

## **Getting Started in Micro Soccer**

- Micro Philosophy
- Micro Rules
- How To Ref a Micro Game
- Pre-Season Time Line
- How To Organize Your Team
- How To Run a Practice
- Coaching Sessions On Dribbling, Passing, Team Shape and Goal Keeping
- And much more!!

### **Mission Statement**

The S.F. Viking Micro Soccer program is a developmental soccer league, where kids learn by playing small-sided games. The emphasis of the program is on FUN, and learning the basic skills (dribbling, passing and shooting). No scores or team standings are kept in order to promote the joy of the sport without the worry of winning or losing.

As members of the Positive Coaching Alliance we expect all coaches and parents to model behavior consistent with good sportsmanship. We also want parents and coaches to demonstrate by example how to honor the game, their opponent, and each other.

Micro Soccer is a part of the **San Francisco Vikings Soccer Club**  
2521 Judah St., San Francisco, CA. 94122  
415-753-3111 [www.sfmicrosoccer.com](http://www.sfmicrosoccer.com)

This work-in-progress was organized, editorialized and compiled by Marcos Estebez.  
A special “thanks” to Libby Rappolt, the founder of the micro soccer program and president of the Vikings Club.

## Table of Contents

Mission Statement	1
Table of Contents	2
Registration	3
Attendance Policy	3
Mandatory Coaches' Meeting	4
Coaches' Training	4
Practice Fields	4
What Is Micro	5
Uniform Requirements	5
Number of Players/Field Sizes	5
Rules of Micro	6-7
Goal Keeper Rules	7
How To Ref A Micro Game	8-9
Referee Technique	10
Dealing With Sideline Refs	10
Rough Play	11
One Team Stronger Than Other (What to Do)	11
Field Rules	12
Adult Rules of Conduct	12
Field Marshals	13
Pre-Season Time Line	14
TEAM MEETING	15
Organizing Practice	16
Six Steps to a Successful Practice	16
Sample Practice	16
Plan Whole Season	16
Coaching Technique	17
Correction Methodology	17
Creating Soccer Players	18
Parents and Developmental Mission	18
Brand New Player	19
Practice 1: Dribbling	20 - 21
Throw-In Technique	22
Practice 2: Game Day Rehearsal	23
Practice 3: Defending	24 - 25
Practice 4: Passing	26 - 28
Receiving	29
Practice 5: Dribbling	30
Practice 6: Passing	31
U7/8 Goal Keeping	32-39
Keeper/Sweeper	40
Positions/Balance	41
Shadow Training	41-43
Positive Coaching Alliance	43 - 46
Silent Saturday	46
Bibliography	47
Medical Appendix	48

## **Registration**

- Fall Registration Deadline: July 31st
- Spring Registration Deadline: January 31st.
- Individual and/or Team Registration forms can be downloaded from our web site. Go to: **www.sfmicrosoccer.com** and register on line. **Registration procedures sometimes change so check the web site or call the office.**
- **The office is located at: 2521 Judah, between 30th and 31st Aves. 94122. Phone: 753-3111.**

### **To Be Accepted, Completed Applications Must Have:**

- **At least 8 players for U5/6 and no more than 12.**
- **At least 10 players for U7/8 and no more than 14.**  
(Be advised: If you move to the Vikings League for U8, their roster limit is 12. You might have to cut players. Their roster limit for U9 is 14.)
- Individual registration forms for each player
- Team registration form
- Completed Coach's Agreement
- Completed Parent's Agreement
- At least two current, working email addresses
- All fees (\$55 per player, check made out to SF Vikings Soccer Club)
- **Mixed Teams must register with at least four girls** or they will be placed in the Boys Division.

**Any team application that does not have all of the above will be rejected.**

### **Waiting Lists:**

The number of teams we can accommodate is determined by the number of fields Park and Rec gives us. We cannot guarantee all teams will be accepted. Completed applications are numbered as they are received. Therefore, the earlier you register, the greater your chances of getting in.

**To meet the Fall Registration Deadline, we recommend that you collect ALL paperwork/fees by the last game of the Spring Season (mid May).** Once summer begins it is extremely difficult to get applications, information, decisions and checks from people who are out of town. You should also consider **collecting all paperwork for the Spring season before the holidays begin in December.**

## **League Policy on Attendance and Punctuality**

**Teams that don't show up to games, teams that don't have enough players, or teams that are habitually late will be dropped.** Make sure your parents understand the level of commitment required to participate in a league. Make sure they understand it is two months of Saturdays and practices. This level of commitment is not appropriate for all families.

## **Fall/Spring: Mandatory Coaches' Meeting**

In the **Fall and Spring** we will have a mandatory Coaches' Meeting approximately two weeks before the season begins. **Teams that do not send a coach (or parent to represent the coach) will not be allowed to participate in the league.** This is our only opportunity to meet with all of you to make sure everyone understands the mission, intent and philosophy of the micro soccer league.

Check the web site ([www.sfmicrosoccer.com](http://www.sfmicrosoccer.com)) beginning at least a month before the season begins for the exact date and time.

## **Voluntary Coaches' Training**

Training sessions will be held to help coaches become better coaches. Dates/Time/Location will be announced at the Coaches' Meeting.

## **Practice Fields**

Park and Rec does not provide us with practice field permits for the Fall; they do for the Spring. In Spring, the process is on-line through Rec and Park and we will notify you with the specifics. For Fall, identify a field that is centrally located for your team. If a team shows up and has a permit for the space you are using, you must let them have it. Sharon Meadows and Speedway Meadows are places you can use without permits (but they're popular). Field availability is better earlier in the week (M/T) than later.

## **NO DOGS!**

No Dogs. Our permit specifically says we cannot have dogs. If a parent has a dog, they will be asked to remove it. **If your parent does not remove the dog, your team will be immediately suspended.** Non-negotiable.

## **NO Hanging On Goals!**

All goals are staked and have sand bags. Nevertheless, there is always the possibility they could fall. This requires community policing. If you see someone hanging/swinging from a goal, pleeeeeeease, tell them to get down immediately!!

## What Is Micro Soccer

Five and six year olds play three a side with no goalies. Seven and eight year olds play 4 a side, one of whom is the goalie.

- Coaches divide their team in half.
- Two games are played simultaneously on fields right next to each other.
- One coach refs one game and the opposing coach refs the other.
- Ideally, each team has an assistant who handles substitutions.
- You play 2 twenty minute halves and take a five minute half time.
- All games end ten minutes before the next game is to start.
- Micro Soccer provides Field Marshals who act as the official time keeper for all games.

If you had a U-5 team, three of your players would play on field “A” and three of your players would play on field “B”. You would ref on field “A”, the opposing coach on field “B”.

## Uniform/Equipment Requirements

- Each team must wear shirts of the same color (shorts and socks don't have to match).
- Jerseys/Shirts do not have to have numbers or be “official” uniforms.
- Soccer cleats are not necessary. Tennis shoes are fine.
- SHIN GUARDS are required.
- Everyone uses a **size 3 soccer ball**.
- The league will provide every team with several balls, cones and discs. These will be handed out after the Coaches' Meeting.

## Number of Players/Length of Halves/Field Size...

Age	Players	Ball Size	Time Played Per Half	Field (Yds)*	Goal Size
U5	3 v 3 no GK	3	2 x 15*	20 x 25	4'x 6'
U6	3 v 3 no GK	3	2 x 20*	20 x 25	4 x 6
U7	3 v 3 + GK	3	2 x 22*	25 x 35	5 x 10
U8	3 v 3 + GK	3	2 x 22*	25 x 35	5 x 10

\*Amounts of time are recommended. Some U5 teams will barely have the attention span to play two ten-minute halves! Be flexible!

Goal boxes (for U7/8) are approximately 60' W x 18' D.

\*Field dimensions are approximate. We often encounter hazards (holes, exposed sprinkler heads, etc) that compromise the amount of space we can use.

## **Rules of Micro Soccer**

### **1. Kick-Off:**

Takes place in the center of the field, at the beginning of each half, and after every goal. The team that was scored upon will kick-off. The other team has to stay out of the center circle until the ball is kicked forward.

The kick-off is a pass to a teammate. The kick-off pass is a forward pass (not a pass back). It cannot be a direct shot on the other team's goal. The team that did not kick off to start the game will kick off to start the second half.

### **2. Throw-In:**

Takes place when the ball passes all the way over the side-line (touch line) of the field. A ball only partially over the line or on the line is still in play. If Team "A" last touched the ball, then Team "B" throws the ball in. To keep it simple, the throw-in is taken from behind the side-line/touch line. (One or both feet can be on or touching the touchline. See throw-in technique under "Training Sessions.")

If the player makes a "foul" throw-in, demonstrate how it's done, and have that player do it again. Remember, this is an instructional league. If the player gets it wrong a second time, let the game continue.

### **3. Goal Kick:**

Takes place when the ball passes all the way over the end-line/goal line and was last touched by the team attacking that goal. On U5/6 fields, place the ball on the mark in front of the goal. On U7/8 fields, there is a box painted on the field in front of the goal. This is called the goal box. The ball is placed anywhere on the goal box. Have the opposing team stand back at least 15 feet from the ball. The ball is now kicked up the field.

It is generally a good idea to train your players to kick the ball towards the sidelines. If the ball is kicked in the center, the other team can intercept the ball and have an easy shot on goal.

### **4. Corner Kick:**

Takes place when the ball passes all the way over the end-line/goal line of the field and was last touched by the team defending that goal. The ball is placed anywhere in the quarter-circle marked at the corner of the field, and kicked by a member of the attacking team towards the goal they are attacking. The opposing team must stand back at least 10 feet.

### **5. Free-Kick:**

When a foul is committed (hand ball, pushing, slide tackling), a free kick is awarded to the other team. Explain the foul to the offending player first, "Michelle, remember, no slide tackling". Set the ball down at the place of the infraction. The team that was fouled takes the free kick from there. It can be anyone on that team. Opposing players must stand back at least 10 to 15 feet.

Because the fields are so small, if the "foul" took place close to the defending team's goal, you place it farther back and towards either sideline.

**Free-kicks are indirect, which means they cannot be shot directly into the goal without touching another player (any player from either team) first!**

### **6. Dropped Ball:**

Let's say a dog runs on to the field and play stops, or another ball rolls on to the field and you want to remove the ball so no one trips on it and gets injured. You would stop play. Remove the ball or dog.

And then restart play (near to where you stopped the game) by calling a player over from each team. You drop the ball. As soon as the ball hits the ground, the ball is in play. Both players will try to kick it.

#### **7. OFF-SIDES:**

There is no Off-Sides in Micro Soccer. If you have a parent who is relentlessly yelling “Off-sides!! Off-sides!” Calmly tell that parent, “There is no Off-sides in Micro Soccer”.

**8. No Slide Tackling**, shirt grabbing, or trash talking. Free kick awarded to other team from point of infraction.

**9. No penalty kicks.**

**10. All players, regardless of ability, will play at least 50% of the time.** This is a recreational and developmental league.

