

LCYSA U6-U9 Curriculum and Coaching Tips 2025

General Coaching Tips:

When providing instruction:

- Attempt to have players facing away from sun and any significant distractions (other teams, elk/deer/dogs)
- Keep it short; under 60 seconds and hopefully closer to 30 seconds
- Try to get lower to their level, can kneel or squat down
- Ask open-ended questions: where's the space, should you dribble vs pass?, can you create space, etc.
- Encourage and applaud effort. It has been shown to be much more motivating than congratulating on a good job or outcome. Encourage risk taking.

**Remember you may be the best thing that happens to them for the day/week: Greet them when they arrive. Have a team high-five to get started. Shout-outs at the end for great effort, plays, good answers.

Game Days:

- Encourage possession soccer with either dribbling or intentional passing. Encourage passing to their teammates on all dead balls and not just lumping it down field, if they don't dribble in
- Encourage a rotation of players during re-starts (goal kicks, sideline outs, kick offs), good opportunity for less aggressive/confident players to get touches on the ball (maybe even give those players more opportunities than the kids that are getting the most touches in games)
- No goalies or puppy guarding at U6/7. Always encourage all players to get into the attack and at least be at the half line when the ball is in the opposition half, especially if they want to stand in front of the goal!
- Please rotate players through positions if you have specific positions. Rotations can be done over the course of the season or within a single game depending on your comfort doing that.
- Attempt to give all players at least half a game. Do not punish kids who don't show up at practice as they are likely not at fault for not showing up
- App Subtime can track minutes and let you know when to sub for more equal playing time. Free for games 40 minutes or less; \$1.99/mo subscription for longer games/more features.

U6/U7- Technical work: Dribbling (running with the ball and moves), ball mastery

- Lots of games with the ball (dribbling/shielding, running with the ball), ball striking, tag
- Challenge them to keep the ball within a hula hoops distance from their body while dribbling
- Coordination relays with sprinting, backpedaling, shuffling, bounding, hopping, jumping, skipping
- 1v1 with focus on attacking goal(s) or across end line in control
- 2v2 with rotation of teams instead of just scrimmage
- Don't need to emphasize any specific formation, everyone attacks and everyone defends
- 1-2 practices per week for up to 60 minutes (feel free to end early if losing them)

U8/9- Technical work: Dribbling, shooting, passing/receiving, ball control, running with the ball, shielding, turning

- Begin incorporating 1v1 Defending (delay using: fast, slow, side on, low)
- Have a specific shape (diamond or box) on goal kicks and try to play out vs just kicking big up the field
- Encourage dribbling and spacing (could use pool noodles to promote spacing)
- 2 practices per week for up to 75 minutes

Coaching Resources:

- Mojo (both an app and YouTube Channel)
- MLS Go Playbook <https://www.mlssoccer.com/mls-go/playbook/> (MLS GO full season training plans on Mojo app)
- Coerver United YouTube Channel: Look at their playlists and try to use the ball mastery and "moves" videos for training ideas
- Catalan Soccer YouTube Channel
- Chat GPT (or other AI service) when trying to train something specific. Ex: what are dribbling games for 6 year old soccer players without any elimination?
- Massachusetts, Tennessee, and Eastern Pennsylvania youth soccer season plans by age group (I can email if you can't find online) *This is the "easy button" if you want a set plan

- US Soccer Grassroots 4v4 curriculum and/or United Soccer Coaches 4v4 Diploma. Costs \$25 and takes 1-2 hours to finish (good for U6-U9 teams)

Concepts to use in training:

Funiño (likely best for U8/9): small sided game with 2 wide goals (12 yards apart) at each end line with goal scoring zone being only 6 yards from the end line

- 3v3 or 4v4 (can rotate through sub(s) every 3-4 minutes)
- 18 yards wide X 28 yards long (including scoring zone) likely needs to be smaller for younger kids
- Kick-ins or dribble-ins with 3 yard defensive buffer (rotate kick take)
- Training Progression: 1. 3v0 and everyone with a ball dribbling and scoring in either opposite goal. 2. 3v0 with teams starting on opposite sides all with a ball dribbling and scoring in goals on opposite end line (create distraction/pseudo pressure). 3. 3v0 with one ball and all players need to touch ball before scoring on opposite end. Can also be done with teams starting simultaneously on opposite ends. 4. 3v1 or 3vCoach. 5. 3v1+1: the +1 is from behind and only goes once attacking team crosses first 6 yard line. 6. 3V2 to 3V3

Rondos (AKA keep away or monkey in the middle)

- U8/9 (maybe) and up
- Work on passing and moving, team shape, body shape, decision making
- Start in 8X8 yard grid and adjust size from there to make it more or less challenging
- Progression of 3 or 4 vs 0, walking defender, or coach to 3 or 4 vs 1 to 5 vs 2: coach can direct or apply pressure that leads to clockwise or counter clockwise passing until instructing or providing pressure that should cause the team to switch direction
- Starting with 3 will force triangles and learning to pass and move
- Encourage receiving with "backfoot" from the passer AKA across their body so they can see the passer and other teammates, if pass comes from left receive with right and vice versa.

Spacing and Passing: These are ideas to begin thinking space, but developmentally they will bunch.

*Even at U8/9 the main emphasis should be on comfort with dribbling and confidence with the ball.

- Tag: everyone close by coach who is tagger (how easy is it for coach to tag everyone?) Try again spaced out. Progress to sharks and minnows (with a ball) and discuss spacing. Can freeze a scrimmage and say if we switched to tag right now where would you want to be if the ball carrier was the tagger?
- Team Handball: up to three steps with the ball. Is it easier to progress downfield with more space between players or being right next to ball carrier?
- Small sided game where a team only wins when all 3 or 4 players on the team score (can use headbands or other way to indicate when each player has scored)
- Channels: Line up 2-3 vertical channels on the field. Can either restrict players to only remain in their channel or middle can move into all three and wings can move into middle but not opposite side.

Additional Drill Ideas:

- Walk the plank: 5-10 yards wide channel, coach/pirate stands along side, attempt to pass the ball at the feet of kids running by. Once hit by a ball players become pirates. Emphasize either passing with inside of foot or laces
- Capture the balls: three teams with equidistant bases (base size of 3X3 yards). All balls start in the middle of the 3 teams of 2-3 players and attempt to take as many balls back to base as possible. Once all the balls are out of the middle, then players can steal from the other bases. Run 30-60 seconds and see which team has most balls. Balls must be in the base to count.
- High seas dribbling: dribbling in 10X10 to 20X20 yard grid. Coach calls out high winds- players dribble fast, low wind- players dribble slow, no wind- sit on ball, choppy seas- toe taps or tik toks, hurricane turn in a circle with either inside or outside of foot, etc.
- Kick the coach: coach walks around in grid and kids dribble up to coach and attempt to pass into legs with either laces or inside of foot for points, then dribble around a perimeter cone and attempt again
- Any variations of 1v1, 2v1, 2v2 which can be across end lines or to pop up or cone goals. Grids can be setup in at about 10X10 to 12X12 yards.
- Pass between legs: Players pair up. Grid of 2 yards to 5 yards wide depending on skill. One player in middle of the grid with legs spread wide, other player must pass through legs and have ball cross line on opposite side. Points for crossing line and through legs. No points if short, will take more time if hit too hard and must recover the ball from far away.

Questions? Contact:

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