



U5/U6 Coaches Guide and Drills

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With these age groups do not try to teach too much in one practice; their attention spans are too short & it won't be fun. The Games included here are fun, they keep all the players involved and active, and they are "self-teaching" and players learn by simply playing the games. The Games are designed to teach different skills and concepts. Simply select the Games that teach the things you want your team to learn.

There are only 9 things you should be concerned about when coaching U-6:

1. **Make it fun & try to have fun yourself.** Whether your players continue to play soccer will depend on whether it's fun. Coaching U-6 is the most fun you will ever have as a soccer coach because you really don't have to know or do much except have fun and keep your players from getting hurt.
2. **Lots of touches and a ball for every player at practice.** It is very important that every player at practice has a ball. Each child should have a ball. Your objective should be at least 300 touches per child per practice and for each child to be doing something with a ball for at least 50% of the practice (as opposed to watching, listening to instructions or standing in line).
3. **Choose Good Practice Games.** There are thousands of drills on the Internet, but most are not well thought out, efficient, effective or fun. We believe in positive motivation and don't believe in punishing a child who has tried their best but lost a Practice Game. Thus, we do not recommend punishing the losers or making the losers leave the game. Don't use "knock-out" or elimination games which leave kids standing on the sideline and we don't use games such as "Crab Soccer" which are fun but have many kids crawling on the ground instead of learning to play soccer.
4. **Have your players dribble and kick the ball a lot so they get used to using their feet**
5. **Don't let anyone get hurt.**
6. **Teach the following concepts and rules.**
 - a. Not using hands (except the Goalie) and not tripping, holding, pushing or hitting other players (it is good to "fight" for the ball, but not to use hands to hit or push).
 - b. The concept of a "field" that has lines (or is outlined by cones) that you should stay inside.
 - c. The concept of "our goal" (the one our Goalie is in) and "their goal" (the one the other team's Goalie is in) and that when we have the ball we should go toward "their goal" (to "attack" it) and when the other team has the ball we should "defend" our goal by kicking the ball away from it. Demonstrate what this means in a slow and patient way and repeat it in several practices.
 - d. The concepts of "attacking" and "defending" and how we try to kick the ball into the other team's goal and how we try to kick it away from our goal.
 - e. The very basic idea of "positions" and that some players play in different areas of the field and don't just run all over the field (e.g., that there is a "Goalie", "Defenders" and "Scorers").
7. **How to do a simple Throw-In if your team is expected to inbound the ball by using a Throw-In.**
8. **Start teaching your players to use the inside of the foot and the "instep" of the foot (i.e., the top of the foot where the shoelaces are) to kick the ball and discourage them from kicking it with their toes.** Show your players how it is better to use the inside of the foot and the "laces" to kick the ball instead of using their toes, and encourage them to use the inside of the foot and the instep when they practice kicking and shooting. The natural tendency will be for beginners to use the toe to kick the ball. In soccer, the toe is only used to "poke" the ball (on defense as a way to "dispossess" the ball from the ball handler or on offense as a way to take a short shot near goal). The toe is an inferior surface for kicking the ball because it is too small. It is easier to kick the ball accurately for long distances by using larger surfaces such as the top (instep) of the foot or the inside or outside of the foot. The instep can be used to kick both low "power" drives or for "lofted drives
9. **Emphasize dribbling and kicking the ball. We recommend you avoid trying to teach passing, and instead let players dribble and try to score so they develop an attacker's mentality and aren't afraid to take on a defender 1v1. Be careful to NOT decrease aggressiveness by teaching players to "be nice" or to "share". A player can't be good at soccer unless they are aggressive. If you teach them to be un-aggressive, it is very difficult to change them back. Getting knocked down is part of playing soccer. Teach players that if they get knocked down, to bounce back up -- don't teach players to be timid or to be afraid of contact.**

Practice Plans - Key is to Keep it Simple:

Practice Plan No. 1 - (for a 45-minute practice)

U-6 Warm Up: "[Follow The Leader](#)" (dribbling)

- let several players be the leader (5-7 minutes)

Games:

1. "[Soccer Bees](#)"
(5-10 minutes)
2. "[Driving School](#)"
(5-7 minutes)
3. "[Race Around The Track](#)"
(7-10 minutes)
4. "[Treasure Hunt](#)"
(10 minutes)

If extra time: play "[Hit The Coach](#)"

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Practice Plan No. 2 - (for a 45-minute practice)

From Practice No. 1, choose 3 games the kids liked best to play again and try several of these new games:

"[Dribble Around Cone & Back Relay Race](#)",
"[Dribble & Tag/Reverse](#)",
"[Dribble Through Goals Race](#)",
"[Dribble Past Defender](#)",
"[Longest Kick Game](#)",
"[Kick Balls Onto Other Field](#)"
"[Tick Tock](#)".

