

SVSL Fall 2015 Intramural Coaching Guide



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Introduction

Saucon Valley Soccer League provides an enjoyable learning environment for the physical, social, and personal development of youngsters. The values of the program include:

- Promoting fitness
- Developing new skills
- Instilling a positive attitude and a desire to succeed
- Teaching responsibility, commitment and cooperation
- Providing an outlet for the release of energy
- Providing a fun and enriching experience

As soccer coaches, you can help us achieve these values.

SVSL Soccer – Participant Values

The Coach

1. Treats own players, parents, and opponents with respect.
2. Teaches and inspires soccer players to love the game and to compete fairly.
3. Demonstrates a positive attitude toward players and the game.
4. Has control and commands discipline at all times.
5. Respects the interpretation of rules and judgment of the officials without comment or argument.

The Player

1. Treats opponents with respect.
2. Plays hard and plays within the rules of the game of soccer.
3. Respects officials and accepts their decisions without gesture or argument.
4. Wins without boasting, loses without excuses and never quits.

The Referee

1. Knows the rules and understands the game.
2. Places health and welfare of the players above all other considerations.
3. Treats players and coaches courteously and demands the same from them.
4. Works cooperatively with coaches to help manage the game.
5. Is fair and firm in all decisions on the field.

The Parents

1. Do not coach the team, including your own child, from the sidelines during the game.
2. Respect the judgment of the referee and do not criticize officials.
3. Communicate with the coach and create a positive, supportive working relationship.
4. Control negative emotions and think positively.

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10 Ways to Know if You are a Good Coach?

1. A good coach is someone who knows winning is wonderful but is not the triumph of sports.
2. A good coach is someone who goes to work early, misses meals, gives away weekends and plays havoc with family schedules so he or she can help out a group of youngsters.
3. A good coach is someone who stays half an hour or more after practice to make sure every one of the players has a safe ride home.
4. A good coach is someone who rarely hears a mom or dad say 'Hey thanks,' but receives a lot of advice on game day.
5. A good coach is someone who makes sure that everyone gets to play.
6. A good coach stresses individual and team progress over success and winning games.
7. A good coach is someone who can help a child learn to take mistakes in stride.
8. A good coach is someone who sometimes helps a child to develop ability and confidence that sometimes did not exist before.
9. A good coach makes practice fun so that players don't even realize they are learning the game.
10. A good coach is someone a youngster will remember a long time after the last game has ended and the season is over

Planning for the Season

Planning

The way to have successful practices is to plan. Your practice planning should begin before you first get together with the team and should continue throughout the season as you plan for each practice.

Pre-season Planning

Find out from SVSL when and where you can practice. Division 1 teams should limit practice to 45 min or 1 hour, once or twice per week. As the players get older, practices can be increased in length. Division 2 teams may practice twice a week for about an hour each session. Division 3 teams may extend practices to 90 min. Keep in mind that these are guideline and not hard and fast rules.

The two main objectives for any soccer practice are (1) to have fun, and (2) to learn to become better soccer players. In order to achieve the second objective, it is important that you develop teaching goals for the season before you start. You will ordinarily have only four to six practices before the first game. Since you will not have time to teach everything, choose the topics you want to focus on and build your practices around these topics.

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Parent Orientation Meeting

All coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion at your 1st practice. The time you invest will pay benefits for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, the following information could be put into an e-mail to parents/players, a face to face meeting is preferable.

