



## U5/U6 Coaching Guide

On behalf of the East Sacramento Soccer Club (<https://www.eastsacsoccer.com/>), thank you for volunteering for this fun and rewarding experience. You are undertaking a task that is challenging but watching your young players learn and develop as soccer players and competitors is extremely gratifying.

It is my role as your U5/U6 coordinator to provide you with the general framework for a successful coaching season. In addition, I will act as a liaison to the board and other coaches to make sure all problems that arise are addressed meaningfully and that the season runs smoothly. This league is managed by volunteers and I will not be able to do it by myself. It takes the collective efforts of all involved to make U5/U6 soccer a special experience. To that end, please lend a hand if called upon.

I am looking for an assistant for this year. Ideally someone that will be in U5/U6 again next year. You just have to observe what I do so you can take over easily next year.

In the attached materials please find some example practice schedules, and some drills that are great for U5/U6 soccer. The next few pages contain your introduction to U5/U6 soccer and a critical list of information.

U6 Coaching Coordinator TBD for 2022



# U5/U6 Coaching Guide

## 1. Getting Started

- a. Head Coach Registration: Register yourself as a coach, complete the Risk Management Section, and complete the background check on Got Sport ASAP if you haven't already. You will find the directions on our Eastsacsoccer.com website under the Rec Coaches Page.
- b. Assistant Coach Registration: Find at least one assistant coach from your team. They need to register, complete the Background requirements also.
- c. Team Name and Information: Provide your team name to myself and the Registrar. You can't duplicate an active East Sac Club.
- d. Contact your team as soon as possible –contact your team within the next few days to give everyone proper notice and a chance to prepare for the season.
- e. Game Schedule: I will email the game schedule to all of the coaches. Please forward this onto your players. This should be available by mid August.
- f. Practice Selection / Time / Location: Practice sign up after this meeting. A master sheet will be sent out once completed. I recommend two practices a week until games start then drop to one practice a week. Once finalized, do not change your practice time/location without checking with me.
- g. Field Permits: Field permits will be located in the orange knack box in the NE corner of the East Portal Field (in case anyone wants to see them).
- h. Team Equipment: You will be provided with the following at the coaches meeting. You must return it at the end of the season.
  - i. One set of PUG Goals
  - ii. Several Soccer Balls
  - iii. Pinnies
  - iv. Cold Compress
  - v. A ball bag
  - vi. Cones

1.1.1 Uniforms: It will be the responsibility of the coach to assign or distribute numbers for the players. I recommend giving parents a deadline to request a special number for the kids and after that just assign them as you see fit. Players MUST wear an East Sac Jersey to play but shorts and socks are only encouraged. Lots of little people (including mine) have issues with the uniform socks and shorts especially if they are swimming in them. The most important thing is that they wear a jersey and socks that cover over their shin guards.

2. **First interaction with your team:** This can be done via email or if you are ambitious, a pizza parlor or other gathering place. In this email/meeting do the following:
  - a. Introductions: Introduce yourself and your coaches to the team. Have the players introduce themselves at the first practice. (I would do this for the first few practices).
  - b. Get Parent Volunteers (**You are the coach, which is enough, don't do anything else:**
    - i. Assistant Coaches: If you don't already have some, ask for volunteers. You cannot have too much help at this level!!
    - ii. Team Parent: Organizes the parent snack schedule.



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- iii. Banner Parent: Organizes and brings the banner. The banner is an optional but fun part of the team. It has the team name, logo and names of the players and is prominently displayed at games.
- iv. Party Organizer: Organizes the end of year or other parties.
- v. Web Parent: Organizes the team website, pictures etc.
- c. Review the Parent Code of Conduct/Liability form (attached). One of these forms must be filled out for each player on your team. Keep them in your team binder. As the coach, you are responsible for making sure your parents follow these rules.
- d. Ask the parents to talk with you privately if their children have any medical needs that you should take into account. Allergies are a big one!
- e. Talk about equipment (Size 3 Balls, Soccer Cleats, Shin Guards tucked into socks).
- f. Handout information about practices, games etc.
- g. Stress to the Parents that U5/U6 is all about fun and learning and is not competitive!