Repeat this Process for each week after that, very easy to create a plan should take you about 5 minutes to come up with a new plan each week.

"Follow The Leader" (Dribbling)

Comment: A great warm-up that teaches dribbling skills. Easy set-up & everyone has a ball.

Teaches:

- "Control dribbling" and "speed dribbling" if the leader goes fast

Set-up:

- Every player has a ball.

The Game:

- Ask who wants to be the "leader"
- All others line up behind the leader & follow him dribbling while he dribbles around the field at a moderate speed for about 1 minute (or, if you wish, allow the leader to speed up)
- Only go forward (no pullbacks), but the leader can circle around & cross thru the line following her
- Emphasize control of the ball over speed
- Then ask for another volunteer leader & let him lead them for another minute; then a third

"Soccer Bees" (Dribbling & Kicking)

- Summary: A simple, fun U-6 game that can involve the parents attending practice. Players buzz like bees and kick the ball at the "giants" to try to "sting" them.
- Teaches: Familiarity with using feet to dribble and kick a ball
- Set-up:
- Use 4 cones to make a square 7-10 yards wide (adjust the size as you believe appropriate)
 - Each player has a ball
 - Ask any parents at practice to participate
- The Game:
- 1st, tell the players that they are "Soccer Bees" and should dribble around inside the square and buzz like a bee. Tell them to push the ball with their feet and keep it close. Tell them they must stay inside the square because it is their "bee hive".
 - 2nd, after a few minutes, have the parents go inside the square. Tell the "bees" that their hive is being invaded by giants and they should "sting" them with their soccer ball. The parents should walk around and have fun while the players try to kick a ball into them. Play until they get tired of it.
 - Don't keep score
- Comments: Just have fun and don't let anyone get hurt. This type of activity is perfect for U-6. They get familiar with using their feet and learn that soccer practice is fun, so they will want to attend.

"Driving School" (Dribbling & Turning)

- Comment: This is a great game & teaches many basic skills. Easy set-up & everyone has a ball.
- Teaches: Control dribbling, using bottom of foot to stop, pullbacks, using outside of right foot & left foot.
- Set-up: Use disk cones to outline a 20-yard x 20-yard "field". (Smaller or larger, depending on age & numbers of players, but not too small or they will collide. Better for this game to be on the larger size at first).
- The Game:
- "This is Driving School & I'm your Instructor. I'm going to teach you how to drive but you must listen carefully & do exactly what I say."
 - Each player has a ball & must stay inside the cones.
 - Coach uses a ball to demonstrate what each of the instructions means:
 - a. **"Go"** - Start dribbling ("Keep the ball **near your feet & look up** while you dribble so you don't run into someone").
 - b. **"Stop"** - Put foot on top of ball to stop it
 - c. **"Slow"** - Dribble slow
 - d. **"Speed Up"** - Dribble faster but keep looking up & don't "wreck".
 - e. **"Turn right"** - Use the outside of the right foot to push the ball to the right & then dribble in that direction. (This teaches them to stop & turn the ball using the outside of the foot). Be sure they know which is the right foot.
 - f. **"Turn left"** - Use the outside of the left foot to push the ball to the left & then dribble in that direction. (If U-6 get confused about which is right & left, it's okay. Don't stop the game).
 - g. **"Pull back & go the other way"** - Use the bottom of foot to pull the ball back (i.e., flick

it backward) & then turn around & go the other way.

- Tell them to be careful & not have a "wreck". As they dribble they must look up to see where they are going. If they intentionally have a wreck or have too many wrecks, they may have to go to Jail (i.e., make them go outside the cones & dribble a lap around the outside of the cone field to practice dribbling; tell them to look up while they dribble this lap & go slow & keep the ball close to their feet).

Time:

- Do this for 2 minutes & then evaluate & give any driving "tips" needed. Then continue the class for 2 or 3 more minutes & then stop, give "tips" & encouragement (tell them they are really improving & they can all become great drivers), & then another round of 2 - 5 minutes.