**11. No Time Outs** (except to deal with an injury or discipline problem).

**12. Mixed Teams will always have at least one girl on the field.** If they do not, they must take one boy off and play short a player.

### **Goalkeeper Rules for U7/8 Only**

The goal keeper is allowed to touch/save the ball with her hands anywhere in the goal box. She can also use her feet.

The goal keeper can only use her feet outside of the goal box. Not her hands.

When the goal keeper “saves” a ball and collects it/catches it with her hands (inside the goal box only), she can put the ball back in play by either throwing or kicking it. She cannot go beyond the goal box boundaries to throw or kick the ball (unless she puts the ball down and decides to start dribbling up the field because she’s just too excited!).

If the goalie puts the ball on the ground after a save, that ball is “live” and the opponent can kick it.

**The goal keeper is not allowed to punt or throw the ball into the other half of the field unless it first touches a teammate or opponent OR the ground on the goal keeper’s half of the field.** This rule is to ensure the game does not become a “punting duel” between the two keepers.

If the goal keeper punts the ball into the other half, remind the goalie that he needs to play the ball into his half. If he does it again, award the ball to the other team at the halfway line. It would be a free indirect kick.

If the ball is in the goalie’s possession, or even if the goalie has his hands on the ball, the opponent may not kick the ball. We will protect the goalie.

**Goalies are not allowed to hang from the goals** or wrap themselves up in the nets. It may be entertaining, but it’s very unsafe!

## **How To Ref a Micro Game**

1. **Inspect the field.** Make sure the field is safe. Look for holes, glass, dog feces, etc.
2. **Inspect the goals.** Make sure they're secure.
3. **Talk to the other coach and decide:**
  - a. Who will ref which field
  - b. Agree on the length of each half and half time. Remember, you must end ten minutes before the start of the next game. (A Field Marshal will blow an air horn to signify when games should start and end.)
4. **Divide your team in half.** I'd recommend talking to the other coach and coming to an agreement before the game on how you will divide your teams up (skill wise) to ensure the fairest match. If games are even, great! If not, talk to the other coach and adjust at half time.
5. **Before the game starts, introduce yourself to the players** and ask them for their names. It's always much more personal to address the players by name instead of "Hey you!"
6. **Inspect Uniforms:**
  - Bring players into center circle.
  - Make sure they have shin guards.
  - No baseball cleats (baseball shoes have a cleat on the very front tip of the sole).
  - No jewelry (watches, ear rings, bracelets, rings). Soft bracelets are fine.
  - Tuck in shirts. This will help you see if a player's jersey is being pulled.
7. **Coin Toss:** Determines which team will get to kick off.
8. **One ref per field.**
  - One ref. One voice. One set of rules.
  - ***Don't let parents on to the field to coach their kid.***
9. **Referees coach BOTH teams.** This is a developmental league. Help players from both sides run in the right direction or make a correct throw-in. Do not over coach. Give them the opportunity to discover the game on their own terms as well. **PRAISE ALL PLAYERS, NOT JUST YOUR OWN!** YOU are the ambassador of good sportsmanship! The best way to teach it, is to demonstrate it
10. **Kick-Off:**
  - Ball placed in middle of Center Circle
  - Team taking kick off can have as many people in circle as they want. Most teams usually have two
  - Defending team cannot enter the circle until the ball moves forward at least one revolution.
  - If ball does not move forward, if attacking player crosses mid field line before ball is kicked, if defending player crosses mid field line or enters circle before ball moves forward, kick off must be retaken.
  - Ball can be kicked to a team mate (usually standing next to player on ball) just as long as ball moves forward (can't be a backwards or sideways pass). Ball does not have to be kicked to a team mate. Ball could also be kicked anywhere up the field (for example, player taking the kick off could kick it towards the opponents corner flag)
  - **A player cannot score directly from a kick off** (it must touch one other player, from either team first). In the big game, it's legal for a player to score directly from a kick off, but not in micro.

## How To Ref A Micro Game/Rules of the Game

### 11. Restart Plays:

- Kick off (as above) to start game, to start the second half and after a goal is scored.
- Throw-Ins
- Corner Kicks
- Goal Kicks
- Free Kicks (Indirect Only. Must touch another Player besides the Player who kicked the ball in order to score a goal)

### 12. Substitutions:

- Both teams can sub at any stoppage of play for either team.
- You may sub on a corner, goal kick, throw-in, after a goal is scored, or injury.
- On a throw-in (for example), as soon as the ball goes out of bounds, call to the ref, "Ref! Sub!" Make sure the ref acknowledges you, and then send in your player(s).

### 13. Hand Ball:

- If a player blatantly uses his/her hand to control or even shoot the ball, stop play, explain the offense, award the ball to the other team.
- It's an indirect free kick (which means the ball cannot be shot directly into the goal before touching another player, from either team, first).

#### **It is not a "hand ball":**

- a. If the player is instinctively protecting herself from injury
- b. If the player is not trying to control the ball

*If a ball is "handled" but the other team maintains possession then let play continue. This is called the "advantage rule".*

**14. No Children Hanging from Goals!** Even if the child is with another team, please help us keep them safe and immediately ask them to get off the goal!

**15. No parents allowed behind the goals or on the field.**

**16. Keep parents and their strollers/BBQ's/ice chests at least three feet away from sideline/touchline.** If a line is painted for parents to stand behind, please have them observe it. This is for the safety of your players.

**17. NO DOGS!!** If a parent has a dog, politely ask them to remove it immediately. Remind them the consequence is suspension. (Blame us so no one gets mad at you!)

**18. No Off-Sides!**

## **Referee Technique**

As the game is in progress, move with the play, and work to keep as clear a view of the ball as possible. You can blow your whistle when the ball goes out of bounds, or you can simply shout, "Sharks' ball!" or "Yellow!"

**No Whistles allowed at the Marina** (it was a concession we made to the neighbors).

## **Dealing With Sideline Referees (Parents)**

If every coach has a **team meeting** and explains the philosophy of this league and how all parents are expected to model appropriate behavior and sportsmanship which includes honoring and respecting the referee, you shouldn't have too many problems.

Nevertheless, there will be parents who will question, challenge and even disregard your referee decisions. When parents harass you and undermine your authority, it is absolutely infuriating. But you must keep your cool. You must keep your composure. Children need to see how adults are supposed to behave and respond to child-like behavior.

### **Here are some ways to handle the distraught sideline parent/referee:**

- Ignore them.
- Acknowledge them with a smile and humbly say, "I'm doing the best I can".
- If the above doesn't work, tell them, "I need you to support me as the referee. If you want, you can talk to me after the game".
- If the above doesn't work, ask your assistant coach to talk to their assistant coach to get this parent under control.
- If that doesn't work, and the parent is becoming more and more irate, stop the game, go to the other coach and tell him you need his/her help with this parent immediately.
- Finally, you can abandon the match.

**If there is a persistent problem with a parent, the Micro Soccer administration wants to know about it immediately.** Email us with as many details as you remember. It's also helpful to have other witnesses email us. Extreme cases are extremely rare. It's important to think about how you will react to bizarre behavior. Counting to 10 is always a good place to start!

## **Rough Play**

We have parent/coaches who have played competitively, and we have parent/coaches whose only level of competition has been for parking spaces. And then we have everything in between with just as many interpretations of what should be allowed and what shouldn't.

In spite of all these opinions (which parents will love to share with you) **YOU as the referee, MUST be in control of the game at all times.** Soccer is a contact sport. However, it is your responsibility to ensure a safe playing environment.

**If there is excessive pushing, shoving, slide tackling, shirt grabbing or taunting, you need to call the players in and tell them what kind of play/behavior is acceptable and what is not.** You might want to call over the team parent/assistant coach from the other team as well so everyone is on the same page (and the opposing team doesn't feel they're being unfairly singled out).

**Set your boundaries and be consistent in their enforcement.** If necessary, remove a child that is playing out of control or acting in a way that is inconsistent with good sportsmanship. A five minute "time out" is usually ample.

However, your **problems will usually be with a parent who feels you aren't doing a good job protecting their child.** Acknowledge the comment/complaint. If the parent continues to push you to make a call you feel is incorrect, tell him/her you're calling the game as you see it and you can discuss it further at half time or after the game. You might want to include the other coach in the discussion as well, especially if the parent is inordinately irate.

## **One Team Stronger than the Other**

**If your team is really dominating an opponent, put "conditions" on your team:**

- Pass three times before you shoot (five times if necessary).
- Play your best scorer in goal.
- Tell your best player he/she can only play in his own half and can not go past the mid field line.
- 3 Touch: Must pass the ball after three touches (Receive it, one dribble and the third touch is a pass).
- Only your goal keeper can shoot
- You can only shoot with your left foot
- Everyone must touch the ball before you can shoot
- You can only shoot from behind the half way line

If you have a strong team, I would recommend practicing some of the above tactics. It's a classy way to continue playing without humiliating your opponent.

## **Field Rules**

- 1. No Dogs Allowed.** Any team with a dog will be suspended if dog not immediately removed.
- 2. Children are not allowed to hang from goals.** The goals are temporary and they WILL fall over. Protect the child and protect the league - if you see a child hanging from a goal, stop them immediately!!
- 3. Children are not allowed to put any of their limbs through the nets** (especially their heads!!!!).
- 4. Take all garbage with you.** Rec and Park will be assessing “environmental fees” to leagues that do not pick up and remove their own garbage.
- 5. Spectators/coolers/strollers are to stay at least three feet back of the touch lines** (side lines).
- 6.** Do not play competing sports (like baseball) right next to the field or anywhere near it!
- 7.** Don’t drop off your children in the parking lot and have them run to their team. Escort them.
- 8.** At Marina, don’t allow players to warm up with ball next to parking lot (inevitably they lose the ball and chase it into a very dangerous area!
- 9.** Keep siblings off the field and don’t allow them to play baseball, football, frisbee next to the field of play. Siblings have been known to run on to the field and collide with players.

## **ADULT Rules of Conduct**

- 1. No alcohol.** Any coach or parent who has an open container of alcohol will be expelled from the league.
- 2. Inappropriate Behavior:** Abusive, profane language or threatening behavior directed at another coach, parent, player, ref, or Micro Soccer staff, **will result in immediate expulsion from the league. We share all disciplinary actions with other leagues. Other leagues have been known to honor our suspensions and expulsions.**
- 3. Parents are not allowed on the field EXCEPT** to assist an injured player. The only adult on the field is a single referee.
- 4. Coaches/parents will respect the referee** and model appropriate behavior by not questioning the ref’s calls. If you feel compelled to talk to the ref, wait until half time. And then talk to him/her privately.
- 5. No parents or coaches behind the goal** “coaching the goalie” or taking pictures. This is extraordinarily distracting to the player. If a player doesn’t know what to do, they will by the end of the game. This is an INSTRUCTIONAL league. The players WILL figure it out.
- 6. No Side Line Coaching.** Let them play. “Get back!” “Shoot it!” “Pass!” “Run!” These comments are distracting and should only come from coach.
- 7. Positive Comments for ALL Players!** “Nice run!” “Good shot!” “Great defense!”

