

MENTOR SOCCER CLUB **U6-U7 COACHING GUIDELINES**

Objective: Allow children to learn **good soccer** in an **enjoyable** and **effective** way.

Overview of U6-U7 Players:

- Need a variety of movement activities to help them improve agility, balance, coordination, and speed.
- Easily fatigued, but recover quickly.
- Short attention span. Can only process small bits of information at a time. Need simple rules.
- Egocentric and have little or no concern for team activities.
- Need generous praise and must play without pressure.
- "Me and the ball" stage of development. Their primary focus is on the BALL. We must design activities that allow the child to have many touches with the ball.
- Encouraging players to pass, defend, etc., at this level may be considered futile.
- No need for formal leagues with standings kept. It is more appropriate to have organized activities where players can be divided into ability groups, and play soccer game without boundaries or keepers.

Practice Planning:

- ✓ Practices for U6-U7 players should be approximately 45 minutes long.
- ✓ Coaches should prepare a **written** plan for every practice.
- ✓ Final activity should always be a scrimmage without restrictions.

Sample Practice Activities:

1. **"Gates activities"** – Use your magic key to dribble through the gates (pair of cone goals all over the field) and unlock them (left foot only, right foot only, kick it through, go through and pull back). The coach (or players without a ball) can try to steal the ball from players. 30-60 second rounds. ***Ask players how many gates they went through, and what helps them to dribble through more gates.**
2. **"Freeze tag"** – With and without the ball. Pass ball through legs to unfreeze. Players hold the ball over their head when they are frozen.
3. **"Cone knock down/hit activities"** – Similar to gates activities - players try to hit cones that are in rows of 2 all over the field (left foot only, right foot only, etc.). Another idea is that single cones can be upside down all over the field. When the player passes the ball and hits the cone, they can turn the cone over. How long does it take to turn over all of the cones?
4. **"Players throw and retrieve"** – Player throws his/her own ball and brings back using a variety of body parts or movement challenges.
5. **"Ball master"**- Coach is in the center of the circle. Coach throws ball and players retrieve ball and bring back using a variety of body parts or movement challenges.
6. **"Alligator Alley"** – Players dribble across field without the alligators kicking their ball. If an alligator gets their ball, they become one of the alligators. Be creative - make up other animals or scenarios (e.g. pirates stealing the treasure). Players can stand on their ball and be safe for a moment on "treasure island," then they must still try to cross. **Ask players what they did to avoid the alligator or the pirate.**
7. **1v1, 2v2, and 3v3 games without keepers - VERY IMPORTANT**

Activities SHOULD:

1. Be a lot of **fun**.
2. Include a lot of **touches** on the ball.
3. Include movement, balance, and/or begin to look like soccer.
4. Be a **game** or **activity**.

Activities SHOULD NOT:

1. Take longer than 30 seconds to explain.
2. Have any players standing in **lines** unless it is a quick rotation activity.
3. Be **drill** oriented.

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U6-U7 Game Guidelines:

1. You can set up positions in beginning, but encourage players to move up with their team and find space when their team has the ball.
2. Defenders should not be restricted to staying by goalkeeper or stopping at the half way line. They should also not be told to stand in a straight line.
3. Encourage all players to defend when their team loses the ball and all players to attack when their team has the ball.
4. Players should be rotated to ALL POSITIONS. Players learn different skills at each position. **Please do not lock them into one position.**
5. U6: use kick-ins instead of throw-ins (have defender allow a few yards space). U7: throw-ins.
6. No keepers needed in U6. Keepers used in U7.
7. Make adjustments when a team is up by 4 goals:

Losing team can:

- Add a player
- Add 2 players

Winning team can:

- Remove a player
 - Place the goal scorers back on defense
 - Only take shots from outside the box.
 - Encourage your players to try to score with their weaker foot.
 - Encourage your players to complete 3 passes before going on goal.
 - If one team is having difficulty clearing out goal kicks, then back the other team to the half way line when the goal kick is taken
8. If your team is consistently losing, set goals for each game such as:
 - Scoring a goal
 - Scoring a goal in the first half
 - Getting a certain number of shots on goal
 - Crossing the mid-field line a certain number of times

Celebrate when the players achieve these goals. Focus them on playing good soccer rather than winning and losing. If you have a shy player, you can set a goal for the player to touch the ball a certain number of times during a quarter. Again, celebrate that achievement.

IMPORTANT POINTS FOR ALL COACHES::

- Keep your coaching comments POSITIVE. The game is for the PLAYERS.
- Avoid the temptation to "over-coach" (e.g. telling players when to pass, shoot, etc.).
- Allow your players to grow by letting them begin becoming their own "problem solvers" on the field. Let them make and learn from their own decisions in order to grow as a player.
- You can be very effective in guiding the players with just a few comments, such as "Keep the Ball" and "Find Space". As the season progresses, the coach will most likely hear the parents repeating these same comments. Hopefully, we will begin to eliminate the, "Boot it," "Pass it," and other unhelpful directions that are shouted during the game.

Players leaving the U6 and U7 program should:

1. Love the game of soccer because practices and games were fun.
2. Be comfortable dribbling the ball.