed to pick up the child after practice). This can save a lot of arguments later.

Be sure to go over the Team Rules, and your expectations for parental behavior (especially at games). While being friendly, be firm that you expect that parents will not yell at kids on the field or yell at referees - and that the ONLY talk that you want to see is positive (good try, nice save, etc.). Remind parents that children perform worse if distracted or harshly criticized, so you really need their cooperation. Also remind them that refs are usually inexperienced themselves at lower age groups, and often will make mistakes. However, if we yell at the refs, we can make the ref more rattled, or get the ref mad at the team, or even might convince the kids that the ref is against them, which tends to make players want to stop trying or say/do bad things to the refs themselves (which can get the kids in really hot water) - so you expect the parents to set a good example of sportsmanship for the team.

If you are going to take a long-term approach toward player development, and move players around (instead of locking players into single positions to increase your win/loss record), tell the parents why you have chosen this route. Explain how you define "winning", and what your approach towards player development will be. Of course, there may be some parents who really want their child on a hyper-competitive team. By giving them early warning of your approach, this allows them to talk to the club about moving to a different team (which may be best for all concerned).

Some coaches haven't done much public speaking, and may be nervous about talking (especially if they have never coached soccer before - and are not sure what they are doing). As an old college professor used to say, "There is a big difference between ignorance and stupidity - one is curable." Don't be afraid to make mistakes, and to admit that you are learning by OJT. If you are trying hard, and doing your best to be fair and make learning fun, most kids and most parents will give you the benefit of the doubt. So, try to relax; get prepared for the meeting ahead of time; ask some questions yourself to get the kids/parents talking; and enjoy. It is going to be a fun year!



## All-Time Best Games, Drills, and Activities

from [www.SoccerLifeLessons.com](http://www.SoccerLifeLessons.com)

### Follow the Leader Stretching

Lead the team by telling and showing them as in follow the leader.

“Reach way up high toward the sky...” (Use two hands similar to a throw-in; we are looking for repetition in body movements to encourage proper technique later)

“Reach way down low to your toes...” (Stretching hamstrings and calves)

“Feet apart, reach to one side... reach to the other side,”

“Flamingo stretch, try to keep your balance! Other side”

“Twist like a washing machine” (Stretching out your core muscles)

“Windmill shoulder rolls, other side” (Stretching shoulders and back)

“Rubber neck roll,” (Stretching neck)

“Grab your ears and loosen up your brain because soccer is a “thinking game!”” (Over time, stop at ...soccer is a... and let them answer “thinking game!”)

### Pirate Drills (Critical Building Block)

This is a great way to teach your team how to properly have touches on the ball and it makes it fun for the kids. These drills are more like a game that you can start slow and then build upon.

Pirate Drill 1 – **“Walk the Plank”** – Teach and show the kids to touch the ball with the insides of their feet to have small touches to move the ball with small steps, just as if you were turning your feet outward a little and walking on a plank.

Pirate Drill 2 – **“Scrub the Deck”** – Teach and show the kids to scrub the deck by putting their foot on top of the ball and moving their foot slightly back and forth while keeping their balance. Once this is mastered (perhaps by practice 4) you should begin to instruct the kids to “scrub the deck, now pull back” to change directions of the ball.

Pirate Drill 3 – **“Tick Tock”** – Remember the Alligator in Peter Pan? You can start by teaching them to “switch feet” when scrubbing the deck to alternate the foot that they stop the ball with. Then ask the kids to hop to make the switch, eventually you will be able to ask them to “switch feet, switch feet, switch feet” repetitively. Once this is accomplished they are ready to learn to make a hop from one foot to another alternating which foot is on top of the ball. The verbal cue you use with this exercise will be “tick, tock, tick, tock” with each switch. This is quite difficult for many of the young kids at this age. For those who struggle with this, it is good to spend a few minutes with them one-on-one, stand in front of them with the ball between the two of you, place your hands on both of their shoulders and help them shift their weight from side to side while slowly picking up the opposite foot to place on the ball. I have found this as the most effective way to teach the coordination necessary to learn this skill.