## **Field Marshals**

- Field Marshals are hired by Micro Soccer to make your experience better. They are the “eyes and ears” of the league. Their responsibilities include:
- Direct teams and players to the proper fields.
- Act as the official time keeper for ALL games.
- Check all players in. Report which teams are late, didn't have enough players, or didn't show up.
- Make sure teams are playing with the proper number of players (for U5/6 it's 3 v 3, U7/8 it's 4 v 4).
- Report any incidents of misconduct (dogs, poor parent behavior which includes excessive yelling, threatening behavior, unwilling to move away from behind the goal, or keep off the field, etc)
- Make sure Mixed Teams have the proper number of girls on the field (all mixed teams must have at least one girl on the field at all times).
- Watch out for kids playing on the goals and with the nets.

**If a Field Marshal is ever verbally abused, or physically threatened, the parent responsible will be suspended for the remainder of the season and the following year!! That suspension will also be observed by both the Vikings League and PAL.**

## **Pre-Season Preparation/Time Line**

### **Timeline Example For Fall:**

8/15: Order Uniforms

8/24: We'll practice at Speedway Meadows. Talk to parents about Day/Time

9/3: Purchase balls, pump, and small goals

9/10: Pick up uniforms to hand out at Team Meeting this afternoon

9/14: First Practice. Dribbling. Review structure of game. Margaret and Tom will help.

9/21: Second Practice. Passing, GK. Review how games will work on Saturday.

9/24: First Game. Have players arrive 20 mins. early. Meet at Flagpole and warm up.

### **Five Weeks Before Your First Game (Uniforms)**

Right after you register, order your uniforms. For the Fall, first week of August. For the Spring, first week of February. Sunset Soccer has colored T-Shirts you can order with numbers and a patch. If you want something fancier, look at uniforms from High 5.

### **One Month Before First Game (Find a Practice Field)**

You want to look for a place to practice now, so you can make the announcement at your Team Meeting. In the Fall, you are on your own. In the Spring, Park and Rec will give you a field BUT, they are notoriously slow , so proceed as if you're on your own.

### **Three Weeks Before Your First Game (Purchase Equipment)**

- #3 Ball for every player (Put your name/number on each one.)
- Ball Bag
- Medical Kit (See appendix for contents)
- 8 Youth Scrimmage vests (4 blue/4 yellow, for example)
- Pump/Needle
- 40 Discs (Enough to mark two fields)
- 10 Cones (Use to mark corners or as goals)
- 8 Flags (Use to mark goals. They stay in place!)
- Goalie Jersey/Gloves/Shorts are optional but goalie must wear a different colored shirt than his/her team mates.

### **Player Equipment**

- Cleats are optional. Make sure they fit. Try different brands if necessary.
- Shin Guards should cover shin. I'd get ones that have ankle guards too.
- Water Bottle (Put name on it.)
- Ball. Size 3

### **Where Do I Buy Equipment?**

If you want to do one-stop shopping you'll want to go to a soccer store like **Sunset Soccer (35th Ave. and Irving/753-2666)**. For kids, they have the best selection.

## **Two Weeks Before Your First Game: Team Meeting**

**Maybe the single most important thing you can do to ensure a successful season is to have a Team Meeting.** Here are a couple of things you want to cover.

- Make sure parents understand the rules/format of Micro Soccer as well as the philosophy of the league.
- No sideline coaching.
- Get medical/emergency contact info for each player. (See appendix). Asthma? Food allergies (share with person bringing snacks)? ADD? Player may need someone to shadow him/her at all practices.
- Hand out uniforms!
- Give Location/Day/Time of practice.
- Location of games.
- Consequences for players being late/missing practice or games?
- Put together email contact list.
- What time should players arrive before games, 20 minutes?
- What time should players be picked up from practice (on time)?
- Do you have an assistant coach who can take your place in case you're sick or need to work?
- Make sure your parents understand the commitment required of them. Teams that forfeit because they don't have enough players will be suspended and possibly expelled from the league.
- Get a Team Parent who can help you with registration, sending emails, making sure people remember to bring snacks, etc.
- Snack Sign Up
- Car Pool Sign Up
- Supervision Sign-Up (Try to find a parent with CPR training): "The good news Mrs. Smith is that Joe had a great practice. The bad news is we can't find him". One person cannot handle 12 micro soccer players especially if you have a couple of wanderers/explorers. If you practice next to a busy road or where there are areas with needles, etc, you will need help! You must ALWAYS know where your players are. Always! Another consideration: Who will escort players to bathroom and wait for them?

## **One and a Half Weeks Before Start of Season – Your First Practice**

This timetable will allow you to have two practices (or three, if you also practice on that first Saturday) before the beginning of the season.

## **Three Days Before Start of Season – Your Second Practice**

- Practice/Rehearse Elements of Game Day to Minimize Pre-Game Anxiety:
- Use Two Fields as close to micro size as possible (see p5)
- Pre-game warm-up. What will it be?
- Dividing players up for game. How will you do it? Who will do it?
- Have one ref for each field and ideally one person to handle subs for each field.
- Have the Coin Toss
- Kick off
- Game (two 20 minute halves)
- Half Time ritual. How will you handle half time? Do teams need to be reshuffled to make them more competitive? What if kid decides he doesn't want to play anymore? What if a kid goes to one of her parents and refuses to come back? What if a parent starts handing out snack and your whole team refuses to listen to you until all the cookies are gone?! Be ready for the unexpected

## **Organizing Your Practice**

- Arrive 15 to 20 minutes early to inspect field (check for glass, holes, etc.) and set up practice areas with cones, discs, flags. Organize scrimmage vests. Pump up balls.
- **Have a Theme and Written Plan** (very important).
- Practice Time: No more than an hour.
- Remember: The Less you talk, the more they'll hear. Your audience has an attention span of twenty seconds or less.

## **Six Steps To A Successful Practice:**

1. Warm-Up incorporates theme. You will also stretch during this time.
2. Fun game (that reinforces theme).
3. Games with goals.
4. Scrimmage with conditions.
5. Scrimmage (no conditions).
6. Cool Down

## **Sample Practice**

### **Theme: Dribbling.**

Dribbling in small spaces. Keep ball close to feet. Use inside of foot.

1. Warm Up: Tag. Every 30 seconds stop and stretch a muscle group. (5 mins.)
2. Fun Game: Traffic Exchange (5 mins)
3. Game With Goals, 1 v 1: Score by stopping ball on opponent's goal line. Rotate players every 45 seconds. 8 mins. Add 2 mins. for water break. (10 mins total)
4. Scrimmage. Condition: You can only score by dribbling through goal (12' wide) (10 mins.)
5. Scrimmage. No conditions. Let them play! (15 mins.)
6. Cool Down: Crab Soccer (10 mins) 55 minute practice!

## **Plan Your Whole Season**

This is more for the experienced coach. Think ahead. Don't just organize your session, think about organizing your whole season. Your plan will change (and it should change according to what your players need). But season planning will give your season shape and force you to think ahead and prepare (especially for topics you're unsure about and may need time to research them).

**Week 1:** Dribbling. Fun games!

**Week 2:** Rules of Game. In bounds/Out of bounds. Restart Plays: Kick off, Throw In, Goal Kick, Corner Kick. Basic Goal Keeping. Show players how game day works: Two fields, substitutions, half time, etc

**Week 3:** Passing/Shooting (Goal Keeping for U7/8)

**Week 4:** Team Shape. Shadow Play. (Play ball out from GK)

**Week 5:** Dribbling. Fake R go L. Fake L go R. Review throw ins.

**Week 6:** Receiving. First Touch.

**Week 7:** Passing/Shooting/GK

**Week 8:** Team Shape

You may never get past dribbling! It's ok to repeat a practice, even several times. Games and practices will show you what your players need most. Do not try to fix everything at once. You will frustrate and confuse your players (and yourself).

## Coaching Techniques

- Utilize Your Help. Let parents help you set up fields, get out scrimmage vests, etc
- Set up multiple fields so practices can flow immediately from one section to another.
- Less Talk. More Play! Kids want to do one thing only – play. When you talk, you are an obstacle. Keep verbal instruction to 20 seconds. It's always better to demonstrate.
- Make eye contact. Squat down and communicate at their level when talking one on one.
- No Standing In Lines. Children want to play, not wait.

## Correction Methodology

- **Keep your corrections limited to your theme.**
- Don't correct someone's passing if you're working on dribbling.
- Remember, everything is about reinforcing your theme.
- **Don't talk! Show them!**
- The following is especially effective during field sessions (a controlled scrimmage for example):

**Stop it.** Yell, "Freeze!" and have everyone stop.

**Recreate it.** Everyone has taken a couple of extra steps. Recreate where everyone was when the mistake was made.

**Rehearse it** (three times) with corrections. Make the correction and have the player do it correctly three times (without pressure).

**Replay it.** Replay it at speed.

You can also use "**triggers**" to help you get what you want. Amy's passes to Sam are inaccurate. One of the main reasons is because she isn't getting her head up to see where Sam is before she passes the ball to him. Other corrections I may need to make at a later date include: Hips opened up towards player she's passing to, non-kicking foot planted to side of ball and pointed in direction of pass, pacing of ball shouldn't be too hard or too soft... Be careful, you don't want to overwhelm the player. For now, I'll just get her to keep her head up!

I'll recreate the play from where Jose passed the ball to Amy. I need to create space and time for Amy to be successful (so she doesn't rush her pass). I will tell Amy to get her head up before she passes the ball. I will tell the team,

**(Trigger #1)**, "Ball is live AFTER Amy passes the ball". This will prevent the defense from applying pressure until after she passes it.

*If she has success*, I will gradually increase the pressure to make it more "game like".

**Trigger #2:** "Ball is live when Amy receives the ball".

*If she has success with that*, I will go to

**Trigger #3:** "Ball is live as soon as Jose passes it to Amy".

**"Triggers" are a progressive and effective way to coach within the context of the game.**

***Know something s wrong but you don t know what or how to correct it?***

It's ok. Let them play. It is often said, "The game is the greatest teacher of all".

## **Creating Soccer Players, Not Forwards or Goalies or....**

“Josh is an amazing goalie! Whenever he’s in goal, I almost always win. The players around him are weak defensively so it’s imperative I have someone who’s strong in goal. When we play a strong team, Josh plays in goal the whole game. When I let him play somewhere else, we almost always give up a goal right away. I’d like to let him play the field more, but I have to think about what’s best for the team...”

*Translation:* When Josh is in goal, we have a better chance to win.

Josh’s development as a complete soccer player is being compromised. Will his teammates become better defenders if Josh is always there to bail them out? No. So the development of his teammates is also being compromised. The development of a player and of a team is totally interdependent. By hiding a weakness, you are often creating another one.