At The End:

- Tell everyone they did great & if they keep coming to class they will become a good driver.

"Race Around The Track" (Dribbling/Turning/Shielding)

- Teaches:** Control dribbling, speed dribbling, turning & shielding.
Variation No. 2 also teaches teamwork, talking & movement of the ball.
- Set-up:** Use 4 disk cones to make a square that is 10 - 20 steps wide (10 steps if U-6, 12 if U-8, 15 if U-10 & 17 - 20 if U-12).
- The Game:**
- Players race (i.e., dribble) around the outside of a square
 - Each player has a ball & starts at the "Starting Line" (i.e., to the outside of whichever cone the Coach picks)
 - Put the slowest players nearest the cone & in front & have the fastest players start behind or on the outside; this will even things up some
 - On "Go", players dribble around the "track" & the first one to go around 2 or 3 times is the winner. (You decide how many times).
 - At the end of each game, ask each player how many times he or she went around the track & give encouragement
 - Have 2 or 3 races one way, each time making the faster players start a little farther back, so everyone has a chance of winning & the fastest dribblers will be challenged
 - Then, reverse & race in the opposite direction so they get practice making turns to the right & to the left
 - At the end of each game comment & give encouragement
- Rules:** No pushing, tripping, or kicking away balls & must stay outside the cones

"Treasure Hunt" (Dribbling)

- Summary: Coach drops about 20 "treasures" around the field (2 or 3 per player). Treasures can be anything, including disk cones, but should be something a child can find and hold while dribbling. On "Go", players dribble around and pick up the treasures. A simple, fun game.
- Set-up:
- Use cones to make a square within which the treasures will be found (about 20 steps wide)
 - Choose treasures as described above and scatter around the square
 - Each player has a ball and starts in the center of the square
- The Game:
- On "Go", players dribble and collect the treasures
- Teaching Points:
- Just encourage players to dribble so they get used to using their feet.

"Hit The Coach" (Dribbling & kicking the ball)

Teaches: Dribbling, kicking & teaches the Coach how to be funny

Comment: A simple, fun game for U-6

Set-up:

- Each player has a ball

The Game:

- Players stand shoulder-to-shoulder facing Coach who is about 5 steps away
- On "Go", the Coach runs slowly away while players dribble to chase him & try to hit him with the ball by shooting at him
- They get 1 point each time they hit him
- Recruit parents to help & split into 2 games or even 3, so it is less crowded
- Stay in a small area & have fun with this game
- Play for about 5 minutes

Variation:

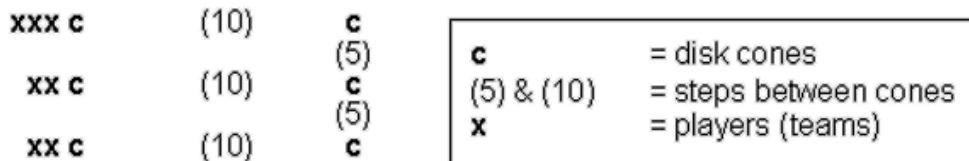
- Before starting, tell the players that if they hit you 5 times (total) you will make the sound of their favorite animal, like a dog or a cow, etc. When you are hit 5 times, stop & let them choose a sound. Then start all over.
- Try to stop about every 60 seconds. You can adjust by changing the number of required hits to 3 or 4

"Dribble Around Cone & Back Relay Race" (Dribbling & Turning)

Teaches: Dribbling & turning and a variation that includes passing

Set-up: Set up one relay "course" for each 2, 3 or 4 players, like below:

(Note: For U-6, put the cones 5 or 6 steps apart and for U-8, 8 steps apart).



The Game:

- Divide into "teams" of 2, 3, or 4 (it's okay to have more players on one team than on another)
- Each team has one ball
- On "Go", the first player in each line dribbles around the cone & back to the starting line & gives the ball to his teammate who then dribbles around the cone & back, etc. (By U-10, teach them to "pop the ball" for a fast start. Do this by kicking the ball forward about 5 steps & then running to it. Also do this after making the turn).
- Everyone must go around the right side of the cone (in the next game you can make them go around the left side)
- The dribbler must dribble it to his teammates & not pass it.
- The 1st team to complete 12 trips wins.

