



South Zone Coaching Guide U4-U12

Recommended Program Goals

One with One Model (U4/U5/U6)

With U4s and U5s, Canada Soccer recommends a one-with-one model. This means that the parent or guardian is on the field with the child. Not only does this help the child adapt to soccer and new surroundings it also helps team have more productive practices by providing the coach a some extra help.

Depending on the child or group, one with one could also be useful in U6, especially early in the season.

Keeping the Ball in Play (All Ages)

Coaches and parents often encourage kids to clear the ball or kick it out of bounds when under pressure - enforcing the old adage, out is better than in the net. Game play has changed over the years and kids are now being taught to keep the ball in play, even when under pressure. They need to learn to work through the pressure rather than “get rid of it”. Does this mean that sometimes you get scored on – yes it does – this is one of the reasons that younger age groups do not keep score anymore. Remember, it is about long-term development of the players and teaching them about support systems, not just winning current game. If kids do not learn to work themselves out of pressure in younger age groups, they will never learn.

Training Sessions

Basic skills like dribbling, passing shooting, trapping/control and formations should be taught in every age group, but with limited training time, I recommend the following areas of concentration per age group.

Age	Foot Skill Concentration	Control Concentration	Formation Concentration
U4/U5	Dribbling – small controlled touches, stopping the ball, no hands	Controlling ball with feet Keeping the ball in play	Spreading out, going for the ball
U6	Variation in foot Skills ie. pull backs, feints Using dominant foot, inside and outside etc, Passing, shooting with strength using correct part of the foot	Control with feet/legs Keeping the ball in play	Spreading out, triangle formations/ angled passing
U8	Dribbling, Foot Skills ie. pull backs, feints etc, Introduce inside of the non-dominant	Control with chest Keeping the ball in play	Spreading out, triangle and diamond formations / angled passing Support positioning and

	foot Passing, shooting with strength using correct part of the foot		passing for team-mates under pressure
U10	Refining dominant foot skills Passing, shooting with strength using correct part of the foot	Control with head Keeping the ball in play	Spreading out, triangle and diamond formations/ angled passing Support positioning and passing for team-mates under pressure Movement without the ball
U12	Refining non-dominant foot skills Passing, shooting with strength using different parts of the foot Chipping and crossing the ball ie. getting lift.	Refining control with all body parts Keeping the ball in play	Spreading out, triangle and diamond formations/ angled passing Support positioning and passing for team-mates under pressure Movement without the ball

25-25-25 Training Times

Canada Soccer recommends that training sessions be 45 to 60 minutes long and be comprised of 25% General Movement, 25% Coordination, 25% Soccer Technique and 25% Small-Sided Games.

Since South Zone training sessions tend to be 15 to 20 minutes long, I recommended coaches focus their time on one or two areas amongst Movement, Coordination and Technique and add in Small-Sided games to bring skills together once they have progressed.

Game Time

- Players should play all positions
- Players learn and practice offensive and defensive skills
- Encourage diamond and triangle positioning
- Encourage keeping the ball in play, even if they lose possession
- Encourage movement without the ball ie. getting into supporting and advancing positions

Coaching Tips

- Trying new drills can be struggle. If a drill is not going well, stop, regroup, re-demonstrate and help them through it. If it still is not working, there is nothing wrong with abandoning a drill and moving on to something else.
- Use one drill-set-up for the entire session. With limited training time, setting up, or re-organizing cones is not the best use of your time. Try to plan your sessions so you can use the same set up. ie. grid, gates, ladders, triangle set up etc.
- With limited training time, I recommend choosing less than ten to repeat for the entire season. Add progressions and new skills into the drill for variation vs. teaching an entirely new format.
- Add progressions to drills as players master basic skills.
- When in doubt, use a common kids game and add a ball.