***If you develop the player, you will develop the team and the by-product of that will be success on the field.***

## **Parents and Your Developmental Mission**

By making it clear to your parents (in the Team Meeting) that **your primary responsibility is player development, and not winning**, you will hopefully avoid parent comments like, “What’s he doing putting Sherry in goal, she can’t catch!” It’s not just an uninformed comment it’s a hurtful one. ***By thinking development first, you will take away the pressure of winning, which will allow you to focus on teaching.***

**This is a developmental league for parents too.** Get your parents to shift their focus from results to the “developmental journey”.

## **Tell Your Parents What You’re Working On In Practice**

For most parents, as long as their child is safe and having a good time, that’s enough for them. Other parents want to be much more involved. Keep parents in the loop by letting them know what you worked on in practice and what you’re looking for in the game.

***If your practice focused on dribbling and shielding, you shouldn’t have parents complaining about passing.*** And if they do, it’s easy to say, “You’re right, they need to work on their passing. But right now we’re working on dribbling and our constructive criticisms should be limited to that”.

## **The Brand New Player**

For the brand new player, you will have to show them the following:

### **In Bounds/Out of Bounds**

Create a rectangle (10 yds x 15 yds) is fine. Show them “inside” and “outside”. Be creative. “Fish in the water. Fish out of the water.” Repeat it several times. Now use the “official” words: “Fish in-bounds. Fish out of bounds”. However you do it, you want them to understand where the ball is played and where it isn’t.

### **Direction**

Put scrimmage vests on half your team or divide your team into “1’s and 2’s”. On a rectangle 20 yds x 30 yds, put all your 1’s on one goal line (end line) and all your 2’s on the other. Have them face each other. Put a parent in each goal.

Instruct your players that on the word “GO!”, you want all the 1’s to run to Henri and all the 2’s to run to Alicia. You might do this the first couple of times without a ball, and then WITH a ball.

### **What is their soccer objective?**

Once they know in and out of bounds and direction, now you give them the bottom line - if the 1’s have the ball, they want to shoot it into the 2’s goal. (Make sure you make the distinction between the opponent’s goal and their own goal or you’ll have kids shooting the ball in their own goals!)

If the 2’s have the ball, they want to shoot it into the 1’s goal. The team with the most goals wins.

I have seen teams on game day place a flag on their goal to remind players which goal is theirs and which belongs to their opponent.

### **Basic Defense**

If the other team has the ball, get it back! Challenge for the ball immediately! You want to teach your players that on defense, they want to be BETWEEN the ball and the goal.

## **Realistic Expectations**

Do not expect spacing or passing. Do not expect players to ignore wrappers, sticks, mud or gophers. Expect goalies wandering off, players shooting at the wrong goal, daisy chain necklaces being spontaneously constructed (possibly during a break away) – this is all age appropriate. Welcome to micro soccer. Enjoy!

## **Practices**

At times you will see 1 + 1 and sometimes 1 v 1 (or 2 + 2 and 2 v 2 etc). The “plus” means “cooperative play” and the “v” means competitive play. For example, in a 1 + 1 defending exercise, the attacker will cooperate and let the defender get the ball. In 1 v 1, both players are competing to score.

### **Micro Field Sizes**

U5/6: 60' x 80'

U7/8: 80' x 100'

### **Practice 1/Theme: Dribbling**

Set Up: Two Micro Sized Fields.

#### **Step I. Warm-Up/Stretch: Knock Out.**

Description: Players inside grid dribbling and protecting ball (shielding) from players who are trying to kick their balls out of grid.

- Use half a field.
- Everyone with a ball in grid except three who are outside of grid (you can adjust the number).
- On coach's command, three “monsters” run into grid and try to “knock out” as many balls out of grid as possible. Once player's ball is knocked out, player retrieves ball, does ten step ups on ball (hopping from one foot to other while non-weight bearing foot touches top of ball with sole of shoe), and then returns.
- Give “monsters” :30 seconds. This is an intense exercise. If some players with ball are “hanging out” you can make field smaller or add an additional monster.

#### **Coaching points:**

- Use inside of foot to dribble. Keep ball close to maintain possession.
- Head up to see where they're going so they don't run into one another
- Change direction/speed to get away
- “Shield ball” by keeping body between ball and monster. Player will continually adjust body (in response to monster's position) to keep body between ball and monster/defender.
- Stretch after every :30 (Quads, calves, hamstring, Achilles). Then pick three new “monsters”.

**The best way to stretch muscles is to warm them up first** (which is why you don't want your kids coming to the fields and immediately shooting). You are teaching kids the routine/importance of stretching, not because they need it now, but because they will need to stretch more and more as they get older.

#### **Step II. Fun Game: Red Light/Green Light**

Description: All players with ball on line. Coach is 25 to 30 yds away on opposite line. (Could use width or length of field.)

1. Face players. Coach yells, “Green light!” Then turns back to players. All players sprint with ball. Coach yells, “Red light!” and immediately turns to face players. Players must stop.
2. Any player still moving must go back to start point.
3. Winner is player who gets to end line coach is standing on.
4. Challenge listening skills by yelling “Red light!” when you would normally say, “Green light!”

#### **Teaching points:**

- Use inside of foot.
- Keep ball close to body because they'll have to stop it as soon as they hear command.
- Stop ball with sole of shoe.
- Teaching players the important skill of listening

### **Step III. Game With Goals: 1 v 1**

**1 v 1 is an efficient, excellent way to train both attacking and defending skills.** It provides players with a lot of touches, technical challenges (dribbling, change of speed/direction, moves, defensive technique) and tactical decisions (how do I take this player on, how do I defend this player, etc) A lot of this is subconscious, but 1 v 1 forces players to constantly think, evaluate and re-evaluate. Teach your players how to set up their own 1 v 1 fields and it will save you a lot of time.

- a. Use one sideline/touchline as common boundary.
- b. Line players up. Divide players into “ones” and “twos”. Each player gets two discs.
- c. Player “1” makes goal on common boundary (takes one big step to R and puts down disc, takes one big step to L and puts down disc)
- d. Player “2” takes 15 large steps and makes goal with discs opposite “1”
- e. All balls start with “1”
- f. On your command, “Go!”, play begins.
- g. Score by dribbling through goal (which is why goal can’t be too narrow).
- h. There are no sidelines, so make sure adjacent players set up far enough apart from each other (5 large steps?)
- i. Play for :45 seconds and then yell “Freeze! Switch!” Player with ball stays where he is, everyone else rotates (explain the direction they will rotate to).
- j. Wait until everyone is ready, then go again. See how they’re doing. But five times may be all they can handle.
- k. If you have an uneven number of players, one player will always get a chance to rest/sit out or have them juggling while they’re waiting.

### **Step IV. Scrimmage With Conditions: Must dribble through goal to score**

- Two micro fields
- Two 3 v 3 games , no Goal Keepers. Goals (Flags) 4 yards apart
- Condition: Must dribble through goal in order to score
- Extra players can work on individual skills or, on one field you have 3 v 3 and you have 4 v 4 on another field or, you have 4 v 3 on one field, etc.
- Review Throw-In Technique if necessary.

### **Step V. Scrimmage. No Conditions.**

- For U5/6: Two games of 3 v 3 (Goals 6’ apart)
- For U7/8: Two games of 4 v 4 with goal keepers. (Goals 10’ apart)
- Enforce all restart plays (throw-ins, goal kicks, kick offs, penalty kicks and corners)

### **Step VI. Cool Down: Crab Soccer**

(You can start out as the lone “crab”, or one of your parents can or several of your parents. The kids love it when parents get involved.)

- a. Half field. Use width. If necessary, use less than half of field.
- b. All kids with ball.
- c. One adult or more on ground, propped up on hands and feet (butt off the ground).
- d. Players dribble past crabs to get to opposite end line.
- e. Crabs (while moving like crabs) try to kick their balls out.
- f. If player’s ball is kicked out, they become a crab.
- g. Last player with ball wins.
- h. Safety Tip: Players with ball must dribble. They cannot “shoot it” past players (and risk someone getting kicked in the face).

## **Throw In Technique**

A ball is “out of play” if it goes All the Way Over the Line. If the ball is on part of the line, it is still in play. When the ball goes out of bounds on the side lines/touch lines, the ball is put back into play with a “throw-in”. Demonstrate the proper technique to your players. Divide them into twos, have them stand 10 to 15 yards apart, and play catch using the correct throw-in technique.

1. Make a “W” with your hands by touching your thumbs together.
2. Hold the ball with your “W”. Lift the ball over your head.
3. Bring the ball back so it touches the back of your neck.
4. Keeping your “W”, bend your knees, arch your back, and throw the ball by bringing it back over your head and releasing it as you extend your arms straight out in front of you.
5. The feet can be slightly apart, next to each other. Or, one foot can be in front of the other. A portion of both feet must be touching the ground when the throw is made. If the heels come off the ground, the toes must still be making contact.
6. As long as a part of both feet are on the line or behind the line, the throw is fair. If one foot is totally on the field, the throw is illegal.
7. Instruct the player to immediately enter the field once the throw is made.
8. Before the player who threw the ball can touch it again, the ball must touch ANY player first.

After you demonstrate, have them do it:

- Divide them into twos
- Have them stand 10 to 15 yards apart, and play catch using the correct throw-in technique.
- Most common mistakes:
  - i. Not having both feet down
  - ii. Not holding ball correctly

**The next part of a Throw-In Practice would be to teach receiving the ball.**

- Get open to receive ball: Run down sideline or fake one way and go another to create space.
- Throw to feet or teach players how to receive with chest, thigh, etc

## **Practice 2/Game Day Rehearsal**

This practice is essential for brand new players and valuable to experienced ones. *The six-step format is modified.*

### **Step I. Warm-Up/Stretch: Traffic Exchange**

- a. Field Size: Half field. Use width. Go from sideline to sideline.
- b. Divide team in half.
- c. Half of team behind one touchline (sideline). Half behind the other. Players facing each other.
- d. All players have ball. Doesn't matter if teams are uneven.
- e. On coach's command, "GO!" teams sprint from one side to other.
- f. Team that gets all its players to other side with balls stopped on line, wins.
- g. You can do best out of seven (if your players are willing).
- h. Coaching Points:
  - Players spread out for an unobstructed dribbling lane
  - Keep heads up so they don't run into one another
  - As they start, they can push ball ahead and run to it. This is called "speed dribbling" and usually done with instep (but inside of foot will be fine). The point: You are faster running with out the ball.
  - As they approach touchline, keep ball close to them so they can stop it quickly
  - Stop ball with sole of shoe on line (or as close to it as possible)
- i. Stretch every :30 seconds

### **Step II. Shadow Training (See "Shadow Training")**

If you need to work on your team shape, then this would be helpful - just a couple of minutes. However, if you need the time to scrimmage, then I will defer to the "game as the best teacher of all".

