

GSC U6/U8 Coaching Tips

By: Joel Hansen

Practice Guidelines for Young Players:

1. Never practice for more than one hour for U8. Never practice for more than 45 minutes for U6. One practice a week is good.
2. Set up a defined field area, usually with cones, that is about the same size or slightly larger than the 4v4 game fields. A large area is not necessary for this age group.
3. Move on to a new activity if the players become disinterested or lose focus. Do not try to force it. Keep it FUN and POSITIVE! For young children to stay interested, it must be fun.
4. Use the **“Soccer Pro”** method to keep young players focused on the coach's instructions and while talking to the players. The **“Soccer Pro”** method is a foot on the ball, hands on the hips, eyes looking at the coach. Yell out “Soccer Pros gather around”. Make sure the players have one foot on the ball, their hands on their hips, and eyes on you. This should keep the kids focused for a minute. Any longer than that and the players will lose interest in what is being said.
5. Have a practice plan or plan the activities prior to the start of practice. Being organized will help keep things moving.
6. Try to avoid practice activities that require long lines, especially during the first phase or segment of practice. Idle time for young kids leads to the kids losing focus on the soccer activity, which can quickly lead to kids that don't listen, which leads to coach frustration.
7. Take plenty of breaks. Usually every 10 minutes, for 30 seconds to a minute. During hot days, make sure that all players have a water break frequently.
8. Don't “over coach”. All the kids already know how to play soccer. I'll say that again: All the kids already know how to play soccer. Just encourage and keep it fun. At these ages, there is no need to coach which part of the foot to use, or to stay in a spot. Don't worry if a defender wants to get involved with an attack. It is also worth noting that positions don't really matter. It is more important to keep all the players engaged in the play than worrying about

where they are positioned on the field. Don't worry if a player is on the "wrong side". These points have no importance and no significance at this age.

Practice Segments:

Divide practice into three phases or segments. A regular practice progression is a good idea, and teaches the players a regular routine which will help keep the kids engaged. Please see the document titled "Coaching Activities & Practice Guide" for detailed directions of each segment and the activities.

Segment 1: Warmups. For players in this age group warmups should include a ball for every player. Each player should have their own ball. Activities can include small or light touches including: "Tic Toc " or "Quick Feet" (they are the same thing), Toe Taps, Dribbling, and the most basic soccer move the "Drag Back". No more than 5 minutes should be spent on these individual skill activities. Other first segment activities include: Freeze Tag, Sharks and Minnows, and Get the Coach.

Segment 2: The second segment is to develop a specific soccer strategy or skill set. Excellent activities that develop confidence, attacking, and defending skills include: Lines of Attack, Defending from Behind, and Get Out of Here.

Segment 3: The third segment should consist of a scrimmage. Each practice should end with a scrimmage. Use all the players on the team. If there are only 3 players, play 2v2 with the coach helping one of the players. Play 3v3, 4v4, etc. If you don't own goals, then you can use cones to represent the goal. An additional option for scoring is to have the players dribble through the goal instead of kicking the ball into the goal or through the cones.