Scoring:

- One point for each time a player goes around & back to the start
- First team to 12 wins

- Play 2 or 3 games

Next:

- Do "Relay Race No. 2" using the same set-up

Variation No. 1: Require everyone to go around the cone on the left side so they are turning with either the inside of the left foot or the outside of the right foot.
(All ages)

"Dribble & Tag / Reverse" (Dribbling, Steering, Talking)

Summary: A fun, simple tag game where one or two players with a ball attempt to tag players without a ball. When tagged, a player gets a ball and helps the others with the ball tag those who don't have a ball. When only one player is left without a ball, that player is the winner, but then that player is "it" and the game reverses so players with a ball try to avoid being tagged by those without a ball. This can be played as one game, or the first or second part only. The second part can be made harder by requiring that the ball is tagged by a foot. Encourage "its" to talk and work together. A good game because it is simple

Teaches: Dribbling, some 1 vs. 1 play, steering toward the sideline and can be used to encourage talking & teamwork by those who are "it". If, in the second game, tags must be made with the foot, then "shielding" can be taught.

Set-up:

- Use cones to make a square 10-20 steps wide (depending on age and number of players).
- Put balls outside the square

The Game:

- 2 players have a ball & the others don't
- On "Go", the players with the ball try to use their hands to try to tag those without a ball
- When a player is tagged, he becomes one the "its" and gets a ball and tries to tag players without a ball
- The last player left without a ball is the winner. Stop the game and tell the players that now, the player without the ball is going to try to tag those with a ball (preferably using his foot to tag the ball, but for U-6 or

U-8, tagging with hands is okay).

- Now, when players with a ball are tagged, they kick their ball out of the square and try to tag players with the ball
- The last player with a ball is the winner

Rules:

- If a player or his ball goes out of bounds to avoid being tagged, he is considered tagged. Thus, a good strategy is to try to "steer" the player you are trying to tag to the sideline.

Teaching Points:

- "Steering"
- "Shielding" (if tagged with feet)
- "Its" talking and working together

"Dribble Through Goals Race" (Dribbling)

Summary: Use cones to create "goals" through which players dribble. Place the goals about 5 steps apart and in an obvious sequence (like a circle). This is another game that helps players learn to control the ball with their feet.

Set-up:

- Use cones to make "goals" that are about 3 yards wide and 5 steps apart. Place them in an obvious sequence so players can easily go from one to the next (e.g., a circle).
- Each player has a ball.

The Game:

- One "goal" is the starting line
- Have 3 or 4 players start at a time, and others 10 seconds later
- Each group competes against each other to see who can finish the course first
- In the second race, re-group the players so the fastest compete against each other

Variations:

1. One group starts at the "Start" and another at the "Finish" so they dribble toward each other. (Only do this if you believe they won't collide).
2. Create 2 teams. One starts as "Attackers" and try to dribble through the goals while the other team defends the goals (one "Defender" per goal). Then switch. The winner is the team that has the most Attackers to cross the finish line with the ball. The Defender must stay between the cones he is defending.

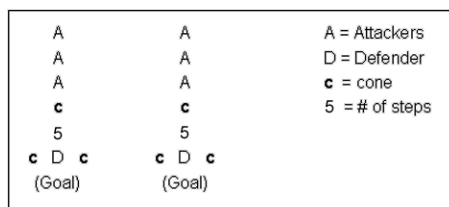
"Dribble Past Defender" (Dribbling and Tackling)

Comment: Comment: A simple way to teach basic 1 vs. 1 attacking and defense.

Teaches: Just playing the game will teach a lot. But, you can also encourage or teach defenders U-8 and older to watch the ball (don't watch the dribbler), to "toe poke", to "block tackle" (see Dictionary or Skills), to not jump at the attacker, to keep knees bent and stay on balls of feet, how to "shuffle" from side to side (feet don't crossover), a crossover step, and at older ages a "boxing" stance. Encourage attackers to shield the ball, control dribbling, and using change of speed, a quick change of direction, or feints to beat a defender.

Set-up:

- For U-6, use one line (unless you have an assistant to supervise a second line) and don't have "teams", just give everyone a chance to be the Defender.
- For U-8 and older, divide into 2 or 3 teams (it's okay if one team has an extra player)
- Select one player from each team to be the first one to play Defender against the other team.
- Use cones to make a goal (about 3-5 steps wide) for each Defender to defend, as shown below:



The Game:

- Each Attacker has a ball
- Attackers line up behind a "Starting Cone", 5 steps out from the Goal defended by a player from the other team.