Common Progressions or Regressions

- Add/Remove skills ie toe touches, dances, pull backs, feints
- Adding/Removing obstacles
- Adding/Remove time limits
- Add/Remove players
- Add/Remove space
- Add/Remove targets or goals

Coaching Resources

Drills and Mini-Games

Drills discussed/demonstrated at the clinic:

U4/U5	Egg Pick-up	U8	Agility Cones
	Egg Gatherers		Technique Square
	Egg Stealers		Triangle Passing
	Mr. Wolf		Speed Soccer
U6	Agility Cones	U10/U12	Agility Cones
	Egg Pick-up		Technique Square
	Egg Gatherers		Triangle Passing
	Egg Stealers		Ladders
	Triangle Passing		Speed Soccer

Canada Soccer Coaching Toolkits

(each has 30-40 development appropriate drills and tips)

Active Start	U4 to U6 (both genders)	https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/CanadaSoccerPathway_CoachsToolKit_ActiveStart_20141006.pdf
Fundamentals	U6-U8 Females U6-U10 Males	https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/CanadaSoccerPathway_CoachsToolKit_FUNdamentals_20141021.pdf
Learning to Train	U8-U11 Females U9-U12 Males	https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/CanadaSoccerPathway_CoachsToolKit_LearnToTrain_20141106.pdf

The Coaching Manual

(excellent resource for all ages but especially for more advanced game-play at the U14, U15, U17 levels)

<https://www.thecoachingmanual.com/home>

Tools and Resources

Soccer Field Inspection Sheet

https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/CSA_Soccer_Field_Inspection_Sheet.pdf

Canada Soccer – Concussion Awareness

<https://www.coach.ca/concussion-awareness-s16361>

Canada Soccer Nutrition Resources

<https://www.coach.ca/sport-nutrition-s14783>

Coaching Education

Canada Soccer – Long Term Player Development

https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/CanadaSoccerPathway_LTPDCommunityGuide_EN_20140623.pdf

Canada Soccer Training and Licensing Information

<https://www.coach.ca/trained-vs-certified-s16468&language=en>

https://www.canadasoccer.com/files/March_2017_Coach_status_BIL_.pdf

Contact Information

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APPENDIX A:

Additional U4/U5 Drills

With U4s and U5s, it can be useful to come up with a theme for your program – it helps them have fun and use their imagination. The following set of drills have a dinosaur theme, but you can adapt as you see fit.

At the end, I have also included several drills from the Canada Soccer Active Start Coaching Toolkit that you can try if you want something more advanced.

Dribbling

Dino Tails

Preparation

Depending on the number of kids playing you will need to set-up a grid that the young players will not try and leave. You will need some pinneys, enough soccer balls for one-each and some helpful parents!



Explanation

The aim for this soccer drill is for the young players to get the tail (pinney) from the parents. The parents will need to put a pinney half tucked into the back of their pants/shorts. The kids have to chase after them and remove the pinney (acting as a tail). Once the kids have all of the pinneys the game ends. If there is a really fast parent then all of the kids can aim to get the last dino's tail!

Role of the Parents

Parents try and get the tails of the little dinos. When they do, they become a big dino while the kids try to get their tail – parents need to dribble too!

Progression

A useful progression to this drill is to play the first game without soccer balls and then introduce them into the second game. This will help the young players understand what they have to do.

Once the kids are comfortable with the parents having the tail see if the kids can be the chickens for a while. This drill can be used for older players by having all chickens and foxes dribbling a ball as a fun warm up game to any session.

Coaching points

- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.

Dino Treasure Hunt

Preparation

Take a look at the simple layout of the drill below. To set-up you will need a cone for the kids to stand behind to begin. You will then need colored pinneys (or cones) down the other end to act as the treasure!



Explanation

To begin you will need to get the kids excited about playing soccer. Tell the young players that this game is "...a fun game called Dino Treasure Hunt. What noise do Dinos make?" The kids will make an 'rarr' noise. Then you need to tell them that dinos love treasure and the treasure is down the other end of the island.

The kids will need to go one at a time and pick up **one** piece of treasure (cone/pinney) and bring it back to the pirate ship.

1. To get the young 3 and 4 year olds to understand this game, play the first round without soccer balls.
2. The second time they should kick a soccer ball down with them.

Role of the Parents

Parents should run along-side their little dinos as they go towards the treasure.