Pirate Drill 4 – **“Hoist the Sail!”** – Teach the kids to reach down with both hands, grab the ball on both sides and lift it as high as they can to the sky. Then tell them to set the ball down, still holding it with both hands. This is the beginning of teaching them how to hold the ball when throwing it in. You don’t teach them to throw the ball in this exercise however, this is just a step in preparing them to learn that later.

Pirate Drill 5 – **“Shark Attack!”** – After they have mastered (or should I say “mastered”) the first three pirate drills, you can yell “Shark Attack” which is the cue for the kids to quickly dribble the ball to the goal and shoot it in. This is your opportunity to teach the kids the difference between a control touch like “walk the plank” with the inside of your foot and a shot like “shark attack”



that is a powerful shot with the top of the foot or “on the laces”.

### **Pirate Drills in Practice (Critical Building Block)**

Putting these Pirate Drills all together makes a very effective warm up and also gives the kids verbal cues that you will be able to use with them for the rest of the season. The overall Pirate Drill will go something like this:

“Okay, everyone on the Center Line”

“Keep your ball in front of you”

“Okay, Walk the plank towards me (you move backwards in different positions... good... walk the plank... walk the plank.... now Scrub the Deck... Good.... walk the plank..... scrub the deck.... walk the plank.... scrub the deck.... Hoist the Sail.... Way up high!... Now down with the ball.... walk the plank... walk the plank... scrub the deck... switch feet... walk the plank.... scrub the deck...switch feet... switch feet... switch feet.... (or tick tock tick tock ... walk the plank... walk the plank.... SHARK ATTACK!, SHARK ATTACK! Shoot at the goal, quickly quickly!!!! GOOD JOB!!!! Let’s play it again!..... everyone on the End Line!”

These become verbal cues for teaching other skills and even for the in-game coaching.

### **Coach Says (Critical Building Block)**

This is a favorite game of mine because with a little creativity you can make this really fun, but also have a teaching objective that will benefit the team’s play. Coach Says is a lot like Simon Says except that no one is put out. When a player doesn’t do what “coach says” you only correct them and keep on playing.

Coach Says can be used to direct the players on the field and also gets the kids accustomed to listening to the coach’s instructions. You can start by doing silly things like coach says put your hand on your head, coach says lift one foot, coach says run around the goal and come back. But you can also include in-game type instructions to say, coach says “wall up”. With this have the kids line up in front of you shoulder to shoulder. Move to another area of the field and then direct the kids again, “wall up” while you motion for them to make the wall in the new location. This verbal cue of “wall up” will be a way to set your defense for the other team’s throw-ins or goal kicks, etc. Eventually, they’ll get the idea and begin to position themselves in the right places for this.

WALL UP Defending a Goal Kick WALL UP Defending a Corner Kick

After they have mastered “wall up” and other silly directions, teach them about the positions of a U6 team by using the verbal cues of “Center-Wing-Wing”. Show them on the field by placing a player as “Center” in the middle of the center circle, then another player at “Wing”, and then a third player at “Wing” on the other side. Talk with them about how a bird has the center, a wing on one side, and a wing on the other side. Then you can add this to your game of Coach Says to say, “Johnny - Center, Sally - Wing, Billy - Wing”. The players should be able to go to their designated spot.

“Center – Wing – Wing” “Wall up!”

On your kick off you can use the “Center-Wing-Wing” cue, and when it is the other team’s kick off, goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in you can use “wall up”. If you find in the course of a game you are overpowering the other team, you can have your team “wall up”, then direct one, two, or all three players to “drop” which will be their cue to back up closer to their own goal. This will provide a softer defense to give the other team a chance to put the ball in play. “Drop”

If you find in the course of a game that you need to provide more pressure on the other team, then you can teach the kids to “wall up”, then “Johnny, mark up”. With this instruction, Johnny will leave the wall to stand behind or near one of the players on the opposing team. Once your players are responsive to the instructions of “wall up” and “markup” you can nearly set the tempo of the game.