### **Step III. Game Day Scrimmage**

- i. Two games going simultaneously
- ii. Ref on each field. Rules of micro enforced, including coin toss, kick off, half time, etc.
- iii. Have parent on each field handling substitutions
- iv. Will you designate a specific person to take throw-ins and corners? (For corners and throw ins on L side, the LM took them, opposite for R side. This kept game moving (better than waiting for kids to argue who got to take the throw-in, etc)
- v. For U7/8 goal kicks, have the GK take it
- vi. For U5/6 goal kicks, have the mid fielder take it

### **Step IV. End of Game:**

Players Cheer for each other. Make this a team building game. Come up with your own unique cheer!

## **Practice 3/Theme: Defending**

### **Step I. Warm-Up/Stretch: Knock Out**

- a. Grid: Half micro field
- b. All players in grid with ball except two monsters. Players in grid begin dribbling.
- c. On coach's command, two monsters enter and begin kicking balls out.
- d. If player's ball kicked out of bounds, that player becomes a monster and starts kicking balls out.
- e. Play until all balls out.
- f. Stretch every :30 to :45 seconds (or at the end of each game)

### **Step II. Fun Game: Numbers Game**

- a. Grid: Half micro field using the width
- b. Set up goals about 12' wide in middle
- c. Divide team in half, you'll have two teams (for example) of six.
- d. Each player assigned a number between one and six
- e. Teams get in the goal they are to protect and link arms
- f. Coach will call out a number, "Two!" and then roll a ball into the middle of the field
- g. Player "2" from each team will run out and compete for the ball and try to score.
- h. Players in goal cannot use hands and must stay linked, keeping balls out of their goal by collectively using their feet and moving together.
- i. Safety Rule: Shots on goal must be below the knee. If necessary, modify it to "all shots on goal must be on the ground". You don't want your goalies being kicked in the face.
- j. When goal is scored or ball goes out of bounds, coach throws in another ball and calls out another number, "4!"
- k. If uneven number of players, use that time for a coach to work one on one with a player on defending technique. If you don't have help, then if only one team has a "Seven", you'll call out, "Six and Seven" so one team will have two players versus one.

### **Step III. Game With Goals (Defending): 1 + 1**

If you've played 1 v 1 games already, you know how to set up. If not, look at Step III under Practice #1. One plus One, in this exercise, means the attacker (player with ball) will cooperate with the defender.

- You will demonstrate proper defending technique first.
- Practice the technique below before you demonstrate so you are comfortable teaching it.
- **90% demonstrating. 10% talking.**
- Have players surround one of 1 v 1 "fields". Make sure all can see.
- Assistant coach in one goal with ball, defending coach in other.
- "I want to show you how to keep the other guy from scoring a goal!"
- Demonstrate immediately
- Assistant coach starts dribbling (walking) towards you
- You sprint towards ball.
- Slow down within 15 feet of ball (you don't want to overplay ball where defender runs right by it!).
- Glide into defensive position: One leg in front of other. Knees bent. Weight centered and on balls of feet.
- End up arm's distance away from ball (about 3 feet)
- Eyes focused on ball (not footwork)
- Disrupt ball by poking at it with front foot (now keeping weight towards rear). This is called a "toe poke".

### **Practice 3, Step III Continued/Theme: Defending**

- Cooperative attacker will let you poke ball away. Defender pokes ball away, keeping one foot behind the other. Poke and shuffle backwards ready to poke ball away again. (Attacker will get ball back after each time it's poked away and continue to dribble, slowly, towards defender.)
- Do this three times
- Now have your players do it three times then trade.
- Now attacker jogs with ball. Another three times each and move on to 1 v 1 and let players compete to score.

Assistant coach takes half, and coach takes other half. If you're alone, half your team can scrimmage or play a fun game like tag while you work with other half on defensive technique.

#### **Step IV: Scrimmage With Conditions**

- Full Micro Field. Goals 12 to 15 feet wide.
- Conditions:
- Must dribble 5x's before passing
- Score by dribbling through goals only. (Dribbling conditions force attacker to hold on to ball longer creating more defensive opportunities.)

#### **Step V. Scrimmage. No Conditions**

U5/6: 3 v 3. U7/8: 4 v 4

#### **VI. Cool Down**

Numbers Game (See Step II. This time you can call more than one number at a time. Example: "1 and 3" etc. )

## **Practice 4/Theme: Passing**

### **Step I. Warm Up/Stretch: Sequential Passing**

This is a warm up to get them moving. We'll deal with the proper technique to pass a ball in Step II.

- Full Micro field
- Half of team in one grid, other half in other
- Divide in three's (one group of 4 is fine but for youngest, groups of two might be best)
- Each player assigned a number
- Dribbling in grid: 1 passes to 2. 2 passes to 3. 3 passes to 1, etc. It might help players to call their number. If #1 is about to pass, #2 calls out "Two!"
- Use inside of foot for shorter passes, use instep/laces for longer passes

#### **Players need to be shown:**

- Maintain spacing (if players right on top of each other, there is no passing)
- Pass and move to open space
- Verbal Communication: Call for ball
- Non-Verbal Communication: Use a hand signal, eye contact, nod of the head, etc. Example: Use extended right arm to show you want ball to your right.

*After players have learned correct passing technique and you play this game again, you will also be coaching:*

- Accuracy of pass (Pass is right to player if standing still or pass will lead player if person they're passing to is moving)
- Pacing of pass (not too hard, not too soft)
- Creating/Maintaining open passing lanes:
- If passer and receiver cannot see each other, then the passing lane is blocked by a defender. Either player, or both, must move to create an open passing lane. Uneven keep away games are great to teach this skill (3 v 1)

*Remember to stretch every :30 to :45 seconds.*

### **Step II A. Passing Technique**

Below is the technical explanation for the coach. Your challenge will always be to teach the technical by demonstrating more, and talking less.

Gather players around two people who can demonstrate proper inside of foot passing technique. Stand relatively close together, about 20 feet apart. Give simple progressive explanations as you demonstrate. Make sure all players can see.

## **Pratice 4 Continued/Step II A: Passing Technique**

- Non-kicking foot is placed to the side of the middle of the ball.
- Non-kicking foot pointed in direction you want ball to go in.
- Knee of non-kicking leg is slightly bent.
- Approach straight on
- As you approach ball, look to see where you're going to pass it (look up to see other player), and then look at ball as you make contact.
- As you make contact, kicking foot is turned out at 90 degree angle, strike the middle of the ball with inside of foot
- Shoulders over the ball to keep ball on ground
- Divide players in two, depending on ability, 5 to ten yards apart. Have them pass back and forth. Five minutes.

## **Step II B. Fun Game/Soccer Bowling**

- Players divided into twos. (A group of three would work too.)
- Players stand 10 yards away from each other (less if too far). Place disc where they stand so they can maintain their distance.
- One player has a ball
- In middle, place disc and a ball on top of disc (holds the ball)
- Players will pass back and forth to each other and try to knock ball off of disc
- Have players keep score. How many times did they knock ball off of disc?
- Adjust distance accordingly. If too easy, move players further apart. Too difficult, move players closer together.
- Group of 3? One side has two players and they take turns or make triangle with three balls (one on each side of triangle).

*While kids are "bowling" you and assistant coach walk around and make corrections. You won't have time to get to everyone – probably only four. It's ok. You'll get to everyone eventually. For those that really need extra help, look for times in a practice when you can pull kids out and give them one on one coaching.*

## **Step III. Passing/Receiving/Moving**

- Divide team into threes (a team of four is also fine)
- Two players on one side (we'll call them players "1" and "2"), one on the other (player "3"), facing each other, 10 yards apart (if team of four, two players on each side)
- Have single players on touch line (you may want to put a disc 10 yards away for the second group to stand at to help them maintain their distance)
- Ball starts with the group of two
- 1 passes to 3 and runs/jogs to take 3's place
- 3 passes to 2 and runs to take 2's place
- 2 passes to 1 and so on
- This gets everyone passing, receiving and moving
- 5 minutes

## Practice 4 Continued/Passing

### Step 4. Passing Game: Keep Away/3 v 1

- Three grids 10 yards x 10 yards
- In each grid, three players against one. Keep away.
- If uneven, make it 4 v 1.
- Three touch (or four). Forces players to pass instead of dribble.
- For every three completed passes, they get a point.
- If defender intercepts ball, he/she gives it back to attacking team.
- Change defender every thirty seconds!
- *Five minutes*

### Step 5A: Three Touch Scrimmage

Teams get a point for scoring a goal or for completing three uninterrupted passes (like above)  
*Five minutes*

### Step 5B: Scrimmage No Conditions

Let them play (finally)

### Step VI. Cool Down: “Star Wars” (Soccer Dodge Ball)

- For youngest: Try 10yds long x 5 yds wide grid.
- For older: 10 yds. wide x 15 yds. long
- Players will run length, from one end to other
- Coach on each side; one has a ball
- Coach says, “Go!” All players run
- Coach passes to other coach trying to hit player with ball
- Any player hit with ball will become one of the passers on the side
- Play until all players out.
- All passes must be on ground.
- If game too slow, make space smaller or use two balls.
- I have no idea why kids call this game “Star Wars”

## Inside of Foot Receiving Technique

Passing and Receiving – you can't do one without the other. I've broken it up because some children will have difficulty just learning how to pass. So why overwhelm them with both at the same time? After they've had time to work on passing, then it's appropriate to introduce the correct receiving technique. This could be a separate practice.

- As ball approaches, get in line with the ball
- Shoulders square to the ball
- Knees slightly bent
- Legs shoulder width apart (or receiving foot can be behind non receiving foot). Use inside of left or right foot to receive ball (depending on the foot ball goes to).
- Receiving foot perpendicular to non-receiving foot (to present as much surface as possible). Toe slightly raised.
- As you receive ball, bring receiving foot back with the ball to absorb energy of ball.

### Receiving Ball Intermediate:

Go to ball. Don't wait for it. (**A1**=First attacker, player with ball. **A2**=Second attacker. **D1**=First defender.)

- i. In 3's. Player with ball (A1). Receiver (A2) 15 yards away with defender (D1) behind her.
- ii. As pass is made, A2 runs towards ball. D1 follows.
- iii. To create more space for A2:
- iv. A2 with back to A1, runs away from A1 then comes back to receive ball. This is called a "check run". Pass should be served as soon as A2 begins run back towards ball.
- v. Before you get ball, look up and see where your teammates and opponents are. Is someone open for a pass, or would it be better to take the ball and dribble?

### First Touch/Prep Pass To Yourself

- As you receive ball (inside of foot), gently push it across your body on a diagonal and play it with your opposite foot.
- As you receive ball, gently push it to outside with outside of foot and with second touch return it to partner with inside of same foot.