Purposes of a parent orientation meeting include the following:

- Enables parents to understand the objectives and goals of the intramural program
- Enables parents to become acquainted with you, the coach
- Informs parents of your expectations of them and of their child
- Enables you to address any concerns of the parents
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
 - team roster (with names of parents and players, telephone numbers, e-mail)
 - schedule of practices and games
 - rules of play for your division

Important points to cover in your meeting:

- Coach introduction
 - Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time)
 - Give some background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience)
- Coaching philosophy
 - Discuss the values of the SVSL Intramural Program
 - Discuss your methods for teaching skills (describe a typical practice)
 - State the importance of having fun and developing skills
 - Ensure the parents understand that SVSL does not keep game scores or standings
 - Discuss your philosophy regarding player rotation, substitution, playing time. **Note that SVSL rules expect all players should play at least 50% of each game.**
- Specifics of the program
 - Practice schedule (how many per week? how long?)
 - Game schedule
 - Minimum playing time is 50% of each game.
 - Equipment required (e.g. shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards) or recommended (e.g. ball, soccer shoes, water bottle)
- Team management
 - Ask for volunteers as assistant coaches
 - Ask for volunteers as team parents (snack schedule, help with nets/flags)
 - Set up telephone tree, e-mail list and/or car pooling system

Discuss COACH'S responsibilities, for example:

- Demonstrate leadership and good sportsmanship and treat each player fairly
- Have organized practices and teach soccer fundamentals appropriate to the age group
- Provide a safe environment (e.g. arrive at practice on time and remain after practice until every child is picked up by an authorized adult, ensure that the players' equipment conforms to the club guidelines)

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- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem
- Allow each player to play half of every game at a minimum
- Respect the referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself in a controlled manner on the field

Discuss PLAYER'S responsibilities, for example:

- Attend practices/games regularly, and to arrive on time
- Bring proper equipment to each practice and game
- Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice/game
- Respect the referees
- Be supportive of teammates all of the time

Discuss PARENTS' responsibilities, for example:

- Be at practices/games on time, attend games and cheer the team
- Be supportive of all the players
- Help their child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not on winning
- Respect the referees (they will make mistakes, but they are doing their best)

Suggestions for Dealing with Parents

Coaching is exciting and rewarding, but occasionally you may experience difficulty with parents. Whatever the concern, a parent is generally just looking out for their child. Don't be discouraged. There are some things you can do to open up communication and make dealing with parents a positive aspect of your coaching duties.

1. Have a parent meeting before the first practice to discuss your plans and expectations for the season. See the section: "Parent Orientation Meeting" for tips on how to do this well.
2. Always listen to their ideas and feelings. Remember, they are interested and concerned because it is their children that are involved. Encourage parental involvement.
3. Know the SVSL Intramural Program values and ensure that the parents understand them too.
4. Know the club and game rules. Be prepared to abide by them and to explain them to parents.
5. Handle any confrontation one-on-one and not in a crowd situation. Try not to be defensive. Let the parent talk while you listen. Often a parent will vent their frustrations just by talking.
6. Rely on SVSL administrators for assistance or guidance if needed. There are very experienced people who run the program who can help.
7. Don't discuss individual players with other parents. The discussion could end up going around the local grapevine.
8. Ask the parents not to criticize their children during practice or a game. Don't let your players be humiliated, even by their own parents.
9. Be consistent! If you change a rule or philosophy during the season, you may be in for trouble. At the very least, inform players and parents of any change as soon as possible.
10. Most importantly, be fair! If you treat all players equally and with respect, you will gain their respect, and that of their parents as well.

Remember that you will be dealing with all types of children, and with parents having different backgrounds and ideals. The challenge for you as a coach is to address these differences in a positive manner so the season will be enjoyable for everyone involved.

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What to Do On Game Day

Game day, particularly for the first few weeks, will be hectic arriving at the field, finding out where you play and making sure all the players get there. There are some helpful recommendations regarding game day preparation and play:

- Prior to game day:
 - Know the rules for your division. They are on one page and are easy to review.
 - Know the rules of soccer, watch a game on TV, or attend a local game. Read the official FIFA rules. The more you know the more you can teach to the players.
 - Select a team formation to play and stick with it throughout the season. Keep it simple so players can concentrate on skills and gaining experience.
- The morning of game day:
 - Determine your starting line-up and script your substitutions ahead of time. Division 2 is divided into 12 minute quarters, many coaches substitute around the 6 minute mark.
 - Ask players to arrive at the field 20 minutes prior to the scheduled start of the game. This allows time to get ready and warm up.
 - If you are playing Division 2 or 3, Select a starting goal keeper and warm them up. Make sure goal keepers have gloves and different colored shirt or pinnie. Select your 2nd half goal keeper and have both of them warm up together prior to the game.
 - Make sure your players are ready to play, they have their t-shirt, soccer shoes/sneakers and shin guards. Socks should be worn on the outside of shin guards to prevent scrapes to other players. Make sure all hair pins, jewelry, necklaces and bracelets (except medical bracelets) are removed. If it is cold out, sweatshirts and jackets should be put on under the player's game t-shirt.
 - Talk to the opposing coach and discuss any special situations such as not having enough players, only a few substitutes, no goalie gloves, etc...
 - Introduce yourself to the referees for your game. Discuss any special situations you would like them to be aware of.
 - Try to start your game on time. There may be a game after yours.
- During the game:
 - All players should play at least 50% of every game.
 - If the referee doesn't show up, each coach should take a half to be the referee.
 - When substituting, tell the player entering who they are replacing and their position on the field. Make sure you have the referee's attention before making a substitution.
 - The league doesn't keep score, however, the players know the score. Don't run up the score on the other team. Things to try if you want to keep the score down:
 - Make your best goal scorer the goal keeper. Substitute your best players with your worst players. Tell your players they can only score with their left foot (or right if they are left footed). Put your best goal scorer on defense and tell them they can't go across mid-field. Tell your players they must make 5 consecutive passes before they can score a goal.
- After the game:
 - Keep your comments short, focus on positive takeaways from the game and the schedule for the upcoming week.
 - Stay at the field until all players are picked up by a parent. This also holds for practices.

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Overview of Soccer Coaching

Introduction

Focus your attention on the listed points for each technique as you observe your players. It is important for your players to learn to practice techniques properly, but remember that this may take some time - more for some techniques than others, and more for some players than others. Techniques are striking or receiving the ball properly. Making a good pass with the proper part of the foot is technique. Receiving a pass with a soft touch that settles the ball at the players feet is technique.

Tactics are the decisions the player makes. Whether to beat the defender, or pass the ball. To use a "wall pass", send the ball deep, or a crisp pass to a teammate are tactics. Make sure you discuss these decisions with the players so they will learn the proper decisions that will help their team. Again, be patient and be encouraging, this takes time!

Coach Equipment

1. A large BAG for all of the items listed below!
2. MEDICAL KIT - A simple kit for games and practices is a good idea for every coach.
3. PUMP and inflating needle – far too many soccer balls are too soft and don't jump from the foot when kicked; the same goes for the balls kids bring to practice.
4. SHIN GUARDS - a spare pair of old ones will cover for a forgetful player!
5. GOALKEEPER'S GLOVES - an inexpensive pair is a useful addition to your game bag. They help the player feel more comfortable when playing the position.
6. SOCCER BALLS - if possible, have a good quality ball available at the game. This will serve for team warmups and can be used as a game ball if none is provided. Each player should have his own ball and bring it to practice; bring extras to practice because someone is likely to forget theirs.
7. CONES - (about a dozen) to set up small areas for practice drills, as obstacles for dribbling drills, or to mark boundaries for a scrimmage field. PINNIES – (enough for each player) for creating short sided teams during games and drills.
8. WATER should be available during practice and at the game. Have the players bring their own water bottles (but keep an extra bottle in your bag or cooler for the occasional forgetful player).

Player Equipment

1. BALL - Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will derive maximum benefit from practice if they each have their own ball for warm ups and individual drills. Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number: size #3 – Division 1; size #4 – Division 2 and 3
2. SHIN GUARDS - An absolute requirement for games and practices. The pull-on "legging" type with foam padding protecting the front of the leg from ankle to shin is an excellent shin guard. The shin guards should be completely covered by the socks.
3. SOCCER SHOES - Recommended, but not absolutely required. Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not legal for soccer.
4. WATER BOTTLE (with identifying marks on it) - Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game.