Progression

A nice little progression to this and other kids soccer drills is adding cones leading up to the treasure so the kids have to weave in and out of them before getting to the end. By placing the cones down the young players have to dribble the soccer ball in different directions - not just straight.

You could also encourage a race parallel with each other to see who can get the most treasure in the quickest time!

Coaching Points

- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.

Sleeping T-Rex

Preparation

You will need the kids lined up next to one another with a soccer ball each at their feet. The coach or a parent will lie down and act as the sleeping T-Rex down the other end of the marked out area.



Explanation

This game is all about getting the kids to take little touches of the soccer ball but to be as quiet as they can as they sneak up on the sleeping T-Rex. Every once and a while the T-Rex should make noises like he is about to wake up or toss and turn to keep the kids excited. As the kids get closer and closer the T-Rex chooses when to get up and chase them or to let them cross the finish line.

If the T-Rex wakes up the kids need to turn around with their balls and go as fast they can back to their home.

Role of the Parents

Parents should run along-side their little dinos as they go towards the T-Rex. Parents should remind them to keep quiet and alternate feet.

Progression

A useful progression to this soccer practice drill is to see how quickly the kids can get back to where they started after the T-Re wakes up. They must take their ball with them remember.

Coaching points

- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.

What Time is it T-Rex?

Preparation

You will need the kids lined up next to one another with a soccer ball each at their feet. The coach or a parent will take a spot down the other end of the marked out area.



Explanation

This game is all about getting the kids to take little touches of the soccer ball and to stop it. It also helps them work on their counting. Kids yell out what time is it T-Rex and then take that many steps forward (just like what time is it Mr. Wolf.) As the kids get closer and closer the T-Rex chooses when to chase them.

If the T-Rex turns around, the kids need to turn around with their balls and go as fast they can back to their home.

Role of the Parents

Parents should run along-side their little dinos as they go towards the T-Rex. Help them count steps and remind them to alternate feet and to “squish the ball”

A useful progression to this soccer practice drill is to see how quickly the kids can get back to where they started after the T-Rex turns around. They must take their ball with them.

Coaching points

- When stopping the ball encourage kids to “squish it like a bug”
- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.

Dino Egg Gatherers

***This game works best preceding Dino Egg Stealers**

Preparation

Put all the soccer balls in the middle of the grid and then set up “nests” using pylons on opposite corners of the grid. Depending on the number of kids create either two, three or four nests. Split kids so that there are no more than four or so dinos in each “herd”.

Explanation

When the coach says “go” kids run from their nest to big pile in the middle and gather the “eggs” (soccer balls) and they dribble them to their own nest and then go get another. They do this for a pre-determined amount of time – three to four minutes depending on their stamina. When you stop the game the kids can count the eggs to see who won and you can play again. If a team is falling significantly behind, have an apprentice join in the weaker team to help them out.

Role of the Parents

Parents should run along-side their little dinos as they collect eggs. If they are able to do it independently the parents can gather around the nests to cheer them on.

Progression

A useful progression is to have the kids add five toe taps to the top of the egg before they can bring it back to their nest.

Coaching points

- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.

Dino Egg Stealers

***This game works best preceding Dino Egg Stealers**

Preparation

Set up "nests" using pylons on opposite corners of the grid. Depending on the number of kids create either two, three or four nests. Split kids so that there are no more than four or so dinos in each "herd".

Explanation

When the coach says "go" kids run from their nest to the other nests and steal their "eggs" (soccer balls) and they dribble them to their own nest and then go get another. They do this for a pre-determined amount of time – three to four minutes depending on their stamina. When you stop the game the kids can count the eggs to see who won and you can play again. If a team is falling significantly behind, have an apprentice join in the weaker team to help them out.

Role of the Parents

Parents should run along-side their little dinos as they collect eggs. If they are able to do it independently the parents can gather around the nests to cheer them on.

Progression

A useful progression is to have the kids add five toe taps to the top of the egg before they can bring it back to their nest.

Coaching points

- Don't let the kids put their hands on the soccer ball
- Encourage the more skilled kids to move faster
- Encourage kids to use the insides of their feet and let their feet take turns.