## **Practice 5/Theme: Dribbling**

### **Step 1: Warm-Up/Stretch: Freeze Tag**

- Players in grid 10 yds x 10 yds (adjust accordingly) with balls
- Three players (or 4) out of grid
- Taggers/Freezers chase players with balls.
- Player is “frozen” once they’re touched
- Players are unfrozen when one of their teammates, as they continue to dribble, touches them
- Game is over when everyone is frozen.
- Choose new “freezers”
- Stretch between games

### **Step 2. Fun Game: Traffic Exchange**

- Grid 10 yds wide and 15 yds long. 12 foot goal on each goal line
- Line players up. Make two equal teams. (If you have 10 players, make two teams of 5.)
- Team A has five players, number them through 5. Same for Team B.
- Players stand between flags marking goal and lock arms
- When coach calls out a number, for example, “2!” The coach rolls a ball into the center of the field and both “2’s” enter the field and play 1 v 1
- They shoot on goal to score. Shots must be below the knee
- Goalies cannot use their hands, only their feet and they must keep their elbows locked
- Variation: Call out more than one number but never more than three!
- Uneven sides: Have player sitting out pass the balls in and/or call the numbers

### **Step 3. Game With 4 Goals: Must dribble through one of goals to score**

- 3 v 3
- Grid 15 yds wide x 10 yds long
- Put a goal on one end of goal line and another goal at other end. Same on opposite goal. Make goals 12 ft. wide so players can dribble through them. If too easy, make them 8 feet wide!
- One team attacks one set of goals and one team the other

### **Step 4. Scrimmage With Conditions**

- 3 v 3
- Grid 20 yards wide x 30 yards (if you have the space)
- You can only advance the ball if you dribble. Therefore, passes can only be square or back

### **Step 5: Micro Scrimmage. No Conditions.**

### **Step 6: Cool Down: Numbers Game (Step II page 24)**

## **Practice 6/Theme: Passing**

### **Step 1. Warm Up/Stretch: Nut Meg**

- Everyone in 10 yd x 10 yd grid with ball dribbling except two
- After players start dribbling, players on outside enter and start kicking balls out
- Player whose ball was kicked out, retrieves ball, re-enters grid, stands in middle, holds ball over his head, and legs apart
- For player to be “freed”, a teammate must kick a ball between player’s legs
- Game over when everyone on inside of grid standing with balls over their heads!
- If you need more pressure, use three outside players

### **Step 2. Fun Game: Keep Away 3 v 1**

- In grid 10 yds x 10 yds, 3 players try to keep ball away from the one
- One point for every three completed passes (to encourage them to pass instead of dribble).
- If players are dribbling too much, make it 2 points for three consecutive passes or make it three touch
- Defender gets a point every time he/she steals the ball
- Rotate defender every 30 seconds
- Players need to pass and move to open space
- Players away from ball must always work to create open passing lanes (no one between ball and them)
- Player receiving ball must learn to take ball away from pressure to create time and space for him to make a successful pass
- *If Defenders having too much success, add an additional attacker, 4 v 1.*

### **Step 3. Four Goal Game**

Same as Step 3 in Practice 5 but this time goals scored by shooting (instead of dribbling through goals)

### **Step 4. Scrimmage With Conditions: Three Touch**

### **Step 5. Scrimmage**

### **Step 6. Cool Down: Soccer Dodge Ball**

- Grid 5 yards x 5 yards (if you have good passers, make it bigger)
- Half of team inside grid, no balls
- Other half of team equally distanced around grid
- Since this game can last forever if you don’t have good passers/aimers, you might want to start with as many as four balls!
- Players pass ball from one side of grid to other trying to hit players on the inside.
- Players on outside can pass to another outside player for a better “shot”
- Passes/Shots must be on the ground
- If inside player touched by ball they join outside players

## **U7/8: Goal Keeping**

The following will cover most of the goal keeping techniques necessary to train your keeper. It will not cover diving. This is two practices worth!

### **Step 1. Warm-Up: Keep Away (Using Hands)**

- Two Grids 10 yds. x 10 yds.
- Two games of 3 v 3 (If uneven, one game of 3 v 2 or 4 v 3. No team larger than 4)
- Can only use hands (throw ball to each other)
- When ball is caught, you cannot run with ball. You stop and immediately look to pass.
- Team with ball supports player with ball by moving and creating open passing lanes
- Defending team (if even numbers) plays man to man defense and communicates by saying "I have Barry! I have Jose!" etc
- If ball dropped, ball goes to other team
- Ball can be intercepted
- If player with ball steps out of bounds, ball goes to other team
- If ball batted away, ball goes to team that last touched it

### **Ball Stretch: Figure 8 Between Legs**

- Standing. Legs spread apart.
- Roll ball around legs in a figure 8 switching hands.
- Spread legs apart for more of a stretch
- Switch directions every two times around
- Same but Fig 8 with ball off ground

### **Ball Stretch: Roll Ball Around Body**

- Sitting on ground, legs straight out in front of you together
- Roll ball around your legs (try not to bend knees) and then behind back. Three times then reverse.
- Same but with legs apart

### **Step 2: Demonstrate Proper "Keeper" Position**

- Feet shoulder width apart pointing in direction of ball
- Weight on balls of feet
- Feet ready to move (think like a dancer)
- Knees slightly bent
- Upper body slightly bent at waist
- Hands at side with palms facing out, elbows slightly bent at waist level
- Shoulders square to ball

### **Step 2A: Demonstrate Receiving Ball On Ground**

*Have assistant coach roll ball to you (coach) on ground to demonstrate.*

- Goalie in "Keeper Position" when receiving ball
- Collect ball with feet together (so if you miss ball, it doesn't go through your legs)
- Bend over from waist, knees slightly bent
- Hands behind ball (not to side of ball)
- Pick ball up and hug it to chest, stand up and take a beat or two before you put ball into play
- As you collect ball, yell, "Keeper!" (This is an important communication to keep Goalies and field players from crashing into one another.)
- Roll ball back to partner
- (Eventually you want goalie to move towards ball)

## **U7/8: Goal Keeping Continued (2)**

### **Step 3: Soccer Bowling**

- Divide in 2's, five to seven yards apart.
- Set up discs approximately six feet apart for each player to stand between
- Roll ball with hands to partner so player doesn't have to move one way or other
- "Pass" should not be too hard or too soft
- Goalie moves towards ball especially if it's a slow moving ball.

### **Step 4: Receiving Ball on Ground/GK Shuffle**

- Demonstrate how to move from side to side by shuffling feet
- Do not cross legs as you move or you will trip
- Always try to get as much of your body behind ball as possible (get shoulders square to ball)
- Do same exercise as #3, but players roll ball several feet to the side of their partner
- Partner has to shuffle to side and collect ball using same technique as above

### **Step 5: 1 v 1 Goalie Wars**

- Depending on ability, goalies face each other 5 to 10 yds. apart (just like above)
- Each GK stands between a goal that is 6 ft. wide (mark with discs or cones)
- GK's roll ball at each other and try to score
- Balls can be right at keeper or to the side
- All balls must be on ground
- Goalies keep score (the player who gives up the fewest goals wins)
- Players remember to call "Keeper!"

### **Step 6: Receiving Low Balls from Ankles to Midsection**

- Move to ball
- Body behind ball, shoulders square to ball
- Hands: Palms open facing out, fingers slightly spread

### **Step 6A: Practice Catching Low Balls in Air**

- In 2's, facing each other, 5 yards apart, throw low balls to each other from ankles to stomach

### **Step 6B: Catching Low Balls in Air/Shuffle**

- Do same but to side (so player has to shuffle to get into position)
- Players both shuffle together throwing ball back and forth at various heights (not above stomach). Move laterally 10 yards and then back (shuffling).

### **Step 7: Goalie Wars: Balls on Ground, Balls in Air Below Chest, Shuffling**

- Have Goalie Wars but now goalies can use everything they've learned so far including balls to the side to make goalies shuffle.

### **Step 8: Receiving High Balls (from Sternum to Above Head)**

- Use High "W". Hands create a "W" with thumbs almost touching. Fingers apart.
- For balls above head, catch at apex (highest point). If Keeper waits for ball to come down, attacker will have more opportunity to head the ball in.
- Get body behind ball
- After catching ball, bring ball to chest and secure it

## Goal Keeping (3)

### Step 8A: Self Tossed High Balls

- Have players stand and toss balls two to three feet over their heads
- Hands form a “W”
- Catch ball at highest point
- Yell “Keeper!” when they catch ball
- Now they can walk around and do the same

### Step 9: Jumping For High Ball Technique

- Demonstrate
- For most players who are right footed, take one step forward with left foot
- Push off left foot, swing left arm up to help elevate
- Right knee comes up to chest
- Arms extended up, hands in high “W”
- All of this in one motion!

*(The reason for the knee coming up to the chest is to help you elevate and protect your chest/ body from an oncoming attacker.)*

### Step 9A: Self-Toss.

- Standing stationary toss ball to themselves.
- Make sure players:
- Don't throw ball too high
- Observe proper jumping technique
- Catch ball at highest point
- Observe proper hand position (High “W”)
- Yell, “Keeper!” when they make catch
- Now walk around and do the same

### Step 10: Practice High Balls in 2's

- Divide in 2's and have them throw high balls to each other
- Receive balls where they don't have to move
- Balls where they have to shuffle to get into position to catch
- The same but now leaping to make catch

### Step 11: Goalie Wars: 1 v 1/High Balls, Low Balls, etc

- Depending on ability, goalies face each other 5 to 10 yds. apart
- Each GK stands between a goal that is 6 ft. wide (mark with discs or cones)
- GK's roll ball at each other, throw bouncing balls, high balls, low line drives, all the kinds of balls they've worked on so far.
- Balls can be right at keeper or to the side (make keeper shuffle feet)
- Make sure hand positions are correct and goalies get their bodies behind ball
- Keeper moves towards ball, don't wait for it
- After they get ball, make sure they hug ball to secure it
- Players remember to call “Keeper!”
- Goalies keep score (the player who gives up the fewest goals wins)

## Goal Keeping (4)

### Step 12. Fun Game: Goalie Keep Away

- In grid 5yds x 5 yds
- 3 or 4 players play keep away from GK
- GK can only win ball with hands. GK moves around grid trying to steal ball with hands.
- After GK makes a steal, she gives it back to the keep away team
- See how many steals goalie can make in one minute
- After one minute, new GK (rotate players)

### Step 13. Angle Play

GK wants to make the goal as “small” as possible for the shooter. You do this by bisecting the angle created by the two goal posts and ball. I’d recommend doing this exercise with only two players at a time.

To demonstrate angles:

- Make a goal 10’ or 12’ wide with flags (you can make a partial field, 20 yds x 10 yds. long)
- One piece of rope about 50 feet long
- Attach one end to each flag
- Pull the rope taut from different places. Each time you will create a triangle with different angles
- The point from where you pull the rope will represent where the ball is
- You want your player to always be in the middle. To do that will require the GK to constantly change position relative to the ball. The rope will triangle is a great visual tool to make this coaching point.
- Have the player in the goal when you do this, you can also have the GK look at the angle from the shooter’s perspective (where you are holding the rope).

### The GK makes the goal even smaller by coming off the goal line.

- You can demonstrate this by having a player stand in the middle of the goal.
- Have your rope pulled taut straight out from the goal (not to the side)
- Simulate a dive to the right by having them lie down with hands outstretched to the post (on their right)
- Especially on the 12’ wide goal, the player won’t be able to touch the post, and you can show the keeper how the ball could get by him even if he dove
- Now, have the player take three steps off the goal line and do the same simulated dive
- His hands will either touch the rope (or come close) which means that he would have either caught or deflected that shot because he just reduced the angle!
- *Translation:* If the GK just stands on/near the line, she has a lot more goal to cover than if she takes two to three steps out and reduces the width to protect.