- On "Go", the first Attacker in each line dribbles forward and tries to dribble across the Goal without the Defender touching the ball.
- The Attacker's team gets one point if he crosses the imaginary line between the cones without the Defender touching the ball with his foot. After scoring, the Attacker goes to the end of the line.
- If the Defender touches the ball with his foot, or kicks it, or if the Attacker or his ball touch the cones or go around them, then the Attacker does not get a point and must go to the end of the line.
- The next Attacker in line can start his attack as soon as his teammate goes to the end of the line
- Play for 1 or 2 minutes, and then switch Defenders
- The team with the most points after everyone has been a Defender wins. If the line moves fast, Attackers may score more than once before time expires.

Rules:

- Attackers must dribble across the goal line and cannot kick the ball across
- Goals only count if the ball goes between the cones.
- Attacker goes to the end of the line if the Defender touches the ball with his foot or if the Attacker or ball touch the cones or go around them.

Tip:

Because this is a timed game, Attackers should not be slow, but should go quickly. If they do, they may have a chance to score again before time expires.

Teaching Points:

Encourage Attackers to change their speed (go slow, then fast), a quick change of direction, or feints. Encourage shielding the ball. See "Teaches"



above for things you can teach Defenders.

"Longest Kick Game" (Kicking)

Teaches: Instep (i.e., "laces") kick

Comment: A simple, fun game

Set-Up:

- Each player has a ball
- Put 3 or 4 cones in a straight line as a "Shooting Line"

The Game:

- Players line up shoulder-to-shoulder one step apart behind the Shooting Line & place their ball in front of them on the Shooting Line
- Tell players to back up about 3 steps from their ball
- On "Go", the player on the right runs & kicks his ball as far as possible (if U-8, encourage them to use their "laces"; if U-6, just a solid kick)
- As soon as he kicks, the kicker runs to his ball & puts his foot on it where it has stopped
- Players kick one at a time.
- Longest kick wins
- Play 2 or 3 games

Teaching Points:

U-6: Watch the ball & have fun

U-8: Discourage "toe kicks" & encourage "drives". Primarily, encourage U-8 to keep their head down, eyes on the ball, lead with the knee, strike the ball with the "laces" & follow through toward target.

"Kick Balls Onto Other Field" (Passing/Defending)

Teaches: Passing, defending, anticipating the direction of the ball, "Weight", teamwork, & the concept of passing to "space" (in this case, away from the other team). With U-6, just let them kick the ball & don't try to teach them anything except to kick it in the correct direction.

Set-up:

- Use disk cones to mark an area 20 yards x 20 yards (smaller or larger depending on age & number of players)
- Use disk cones to divide the area in half; each half is a "field"

The Game:

- Divide into 2 teams: each team starts on their End Line facing the other team & each player has a ball
- On "Go", the players pass their ball onto the other team's "field" & each team kicks the balls back onto the other team's "field" as fast as possible (no dribbling allowed)
- At the end of one minute (or two), stop & count the balls on each field (only count balls on the field, not balls out of bounds)
- At the end of the game, the team that has passed the most balls onto the other team's field wins. (But for U-10 & up, any balls that a team has kicked out-of-bounds are deducted from their score; this is to discourage just kicking it hard & to encourage control).
- Encourage players to spread out in order to cover their entire field & to kick the ball between players on the other team, but don't kick it too hard (or it will go out of bounds & not count)
- Encourage players U-10 & up to anticipate the other team's passes, intercept them or cut them off, & one-touch pass them back

Rules:

- Balls kicked out of bounds are left there & not

played again (but players cannot kick balls out on their end just to get them off their field; they can only kick them toward the other team's field). However, balls accidentally kicked out-of-bounds by the receiver can be dribbled back in-bounds, but no dribbling once in-bounds.

- No dribbling allowed & players must stay on their side of the half-way line. (Players must pass the ball from where it stops or from where they intercept it).
- Players must pass the ball within 5 seconds of receiving it (i.e., by the count of 5). This is to keep them from trying to run down the time.

"Tick Tock"

(aka "The Foundation")
(Fast feet & footwork)

- Teaches:
- Fast feet, touch & ball control using inside-of-feet
- Set-up:
- Every player has a ball & starts with the ball between his feet, with knees bent
- The Game:
- On "Go" each player taps the ball between his feet. Each tap is "one"
 - 1st to reach 20 wins (1st to 40 if U-12).
- Tip:
- Keep knees bent & tap ball with the front of the foot (this gives better control than the back of the