### 3. **Practices:**

- a. Safety:
  - i. Do not practice in hot weather or in pouring rain or extreme cold. If it is warm, utilize shade as much as possible and give extra water breaks. I may cancel practices for a few days or a week if we hit a long stretch of hot days.
  - ii. Water: What would kids these days do without a water bottle?
  - iii. Heading: No heading in U5/U6, period. End of story.
  - iv. Head and other injuries: Refer to the Club regulations (handout)
- b. Equipment:
  - i. Each player is required to have: soccer cleats and shin guards (tucked into socks). I recommend having an extra pair of shin guards and maybe hand-me-down cleats in your bag if you have them.
  - ii. Balls: The Club will give you a few balls but not enough for the whole team. I would strongly suggest you recommend each of your children to bring their own. Have players put their name and phone number on their soccer balls!
  - iii. Whistle: Helpful to start and stop games but not necessary.
- c. Practice Format: Totally up to you but have a plan and do not just wing it. Some practice ideas are at the end of this document, also visit the Club website and You-tube (search soccer practice for small children) for ideas:

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### 4. **Some notes on practices:**

- a. Avoid lines as much as possible: The goal is to have everyone touching the ball or playing defense as much as possible. Lines don't accomplish either. It's up to you to keep everyone engaged throughout practice.
- b. Keep lectures short: Take small opportunities to address the kids. You'll get maybe thirty seconds before you lose their attention. Stretching is a great time to get their attention or at the end of practice huddle.
- c. Scrimmages are fun but weaker players can often be bored and left out of an all-team scrimmage which leads to lack of self-confidence and a downward spiral. I would encourage



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practicing the 3 v 3 (U5) or 4 v4 (U6) formats that the players will actually see in games. If you want to have a full team scrimmage, make sure everyone is involved.

- d. Disruptive or Uninterested Kids: There will likely be a player or two that is disruptive or uninterested. Here are some strategies to deal with them:
  - i. **Keep everything fun and play based.** You aren't coaching college soccer, the whole idea is to have fun. By keeping the kids engaged you run the best chance of connecting with these players.
  - ii. Talk to the parents so you can understand issues the player may be having. Maybe they are low on energy and need a snack before the practice or maybe they need a little time to transition to a new environment. Some kids just need some down time with mom or dad, which is fine.
  - iii. Have rambunctious players run to a nearby tree to get their "wiggles out" or freeze the play and have everyone shake out their wiggles as a team.
  - iv. Ask a parent to come give you a hand keeping the kids on task.
  - v. Remember, this is U5/U6 soccer so please be **extremely patient** with the little people.
- 5. **GAME DAY:** game days are on Saturdays with games starting at 9am, 10am and 11am. They are the best part of U5/U6 soccer, please keep it fun and follow the rules. Game days also require your participation to prepare for and clean up after the event.
  - a. **Setup and Breakdown**
    - i. **PAINTING:** Each coach is responsible for striping the fields at least once this year. Sign-up sheet is available with practice sign ups. Striping demo to follow after this meeting.
    - ii. **FIELD SETUP:** We will be using your PUG goals for the games so both teams must bring them to the games. The flags are located in the orange knock box in the NE corner of the field (code 1010). The first teams to play in the morning are responsible for setting up the flags and the last teams are responsible for taking them down.
    - iii. **KEEP IT CLEAN:** Please note, EVERY team is in charge of cleaning up after themselves after every game... all trash, coffee cups, orange peels, etc. Please keep it clean so that we can keep our field permits in place.
- 6. **RULES OF THE GAME**
  - a. **COACHES will act as referees** for the U5/U6 games. U5/U6 coaches are permitted to be on the field to instruct their teams. I would encourage only one coach from each team on the field at a time. Short of dribbling the ball yourself, feel free to direct and help as needed.
  - b. **Parents** (other than registered coaches) are not allowed on the field. **Parents are encouraged to cheer but not to coach (this is very important).** Parents and coaches yelling directions during the game is one of the easiest ways to confuse the players (Do I do what coach said or what Dad said??).
  - c. Home Team wears Pennies.
  - d. Home Team for 9AM games setup the goals and corner cones.
  - e. Keep on schedule: Teams must complete warm-ups prior to kickoff time.
  - f. If players are committing unsportsmanlike behavior, I encourage the coaches to stop the game and discuss the behavior with the teams before resuming play. Remember everyone is there to have fun and learn.
  - g. **RAIN OUTS** –Even moderate rainfall during the week can close our fields. If it has been raining call CITY PARK FIELD STATUS LINE AT (916) 277-2336 or go to the website at:



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<http://www.cityofsacramento.org/parksandrecreation/parks/park--safety.htm@fields> to see the status of the fields.

- h. Note: If the fields are open, we are going to play, rain or shine. Unless you get an email from me saying fields are closed, we are playing.
- i. **THE PARENT TUNNEL:** It is an ongoing tradition to have parents create a tunnel for the two teams to run through following the U5/U6 games, let's keep the tradition alive. I also challenge you to do this and not smile, it's impossible.
- j. **PLAYING TIME** all players are REQUIRED TO PLAY 50% of the game. Please ensure that this happens. I recommend that you set a rotation up before the game and print it out. Be ready to adjust based on kids being sick, tired, hungry, distracted on strike etc.
- k. **LOPSIDED GAMES:** Please keep it fun. The rule is that games cannot have more than a 5 point differential. You need to do everything in your power to make this happen.
- l. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their sideline. They, with the help of a parent volunteer, will make sure that only positive comments are offered. There is zero tolerance for inappropriate behavior. If a parent is being disruptive, send them home (with their player).
- m. If possible, home team with their spectators will be on one side of the field and the visiting team with their spectators will be on the opposite side of the field. If field constraints or safety precludes this, coaches of both teams will decide the best spectator configuration.
- n. Teams will be divided into two groups and play two 3v3 (U5) or 4v4 (U6) games simultaneously on adjacent fields. I will send out a diagram of the fields before the year starts.
- o. It's up to the two head coaches if they want to do round robin or "A" and "B" game. The important thing is to keep both games as fair and fun as possible.
- p. Games consist of four (4) quarters of eight (8 or 6) minutes each. There will be a five (5) minute break in between each quarter. Teams must be on the field and ready to play at the five (5) minute mark.
- q. Re-shuffling of players between fields may occur during each quarter break to avoid lopsided situations.
- r. If a team shows up with too few players to field a team, they may borrow players from the opposing team. If the other team doesn't show up at all, split your team up and play. NO forfeits; the focus is on playing the game and having fun.
- s. During games, offer encouragement to all players including your opponents.
- t. Substitutions may be done by either team on any dead ball situation.
- u. Each quarter begins with a kick off. The kick off must be a pass to another teammate. The team kicking off lines up on their goal line. The defending team must line up at the mid line and wait until the ball is put into play before moving to defend.
- v. When balls go out of bounds: coaches will throw a ball back in to the team that did not kick it out.
- w. After every ball in the net (goal), the game is re-started with the team that did not score kicking off in the manner described above
- x. Scores will not be kept
- y. No heading. Headers result in a change of possession.
- z. Have fun!

### Season:

- aa. Practices can start in August, please be mindful of the weather though.
- bb. Games start on the first Saturday after Labor Day. I will send out a schedule early to mid August.
- cc. Bye Week: Everyone has a bye week on the 6<sup>th</sup> week.
- dd. U6 will be a 10 game schedule, U5 will be 8 games.