### 13A. Shooting On Goalie/GK in Goal

- Make an arc around goal area, closest point not more than 10 feet
- Put players around arc (no more than five or six to keep it sane and safe), each one with a ball
- GK in goal
- As soon as one person shoots, the next one goes
- GK must adjust position relative to ball
- GK must stay alive and alert because balls will be coming quickly
- Have at least one or even two people behind goal to collect balls.

## Goal Keeping (5)

### 13B. Shots on Goal/GK Comes off the Line

- 4 to 5 players + GK
- Simulate a breakaway (with a condition to keep goalie safe)
- Start in middle of field but vary it for keeper to get used to attackers coming in from different angles
- Mark a starting point (with cone/flag) 12 to 15 yards out
- Mark a point (with cone/flag) that shooters cannot pass (3 to 5 yds away)
- Shooters all start behind disc 15 yds. out
- One at a time, attacker dribbles in and shoots before or at next marker (but not beyond)
- After shot, if GK did not save it, shooter retrieves own ball
- After shot, next player goes
- (You may want to put a player or two behind goal to help retrieve balls)
- As attacker approaches, GK comes off goal three to four steps and sets before shot is taken

### Step 14. Distribution of Ball (Throwing)

Most goalies, after they make a save, can't wait to punt the ball as far as they can. It's fun, but not effective because punts are rarely accurate and difficult for teammates to control. Also, because the micro fields are so small, strong punters can turn a micro game into a punting war between the goalies.

Throwing the ball is a "pass". Therefore, it should have the same qualities of a pass – accurate, pacing (not too hard, not too soft) and to the player if player is covered by a defender or to space if the player is unmarked. There are three common ways for GK's to throw the ball:

#### Bowling

- As the name suggests, the ball is rolled into play.
- Used for short, safe passes
- Cup ball in palm and wrist, slightly forward from bottom of ball
- If throwing with right arm, long stride forward with left leg, bowling with the right hand
- Release should be slightly late to get fast, even roll (not bouncy)
- Aim throw slightly ahead of player
- Follow pass for a few steps to support (if player covered, GK becomes an option for field player to pass back to)

#### Side arm sling

- Used for medium distances
- Cup ball in hand/wrist
- Arm straight out to side
- Bring arm back, as you "sling" ball, roll ball off of palm, strong stride by opposite leg
- Follow pass in support (just few steps to give a pass back option)

#### Overhead sling

- Cup ball in hand/wrist
- Arm straight back
- Sling ball over head, roll ball off of palm, strong stride by opposite leg
- Follow pass in support (just few steps to give pass back option)

## Goal Keeping (6)

### Baseball Throw

- While not common, some players can actually throw the ball further this way. Let them!

### Demonstrate Side Arm Sling.

- Players Practice Side Arm Sling in 2's

### Demonstrate Overhead Sling.

- Players Practice Overhead Sling in 2's
- Goalie Wars: 1 v 1 Use Three Different Types of Throws

### Step 15. Distribution Game: 1 v 1 +2 (Neutrals) + GKs

- Field: 20 yds wide x 30 yds long
- Two teams
- Each team has a GK and one defender
- Two neutral players combine with team that has ball to make it 3 v 1
- Start ball with GK. GK starts game by throwing ball to teammate
- If lone defender on other team wins ball, or kicks ball away, the two neutral players now combine with that defender to attack other goal (3 v 1)
- If GK makes save, neutral players immediately transition to play offense and create "passing" lanes for GK
- If GK scored on too much, put in additional boundary five yards away from goal. All shots must be outside that line.
- This should provide lots of shots on goal, lots of balls being distributed by GK, field players having to constantly spread out to create space to receive ball, and a great way to teach players how to transition from defending to attacking.
- If ball not moving around enough, make it three touch
- Part of game GK can only bowl ball, then side sling, then overhead sling.

### Step 16. Punting

- Ball dropped from the hand opposite of the kicking foot (kicked before touching the ground)
- Plant Foot: Firmly on ground with full body weight on it
- On back swing - bring heel as close to buttocks as possible. Make the toes rigid and lock the ankle.
- On forward swing – keep toes rigid and ankle locked, snap knee at contact with ball (toes move across body)
- Plant foot rises
- Ball (ideally) kicked into left or right channels

### Step 16 A. Players Punt

- Demonstrate punting technique
- Divide players in two and have them punt to each other.
- See if they can catch ball on fly (might as well work on their receiving at the same time).
- Provide plenty of space so errant kicks don't hit someone else

## Goal Keeping (6)

### Step 17. Goal Kicks Using Instep

Goal kicks to left or right channels (middle is too dangerous if ball intercepted)

- Approach: Slightly from side, at 45 degree angle
- Player uses instep (laces)
- Ankle locked, toes firm, foot pointed down
- Take big step into ball, lean back, kick through ball and follow through
- Bring heel up to butt, on forward swing, snap knee at contact with ball
- Non-kicking foot is placed slightly behind ball for high flight
- Non-kicking foot is pointed in direction player wants ball to go in
- On approach, player focuses on striking center of ball
- As you kick ball, you will come up on toes of non-kicking foot

### Problems

*Ball doesn't leave ground*

Is plant foot behind ball?

Is player kicking lower half of ball?

Is player leaning back?

*Ball not going straight*

Is player kicking ball in center?

Is player kicking ball with inside or outside of foot (making it spin to one side or other)?

Is non-kicking foot not pointed in direction player wants ball to go in?

At contact, are hips and shoulders turned towards the target?

*No power*

Take big step into ball

Kick through ball (instead of stopping at contact)

Toe pointed down, ankle locked

Bring heel up to butt and snap knee at point of contact (this is where you generate a lot of power)

### 17A. Players Practice Instep Kick

- Demonstrate Instep Kick
- Players in twos
- "Goal Kicks" to each other
- Allow plenty of space between each set of players
- Could play "Monkey in Middle" with three. Players practicing long balls in the air have to kick it over the player in the middle. If player in middle catches someone's ball three times (or one time if the kickers are really good), the player in the middle becomes one of the kickers.

## Goal Kicks/Field Players Receiving Goal Kicks

### 17B. Goal Kicks/Field Players Getting Open

This is a two-pronged practice - working on goal kicks and field players creating space to receive the goal kick.

- Field 80' x 100' (if you have the space)
- With discs, mark a goal box 3 yards deep and 20 yards wide
- Three field players form diamond shape with GK taking goal kick
- On Goal Kick, place ball anywhere on goal box line (most put it on a corner)
- How you design runs for your field players to get open will obviously depend on how far your keeper can kick

### Left Midfielder Creates Space to Receive Goal Kick:

- LM starts wide, near touchline
- Forward starts at midfield line, towards left
- Forward and LM both make diagonal runs to right (both players ideally taking defenders with them).
- LM only goes about five steps and comes back to where she started
- RM (also starting wide) goes up couple of steps and comes back
- Keeper kicks ball to left just as LM begins to come back
- Remember to adjust runs to ability of kicker

### For Right Mid

(Opposite of Above)

### Ball to Forward

- For a GK who can kick the ball to midfield or further:
- Instead of mids playing at touchlines, have each play about 3 to 5 yds off of touchline and almost at mid field
- Forward at midfield
- On GK's signal (raised arm dropped, for example), Mids come back and towards touchlines and stop
- Forward comes back several steps and immediately reverses field
- As soon as forward starts run back up field, GK kicks to Forward, ideally a ball that the forward can run to (so he/she can maintain momentum)
- Use your imagination. For example, the LM and F make runs where they switch positions.

## 18. Keeper/Sweeper Practice

*You want your keeper to be a field player too. An engaged player is an alert player. That's especially important for a goalie!*

- 2 v 4
- Half Micro sized field
- Two players at midfield (Team A) attacking the 4 player team (Team B). Team B is in their diamond shape
- One of Team A players at midfield takes uncontested long shot on goalie
- Play begins once GK comes out of box and throws ball to feet of her field players. I'd suggest starting with keeper "bowling" the ball. If successful, you can have keeper move on to other types of throws. Remember: A ball on the ground is a lot easier to handle (for field player) than a ball in the air.
- As soon as keeper gets ball, his/her team "opens up" (spreads out). Midfielders spread wide and forward plays with back to goal looking for pass.

### **To practice different players receiving ball from the keeper/sweeper:**

- After the long shot, Team A players immediately guard Team B midfielders (which means ball will have to go to either forward or your back)
- One guards Forward, one guards Left Mid (available players are now back and right mid), etc...

## **Positions/Balance**

**Coach:** “After #5 beat Carlos, you were the only one who could stop him. Why didn’t you?”

**Player:** “That happened on Carlos’ side. You told me not to leave my position!”

For 5 to 8 year olds, bunch ball is the name of the game. Coaches get frustrated and hammer home, “Stay in your position!” Coaches, be careful. Yes, you want your players to stay in position, but many children will take you literally and create an imaginary grid for themselves (15 feet by 15 feet) and never leave it!

While you are teaching positions (you play left mid, you play forward, etc.), what you are also teaching is balancing the field.

“Positions” must be taught in this context: Your position on the field is relative to the ball, your teammates and the opponent. Which means? Your position is always changing! This is advanced and very few, if any, are going to get it until under 10. But that’s ok. Start the process now.

U8’s are old enough to practice overlapping runs and learn about trading positions. For example, left midfielder has ball. The full back makes a run to the outside of the left mid and receives the ball. At this moment, the full back becomes the left mid and the left mid will cover for the full back by taking her place. You can choreograph this in practice. It’s very fun for the kids and it makes them think beyond “positions” to “balancing the team shape”. It also shows that even if you’re a back, you will still get an opportunity to shoot and attack the goal!

### **Micro Team Shape**

- U5/6: One midfielder. Two forwards. Shape: Triangle.
- U7/8: GK/Sweeper. Two midfielders. One forward. Shape: Diamond.

## **Shadow Training**

One of the best ways to teach team shape (attacking and defending) is **shadow training**. Shadow Training is a way of practicing choreography or patterns of play without an opponent. Attacking patterns are fun. Use your imagination!

I could use **Shadow Training** for any of the topics below:

### **Attacking**

What aspect of game do you want to stress?

- Kick off
- Throw In
- Corners
- Goal Kicks
- Playing out from deep in your half
- Forwards passing back to midfielder
- Midfielders passing back to Goalie
- Switching ball from one side of field to other
- Crossing the ball Overlapping runs (u8’s)

## Shadow Training (2)

I could use *Shadow Training* for any of the defensive topics below:

### Defending

- First and second defender
- Corners
- Throw-Ins
- Kick Offs
- Goal kicks
- Back door

### U5/6 Shadow Training: Passing Back to Midfielder/Back (3 + 1)

3 + 1: The first number (3) tells you the number of attackers, the second number (1) tells you the number of defenders. The plus sign (+) means the game is cooperative; the defender will cooperate with the attackers.

