

Practice Plans Ages 7-9

Week 1

Leave all available soccer balls out on a line. As players arrive introduce yourself and ask them to go pick a ball. Allow for 5-10 minutes of “goofing off”. These guys are young, and it may be their first time with a soccer ball. Give them a few minutes to get comfortable. Encourage them to only use their feet, but don’t stress. Practice hasn’t officially started.

Once all players have arrived or you feel they’ve had enough time for playing call them all in for a basic stretch. Use this opportunity to chat with them. Ask them a combination of soccer and fun questions to get them comfortable speaking with you.

Every practice should start this way. Repetition helps at this age. It allows them to learn, by the time we are done stretching, practice has started.

Stretch Suggestions

Spread your feet and lean to one side. Then the other.

Go down like a dog. Wave arms between legs.

Batman or butterfly. Ask are you a batman or a butterfly? Sitting with soles of feet together.

Chicken wing – this is the best opportunity to chat loosely. Both legs. Keep one leg bent with the other extended, touching your toes.

Balance on 1 leg for 10 seconds

Balance on the other leg for 10 seconds

Tip toes for 10 seconds

Water

There should be roughly 40 minutes left. You do not want to toss too much at them. They can only comprehend so much. Focus on 2 drills that focus on the same skills.

Game 1 – King/Queen of the Ring

This game is my absolute favorite. It helps you become comfortable as the leader, develop the kid’s spatial awareness and the kids love it. Set up a large circle grid of cones. Large enough that each player can fit with space to spare. Each player stands behind a cone with a ball. Count down and let them go. Each player needs to move around inside the circle while keeping their ball close. They also need to attempt to kick out their opponents’ ball. The first round might be a disaster. That is expected. They will need 2-3 rounds to understand. This game is so valuable. You should use it almost weekly. The King/Queen is the last one with their ball in the circle. Crown them. King Andrew. Call him King Andrew – this helps the players learn names, and they love it. King Andrew will start in the middle of the circle and the King will now give the count down. Continue like this alternating Kings and Queens based on who wins the round.

Coaching Points Game 1

The idea of the game is that the players need to learn to be aware of the players around them. Most young players spend most of the time looking DOWN at the ball. Demonstrate why this does not work. Ask to borrow a ball. (ALWAYS ASK, THIS HELPS ENFORCE SHARING BY PERMISSION)

If I (Coach) have the ball, and I'm looking DOWN at the ball, can I see you (pick a player – Andrew?). The answer should be no. Ask what will happen if I run into Andrew without seeing him? Could I lose my ball? Answer should be yes. Follow up, so if I'm looking down at the ball, where should I look next? Answer is UP. Repeat this a few times. First, I look down, then I look? Up. Down? Up.

Enforce these ideas while the kids play. Remind them to look up. Look down then up, down then up. Remind them to look up DURING the round. Don't beat a dead horse but be constant and be positive.

How to Increase the Challenge?

Increase the speed. First a jog, then a run, can we sprint?

Coach is in the circle now. Permanent defense. Can you survive the wrath of Coach?

Water

Game 2 – Sharks and Minnows

Make a line of cones roughly 10 yards long. Make a 2nd line of cones the same length. These cones should be separated by about 5 yards. Inside these lines are the "Shark's Waters". The Shark (Coach) cannot swim outside the cones. All the Minnows (Players) line up outside one line of cones. You begin pacing down the "waters" from one end to the other. You count down and let them go. The minnows need to dribble through the shark's waters and reach the other side without losing their ball, or having it stolen by the shark.

Coaching Points Game 2

This game piggybacks off the first game's focus. We need to look where we are going (LOOK UP) and dribble to an Opening (New Focus). When walking as the shark you want your steps to be consistent. Explain to the players that if you are walking left, that the right side will be open. Or if you are walking right, the left side will be open. Ask them, would it be easier to swim past me if you go where I am? Or to an open space? We are trying to develop spatial awareness. The players need to move away from where the shark is headed and towards the space that is opening. They do this by looking UP.

How to increase the Challenge?

Increase the speed of the shark.

Add another shark, walking the opposite direction.

Water.

Scrimmage. You can't beat an old-fashioned scrimmage. A 30-minute game to end practice is a coach's favorite and a player's favorite. Nothing can simulate the game like the game. Throughout the scrimmage coach for the points of focus. Looking Up and Moving to the Opening. Your team should be large enough to scrimmage itself either 4v4 or 5v5. If not, ask the team next to you. They should be the same age group and division.

End Practice

Re-enforce names at the end for both yourself and your teammates. Ask them questions about your coaching points from practice.

When I'm looking down, where do I look next? UP!

When I have the ball, do I dribble towards the other players, or around them? AROUND!

Break it down with a team cheer.

Good job Coach.