In some cases you’ll have kids that are just not responding to your verbal cues (you know who I

am talking about), this is when you use all your reserves of patience that you have, smile, and love them anyway! “Center – Wing – Wing”

### **Hit the Coach (Throw-In)**

I often see coaches teach their kids to throw the ball in by first crossing their legs to prevent them from lifting one foot or jumping. Unfortunately, I have also seen this style of throw-in never get corrected and the player ineffectively revert to this style even at the U12 level. With a few simple games and drills a more effective way to learn throw-ins can be achieved. Starting with the Pirate Drill of “Hoist the Sail” as a good building block skill.

Have the children stand “off the field” one step back. Ask them to “hoist the sail” picking the ball up with both hands straight over their heads. Have them put the ball on the back of their neck, and then throw to try to “hit the coach”. When first teaching, don’t worry about them jumping or lifting their feet, focus on them being “off the field, one step back, ball on neck, and throw”. During the next practice you can add the additional skill of keeping their knees bent just a little while they throw the ball in. If they keep their knees bent just a little, then they won’t jump or step. (This puts them in a position as U8 players to learn to take a step forward and drag their back foot during a throw-in.)

One smart verbal cue that I heard a coach use was “pillow fight” to remind his kids to use both hands on the ball as if they were “hitting their brother over the head with a pillow.” Once they are able to get the basics of the throw in, it is important to teach the kids not just to try to hit the coach, but to throw past the coach. This will later translate into throwing ‘past their teammate’, where they want the teammate to run to and not to the feet of their teammate. This step will facilitate the skill later as a U8 player to learn to block out your position to receive the ball in your favor on a throw-in. One at a time, please!

### **Monster (Dribbling / Ball Control)**

This is a great game to teach good foot skills, ball protection, and it is usually a favorite. Have the kids “walk the plank” or “quickly walk the plank” (dribble) randomly within a specific area. I like to have the kids stay inside the center circle. Once they all get going, call out one player who is the “monster”. That player will go around trying to kick the other player’s balls out of the circle. Once their ball is out, they must retrieve their ball and sit out until the game starts over. The game continues until the monster has eliminated each player. If the game is not moving fast enough, call out two monsters. Sometime this is such a favorite that you may have to play this game eight or nine times in a row, a ‘turn’ for each player to be the monster. If the kids are enjoying it, let them play, it is a great game to teach ball control.

### **Monkey in the Middle (Passing / Shooting)**

All players stand around the center circle while one player (the “Monkey”) gets in the middle of the circle. The players outside the circle pass one ball back and forth while the player in the center tries to gain control of the ball. When the player in the center gains control of the ball, you can choose another player to be the Monkey. This game gives you an opportunity to teach both good and aggressive receiving as well as good passing and even fakes.

In teaching receiving teach – “try to get in front of the ball, lift your foot and turn it outward so that the ball hits the inside of it, and give a little hop”. You’ll have to show this one a few times, but once they master this, they are on their way to being soccer players! It often helps to say out loud “down” when you show them how to stop the ball, so to put it in the child’s mind that they want to keep the ball down.

In making passes teach – “take a peek at your target, strike the ball with the inside of your foot, and follow through”. The most important thing to focus on at this stage is to “take a peek at your target”. This game can easily get out of control, but it is also a kid favorite and will allow you to take time to address the passing and receiving skill of each individual player as the game goes on.