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## Practice ideas:

- ee. **Warmup:** Setup a 20x20 yard field, have the players dribble inside the field trying not to hit each other or have them dribble around you in a circle, anything to get them moving with the ball. You can have some fun with this later in the season to say “switch” and they have to leave their ball and find another. Players can also stop the ball with the body part that you yell out such as “knee”, “elbow”, or “bottom”!
- ff. **Stretching:** Have the players learn the other players’ names during stretching. Stretching is also a good time to tell the kids what they are going to do during practice (and it’s about the only time they will listen). This is also a good time to put pennies on the half the kids before the drills start.
- gg. **Jumping Jacks and Ball Touches:** Have the players do Jumping Jacks and Toe Touches. I usually let the players choose how many they will do of each.
- hh. **1<sup>st</sup> Drill: Treasure Hunt:** Place lots of cones in the 20x20 field and have the kids dribble to a cone, pick it up and bring it to you, all while dribbling. You can do a couple rounds and you can always “reload” the field with treasure to keep the kids going. Focus on dribbling and keeping the ball close.
- ii. **WATER BREAK**
- jj. **2<sup>nd</sup> Drill: Clean your room:** Make a 20x30 field split in half. Split the players into two teams each with a ball and tell them to “clean their room” by kicking their balls into their opponents field. After a bit, count the balls in each field. Focus on kicking correctly. Watch you placers kick the ball and especially beware of toe punching.
- kk. **3<sup>rd</sup> Drill: Red Light Green Light:** Start the players on a line and have them dribble towards you, stop etc. Practice stopping the ball. You can do a bunch of variations of this including cutting left and right and pulling the ball back and turning. As the players progress, eliminate the verbal commands and switch to hand signals to get them looking up. Focus on dribbling, cutting, pulling back, stopping and paying attention. You can also turn this into “Simon Says”.
- ll. **WATER BREAK**
- mm. **Hungry Hippo:** Split the team into four groups, one on each corner of a 20x20 field. Put all of the balls in the middle. Have the kids perform a relay to retrieve all of the balls. Work on pulling the balls back and turning, dribbling close. Make sure to recharge the pile to make sure everyone gets a chance to get a ball.
- nn. **4<sup>th</sup> Drill: Small Sided Game:** Split the team into four teams of 2 to 3 each. Make two 20x20 fields and small goals out of cones. Have your assistant watch one field and you watch the other. Have lots of balls on hand to replace out of bounds balls. Rotate the teams so that everyone gets to play each other.
- oo. **End of Practice Cheer!!!** Help the kids make up a team cheer and do a lot of cheering, they love it and it connects them to the team.

## **2. OTHER FUN DRILLS:**

- a. **Ouchy:** Grab a few parents and have the kids try to hit the coaches and parents with the balls. When they hit you, jump up and say “OUCHY”.
- b. **Sharks and Minnows (Classic):** Start all of the players in a 20x20. The coach starts as a shark and steals the ball from one of the players who then becomes a shark. Continue until everyone is a shark. Variation, go from end line to end line.
- c. **Crab Soccer:** Same as sharks and minnows but sharks walk on the backs (crabs).



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- d. **Little Goals:** Setup 8 or so 4 foot wide goals in a small field. Have the kids try to score as many goals as you count down from 30 seconds.
- e. **Simon Says:** Infinite Possibilities. You can have them chase other players, stop, spin around, kick the ball at coach, use only their left foot, anything to keep them moving with the ball and having fun.
- f. **Tiger Tail:** Have half the kids tuck a pinnie into the back of their shorts
- g. **Parent Day:** I like to bring all of the parents out onto the field early in the season to show them some easy things they can do with their players at home. Then bring them back out field later in the season to see how their players are progressing.
- h. **Other Drills:** Go online, or get a book, there are countless fun drills and games for U6 soccer. Remember, keep it fun and try to avoid those lines.