#### **I want to encourage the forwards to pass back to midfielder. Here are the benefits:**

- Good idea for forwards to learn they have pass-back option when they're trapped
- Midfielder develops communication skills by calling for ball "Help behind!"
- Midfielder learns to trail the play providing rear support
- If midfielder thinks forwards might pass back, she'll be less likely to leave her supporting role and that will help maintain the team triangle.

#### **Start with kick off (players are walking, one defender):**

- LF passes to RF. RF takes a dribble or two. Defender approaches and applies pressure with her presence only.
- MF calls for ball "Man on! Help behind!" RF passes back. RF continues to walk up field.
- MF passes ball to LF (we just switched the point of attack – a good thing!)
- LF takes couple of dribbles, Defender approaches. MF calls for ball
- LF passes back. MF to RF
- And so it goes...

*Variation: You can start the ball with the midfielder deep in your half*

#### **To Increase Difficulty:**

- Jog (increase speed)
- Three touch play
- Defender applies more pressure until finally you play 3 v 1 scrimmage!

#### **3 v 1 Scrimmage Conditions:**

- Forwards can't shoot unless each of them has made one pass back to the midfielder.
- To help communication: If the midfielder doesn't call for the ball, don't pass it back, pass it over to other forward.
- To remind forwards that midfielders get to shoot too, a condition could be only midfielders get to shoot.

## Shadow Training (3)

### U7/8 Shadow Training: Passing Back to Goalie (4 v 0)

This is a practice designed for the team to think of the goalie as a field player and reinforce the concept of the diamond shape.

#### **Conditions:**

Three touch (Receive it = 1. First touch to set up your pass = 2. The pass = 3). If necessary, make it four touch.

Remember, GK may not handle ball when it is passed back to him by teammate. GK must play it with his/her feet.

- Team in diamond shape
- Start ball with GK
- GK throws/rolls ball out to Left Mid. (Balls that are thrown by goalie, instead of punted, are more accurate and much easier to control.)
- After ball received, team, in diamond shape, starts walking up field.
- LM to Forward
- F to GK
- GK to RM
- RM crosses to LM
- LM shoots
- Repeat same series but opposite
- GK shouldn't come up any more than mid way between the kick-off circle and the top of the box

#### *Variation:*

- GK to Forward. Forward receives with back to goal, turns, three dribbles and shoots.
- GK to LM to F to GK. Gk shoots!
- Make it up!

#### Increase Pressure:

- Add defender: GK plays ball to any player who isn't covered
- Condition: Defender cannot defend the GK
- More Pressure: Add another defender (now it's 4 v 2)

**Positive Coaching Alliance**  
**www.positivecoach.org**  
**(650) 725-0024**

The following are excerpts from a program taught by the Positive Coach's Alliance based out of Stanford University. Micro Soccer is a supporter of the PCA - we embrace their philosophy and we want all our coaches, parents and players to do so too.

### **Redefining "Winner"**

A Positive Coach doesn't measure success by the final score. A Positive Coach focuses on effort, rather than outcome and on learning rather than comparison to others. He recognizes that mistakes are an important part of the learning process. A Positive Coach creates an environment where players are not afraid to make mistakes. She sets standards of continuous improvement for self and players. She encourages her players, whatever their level of ability, to strive to become the best players, and people, they can be.

#### **Teach your players, that regardless of the score, here's what winners do:**

- Winners make maximum effort.
- They continue to learn and improve.
- Winners refuse to let mistakes (or fear of making mistakes) stop them.

### **Filling The Emotional Tank**

Like gas tanks in cars, all of us have Emotional Tanks that fill and drain. A child with an empty emotional tank is irritable, pessimistic and unable to deal well with adversity. However, a child who's tank is filled is cheerful, optimistic, and better able to deal with adversity. The bottom line is this - players with empty tanks are less coachable while those with full tanks are more coachable.

As coaches and parents, there will be times when we need to correct and criticize. Research has shown that a 5:1 ratio of praise to criticism (five positives for every criticism) is ideal for children's learning. When the ratio of praise to criticism drops below 5 to 1, children become discouraged and their tanks drained.

Give specific praise. The more specific the comments, the more the child feels like you really DID pay attention ("Nice pass to Rebecca in the first half" versus "Way to go!")

### **Keep The Tank Full: Positive Charting**

Assign each parent a child or two or three to "adopt" for the game. Explain the kinds of things you're looking for (passing, getting back on defense, gave praise to another player, etc). Have parents record their positive comments in your Positive Charting Notebooks (just some notebooks you purchased for this purpose). You can then share these comments with your players at your next practice or after the game. If you do it at a particular time, it will become a ritual they will absolutely look forward to. Remember, make comments specific AND make sure every child has been "adopted".

This is a real community builder and a great way to get a parent's attention off their own child!

## **Keep the Tank Full: Buddy System**

This works at games as well as in practices. Assign each player a buddy (or two, if necessary). Each player is responsible for keeping their buddy's emotional tank full during the game (good shot, good pass, good hustle, etc). After the game you might sit around and have each player say one positive thing about their buddy. Be warned, for real young kids, they will often forget WHO their buddy was. You might have to write it down.

## **Criticism Sandwich**

When you make a criticism put it between two positives. (Nice save on that shot by #6. Don't forget to yell "Keeper". Excellent throw to John on the wing.) When possible, make criticisms in private.

## **Non-Coachable Moments**

Recognize when your player is simply too upset to hear ANYthing. If you have a criticism, now, is not the time. It will only make them MORE upset.

## **Ask Before Telling**

Getting input from your players empowers them and informs you. It might be asking about a drill or game you tried in practice. Did they like it? Why or why not? For older kids, you might ask them for their input on the game at half time and what they think they could do, as a team, to be more successful, etc. Get their input, then give yours. Once again, the half time talk is probably not appropriate for 5 year olds who only want to know about snack or when they can get back out on the field!

## **Honoring The Game**

Unfortunately, the sports world today is full of examples of what not to do. The more vile or flagrant the act, the more attention and air time it gets until the abnormal seems to represent the norm. We wish to reverse this trend with "Honoring The Game".

**We honor the game by getting to the ROOTT . Respect for:**

- Rules
- Opponents
- Officials
- Teammates
- Tradition

### **Rules:**

Respect for the rules is important. Play to the letter and spirit of the rules and refrain from "bending" them when doing so dishonors the game.

### **Opponents:**

Without an opponent, there is no game. A worthy opponent challenges us to do our best. We must respect opponents and remember they are members of our community. We will try our hardest to win but not at the expense of demeaning or demonizing our opponent. I want my players and their parents to show respect for opposing coaches and teams and teach that to my athletes.

**Officials:**

Officials have been selected and trained to enforce rules to keep sports from becoming chaos. Officials are not perfect and make mistakes just like coaches, parents and players. Players and parents must show respect for officials even when they disagree with the call.

**Teammates:**

Our players should feel a commitment to each other as teammates. I ask them to encourage and support one another on and off the playing field.

**In Closing:**

- It takes moral courage to uphold a positive culture.
- It is important to stand up and confront behavior that threatens a positive culture.
- Modeling the type of behavior you want kids to emulate is critical in terms of how you interact with other coaches, parents and opposing fans.
- Encourage parents to cheer for both your team AND the opponent's team.

**Silent Saturday**

Every season Micro Soccer will participate in the national event called, "Silent Saturday" where all spectators may only clap. No talking. No yelling. No cheering. Just clapping.

Studies have shown that the majority of players performed at a higher level when they could fully concentrate on the game instead of being distracted by comments that criticized and affected their performance. Silent Saturday promotes an awareness of the difference between cheering and criticizing. It allows players the silence to practice a vital soccer skill - communicating with each other.

The date of Silent Saturday will be announced at the beginning of the season.

## Bibliography

“Catch Them Being Good” (Everything You Need to Know to Successfully Coach Girls) by Tony Diccio/ Colleen Hacker (for older players, but you’ll get something out of it for all ages)

“Coaching 6, 7 and 8 Year Olds”, “Coaching 9, 10 and 11 Year Olds” by Bobby Howe and Tony Waiters.

“Coaching The Goal Keeper” by Tony Waiters.

“Coaching Soccer Successfully” Roy Rees/Cor Van Der Meer

“Coaching Youth Soccer” by Neil B. Ingels, Jr.

“Fundamental Soccer” by Karl Dewazien.

“SOCCER - How To Play The Game” by Dan Herbst.

“Successful Coaching” Rainer Martens (This is not sport specific. It is about the art of coaching.)

Usually better than books or videos is a hands-on class. Check the [www.sfvikingsoccer.org](http://www.sfvikingsoccer.org) web site for information/links on clinics and or license courses (F, E, E/D, D etc).

Another great source is the **National Soccer Coaches Association of America**. Their web site is [www.NSCAA.com](http://www.NSCAA.com) If you become a member, you receive their publication “Soccer Journal” which always has articles by various coaches (high school, collegiate, national, international) on all aspects of the game.

**Become a student of the game.** Go out and watch matches - middle school, high school, college games. Go to practices of other teams, observe the coach and steal what works for you! Invite a coach you admire to come run a practice. Hire a specialist, like a goalie coach or fitness trainer, to come do a session with your team. Your kids learn and so will you.

**Acknowledgments:** Nothing in this “manual” is original. It has all been stolen from books, manuals, and other coaches. A special thanks to Libby Rappolt, The Positive Coaching Alliance, CYSA and the National Soccer Coaches Association of America for sharing their knowledge of the game.

## MEDICAL APPENDIX

### Player Medical Info

You should have a binder with every player's medical information (which you will get at your Team Meeting). Who to call in an emergency, list of allergies, asthma, is child allergic to any medications, physical limitations, etc. Bring it to every practice and game. Go over their "charts" and identify any kids that may have asthma or allergies. If a player has asthma, make sure they have their inhaler.

### Medical Supplies

- Different sized band aids
- Anti bacterial ointment
- Tape
- Gauze
- Sun screen
- Cotton balls
- Antiseptic solution to clean cuts
- Scissors
- Plastic Bags for ice

### Band-Aid/Ice Psychology

Most "injuries" are nothing more than scrapes. But for many kids, if you don't treat it with a band aid, you will never get them back on the field. Forget about the "suck-it-up-and-get-back-in-there" speech. Acknowledge their "injury" with a band aid, and you'll have a much better chance of them playing again!

The next main ingredient is **ICE!** ALWAYS carry ice! It's another one of those miracle-healing aids. I would stay away from those chemical cold packs. They're not as cold as real ice and when placed on the skin, they can blister it.

**Familiarize yourself with the closest emergency room to your field.** Take a CPR class or find out if there's anyone on your team who is CPR certified and see if they might be willing to attend practices.

### Glasses vs. Goggles

If you have a child that must wear glasses on the field to see, I strongly recommend that they get goggles. The problem isn't so much that the lenses will shatter, but the frame can break and impale the child.