### **Sharks and Minnows (Dribbling)**

Have the kids line up on one side line, each with their own ball. They are the minnows. Have one player on the other side line, he is the shark. When the coach yells “Go!” the minnows will (“swim”) try to get to the other side of the field

without the shark taking away their ball. As each minnow is captured, they then become sharks and join in on the other side to help capture the minnows. The last one or two minnows left can become the sharks of the next game. This gives them incentive to try to 'win'.

### **Cops and Robbers**

All players but one start by dribbling around, staying in half the field, these are the Cops (blue). The Robber (red) must start in "Jail" (center circle). The Robber must wait until the coach yells "Jail Break!". The Robber then runs out and must 'steal' a ball and successfully dribble it back over the center line. At that point, the child whose ball was stolen also becomes a Robber and the two Robbers must go back to jail to start the game again. Again, the Cops dribble around and the coach yells "Jail Break" for the second time, at which the two Robbers run out and attempt to 'steal' a ball and successfully get it back across the center line. Every time a ball crosses the center line the Robbers must go back to "Jail" and the game starts again with an additional Robber.

Coach your "Cops" to *"dribble into open space, keep taking peeks up to find the open space on the field and move to that space"*. This will help them learn to avoid the opponents during game day.

### **What's the Time Mr. Wolf? (Dribbling)**

This was a game taught at our club by the British Soccer Camp counselors. The kids loved it. The more dramatic you are, the more they like it. Have the players stand on the end line, each with a ball. You stand on one side line or maybe closer. You turn your back on the kids and have them call out "What's the time Mr. Wolf?" You turn to them and say, "Four O'clock", they can then take four steps forward and then 'scrub the deck'. You turn with you back to them again, and they will yell out, "What's the time Mr. Wolf?" You turn to them and say, "Three O'clock", they can then take three steps forward with the ball and again scrub the deck. This goes on with you calling various "times" until you decide to answer "DINNER TIME", the kids are then to pull their ball back and dribble back to the end line away from you. As you catch a player's ball, they then join you as the wolf and also give you suggestions about what time you should call out and when you should call out "Dinner Time", and also help you catch the others.

As a variation on "What's the Time Mr. Wolf" you can also play "**Sleeping Bear**". In this variation you will lie down in the grass and pretending that you are a sleeping bear with lots of grumbles, snores, and growls to add effect. You instruct the kids ahead of time to make small touches on the ball with the insides of their feet to sneak up on the bear, but they must be very quiet or they will wake up the bear! When the kids get close enough, you pop up and chase them back. Any players you catch can then become "baby bears" to help you sleep, then chase the other kids. A fun thing that the kids enjoy is to ask them after catching the first player, "Should I give him another chance or should I eat him?!?!?"

### **Marbles (Shooting)**

Place a special ball (perhaps a unique color) in the center circle and have the players stand around the edge of the circle and attempt to kick their ball at the special ball to knock it out of the center circle. Once the ball is knocked out, reset it and play again.

### **Target Ball (Shooting)**

Place a ball on the top of a cone in front of the goal, have the players shoot from different distances and angles on the field to try to knock the ball off the cone.

### **Hit the Coach (Dribble)**

On "Go", run away slowly as the players dribble toward you in chase and then shoot at your feet to try to hit you. They get one point every time they hit you. Ask who got points when the game is over.

## Coaching Resources

All these clips have been carefully selected to provide as much detail as necessary while coaching within Rec soccer. Each clip is very brief but extremely helpful. These clips give a good overview on the different aspects of soccer, but not all drills are appropriate for U6.

Clips last approx. 2 minutes each, and are all of good quality. The coaches demonstrating these skills are highly knowledgeable and experienced coaches working within the United States. Take time to listen for the key coaching points, reinforcing the demonstrations. Below is a link to a session I felt would be very effective with players of all ages, one of my favorites.

