

## Practice Plans Ages 4-6

### Week 3

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.

Go down like a dog.

Batman or butterfly. Ask are you a batman or a butterfly?

Chicken wing – this is the best opportunity to chat loosely. Both legs.

1 leg with 2 helpers

1 leg with 2 new helpers

Tip toes with 2 new helpers

### 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 – Whichever Game from Week 1/2 worked the Best. Repetition is crucial at this age.**

**It never hurts to start a rotation here. We do not want to play King of the Ring exclusively. Start alternating between the original 3 games. These are the most valuable and we want to revisit them often.**

### Water

## **Game 2 – Cat and Mouse**

We still want to piggyback off Week 1/2 (Looking Up and Dribbling to an Opening). We are only playing 1 new game this week and we want it to be related yet different.

Have each player place their ball along an end line (ideally the longer sideline). Then have each player (without their ball) move to the shorter sideline.

Round 1 should just be Coach vs the Kids. Coach takes the role of the Cat. The kids take the role of the Mice. The Mice need to get across the “Kitchen Floor”, Soccer Field, without getting caught by a “Mouse Trap”, Soccer Ball. The Coach passes the soccer ball at the Mice as they run across the field. They should run from one end to the other and stop. They should only cross the field once per round. If they get hit by the ball then they become a Cat and need to start passing the ball to catch the other mice. Continue until you have caught most players.

### **Coaching Points Game 2**

The kids love this game. It starts off just purely fun. They are working on their agility (dodging the ball), their awareness (looking for the ball), and their stamina. Once they take the role of the Cat they are working on passing to a moving target. We want to coach for them to pass to where the Mice are going, not where they are.

As Mice:

- We want them to use any means necessary to not get hit. Jumping, stopping, diving, etc. We want them to start realizing they can run in more than just a straight line.
- We want them to deal with defeat. Some kids take loss easily, others do not. This game is the great equalizer since you don't “lose” you just change teams.

As Cats:

- We want them to learn to pass to a moving target. To do so they need to use our previous Coaching Point of Looking Up.

### **How to increase the Challenge?**

Start with more players as Cats.

My personal favorite is to get the parents involved. Ask if any parents are willing to play a round? First round or two have the parents be the Cats. The kids will love it. After that switch it up and let the kids be the Cats and their parents the Mice. The kids will love having to catch their grown-up.

## Coaching for Adversity

Some kids will deal with loss poorly. It happens, for a variety of reasons. If you have a player who is really upset, as in disrupting the game upset, we can shift the focus for them. This happens all the time. Cat and Mouse creates a challenge and when the kids “fail” it can hurt. We can still help a player who cannot mentally recover yet. Rather than forcing them to become a Cat, challenge them to become a Mouse again. I try to help them deal with their anxiety here. If they do not want to become a Cat, then they need to make Eye Contact and ask to remain a Mouse. It is a simple gesture but make sure they make Eye Contact. Speaking to a Coach, Teacher, Adult can be intimidating. Even for adults. By enforcing Eye Contact we are helping them deal with that intimidation. They will become more comfortable with you, and they learn that asking questions with respect is never frowned upon. If they can make Eye Contact and ask, then I always let them be a Mouse again. Just once though. We don’t want to let them build the habit of avoiding one uncomfortable situation (being the Cat) because they became comfortable with the other (making Eye Contact).

Tread lightly with this should you use it. Once the other kids see it happen, they will expect the same treatment. It is a great tool to have, but one to use sparingly.

## 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, Spacing** and now **Passing**. 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!

Should we be running into each other while playing? NO! Should we keep our Space? YES!

Should I pass to where you are? Or where you are going? Where we are going!

Break it down with a team cheer.

Good job Coach.