\* Incorporates Touch work, passing & basic moves

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PcqAvdmge7E>

### Coaching Resources – Basic Soccer Warm-ups

1. Warming up with Touch work

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yeKUIT9LnU&feature=related>

2. Simple Dynamic Stretching Warm-Up

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1krrbatFSqQ>

3. Knockout Warm-Up Game

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rv2ax7yf3WE>

4. Group Warm-up

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=da3qUhawqd8&feature=related>

### Coaching Resources - Basic Touch Drills

1. Developing your First Touch

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfEHni8GE2k>

2. Developing your First Touch (Inside the laces)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvZTem68iC4&feature=channel>

3. Touch work with outer thigh

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uPwYd6LfYk4&feature=channel>

4. Movement & First Touch away

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XopMLnSu870&feature=channel>

### 5. Body Stance for a First Touch

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtW8UwMGIkM&NR=1>

### 6. More advanced drill Developing First Touch with more Movement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b6ITnkZ1UGQ&feature=related>

### 7. Developing your First Touch with your head

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMFsQV4aemU&feature=channel>

## **Coaching Resources - Dribbling**

### 1. Dribbling for Control

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zUMFr-WZwE>

### 2. Dribbling for Speed

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m9C0plvXtE8&NR=1>

### 3. Using the Inside & Outside of foot

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-c48OrWody4&feature=related>

### 4. How to take on a Defender

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NXbrAwv6W0A&feature=related>

## **Coaching Resources – Passing Drills**

### 1. Passing Technique

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRhPX9v3VrI>

### 2. One Touch Passing fun drill

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5kki78rOPg>

### 3. Triangle Passing Drill

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eJk1Im2B3W0>

### 4. Drills to improve Touch and close passing

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54Awmzu-ss4>

### 5. Passing and Moving (more advanced)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nrn-w2Sxpk4>

## 6. One Touch passing exercise

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBRu7aTyAeI>

### **Coaching Resources - Shooting Drills**

#### 1. Striking Technique (Maximizing power)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clX3y4X\\_4fQ&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=clX3y4X_4fQ&feature=related)

#### 2. Creating Spin and Swerve

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqWXKt16svs&feature=related>

#### 3. Scoring with your Head

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znw9sdWODEo&feature=related>

#### 4. Drill to maximize sweet spot connection & better contact

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vuKiN7TK28&feature=related>

#### 5. Group turn and shoot drill

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D03iihDpFNs>

### **Coaching Resources - Basic Principals of Defending**

#### 1. Defending

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbdedDgzEsQ>

#### 2. Block Tackle

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IUtauRD5ipo&feature=related>

#### 3. Slide Tackle

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dJ794D3zYAU&feature=related>

### **Coaching Resources - Additional Great General Resource Sites**

#### Positive Coaching Alliance

<http://www.positivecoach.org>

#### Soccer Plans.com

[http://www.soccerplans.com/Home\\_Page.php](http://www.soccerplans.com/Home_Page.php)

### Player Development Revolution

[http://www.playerdevelopmentrevolution.org/Page.asp?n=55096&snid=dMHA\\_1L2\]&org=playerdevelopmentrevolution.org](http://www.playerdevelopmentrevolution.org/Page.asp?n=55096&snid=dMHA_1L2]&org=playerdevelopmentrevolution.org)

### Coaching Soccer 101

<http://www.coachingsoccer101.com/drills.htm>

### Coaching Kids Soccer

<http://www.coaching-kids-soccer.com/>

### Massachusetts Youth Soccer

[http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coach%27s\\_corner.aspx](http://www.mayouthsoccer.org/coach%27s_corner.aspx)

### Footy 4 Kids

[http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/soccer\\_games\\_and\\_drills\\_by\\_age\\_goup.htm](http://www.footy4kids.co.uk/soccer_games_and_drills_by_age_goup.htm)

### Soccer Expert

<http://www.soccerxpert.com/u6-u8-soccer-drills.aspx>

There are many other great soccer coaching sites online, so if you find a great one that is not listed, please let us know so we can included it in our list.

Also, please review materials provided on your CD for more helpful hints, tricks, drills and games.