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Practice Sessions – Outline

I. Warm-up 10 minutes

Each practice session should be started with a warm-up. Dribbling and ball control games make the best warm-up. Use your imagination to improvise from the skill games described below. Keep it "ball" oriented and fun. Try a relay game.

II. Stretching 5 minutes

Follow the warm-up with a stretching session. Generally, players under the age of 10 do not need to stretch. It is good to have them do a little stretching even at these early ages to develop the habit. Have the players stretch their calves, thighs, hamstrings, Achilles tendons, and arms. Hold each stretch for the count of ten and do not let the players bounce while they are stretching. This is a good time to tell the players what they will be doing in their practice today and to joke around or talk about what they did that day.

III. Skill Games 5-10 minutes each

Utilize one or two skill games during each practice. Try and build each of your practices around a particular skill (e.g. dribbling or passing). First demonstrate the skill to the players before starting and then correct group and individual players' mistakes during the skill games. Try not to be over corrective - remember, let the game be the teacher!

IV. Scrimmages 15-30 minutes

Complete your practice with a small sided game (i.e. 3 v 3, 4 v 4). Try to make the skill you practiced earlier a "condition" of the game. For example, in a practice that emphasized passing, the players of a small sided scrimmage must complete 2 or more passes before they can shoot on the goal. Make the scrimmage as much like a competitive game as possible, utilizing the rules of soccer modified for the appropriate age.

Skills Development & Techniques

Not all intramural divisions will be able to perform or learn these skills and techniques. Choose the appropriate skills to be developed for the age group.

1) Passing

- a) Practice all foot skills with both right and left feet.
- b) Inside of the foot pass: Ankle locked, Connect with the middle of the ball with the instep, Follow through (contributes to direction and pace of the pass)
- c) Outside of the foot pass: Ankle locked, Foot pointing slightly downward at the toe, Leg swings across the ball, Ball should spin when kicked

2) Receiving a pass

- a) Move toward the ball (don't wait for it to come to you)
- b) Foot surface first touching the ball should be withdrawn slightly on contact to take the momentum out of the ball ("cushioning" or "catching" the ball)
- c) Redirect ball in front or to the side in anticipation of moving in that direction to pass or dribble in order to avoid a defender

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- 3) Dribbling
 - a) Keep ball close, approximately 2-3 feet in front of you
 - b) Look up frequently to see defenders and establish eye contact with teammates
 - c) Change speed and direction
- 4) Shielding
 - a) Legs bent, solid balanced base, shoulders down
 - b) Arms out, it is legal to hold off an opponent
 - c) Used as a means of keeping an opponent away from the ball.
- 5) Shooting
 - a) Head down looking at the ball, not the goal
 - b) Ankle locked with foot pointing downward at the toe
 - c) Strike the ball with boney part of the top of the foot, near the laces.
- 6) Throw-ins
 - a) Ball **MUST** pass directly over the head, with both hands
 - b) Both feet must be on the ground (not necessarily flat; it is permissible to drag the toe of the trailing foot)
- 7) “Trapping” (Settling or Controlling)
 - a) Controlling the ball using any part of the body: foot, thigh, chest, shoulder, hip, head.
 - b) The controlling surface must “give” on contact to cushion the ball
 - c) Ball should stay close to the player (not bounce away), and be pushed away from the defender.

Simple Soccer Tactics

Remember, tactics are not important for the younger player and should not be stressed. As the players mature, and the concept of team play begins to develop, the tactical elements can be introduced. Listed below are some basic guidelines for the coach, which fall into the realm of tactics.

General

- Play positions (the various roles can be understood even as players rotate positions).
- Get open and call for the ball.
- Look and listen for passing opportunities.
- Pass and move to space and/or to a support position.
- Work to build and maintain triangles - the basic structure for passing and support.

Team Offense

- Maintain possession of the ball.
- Keep the offense wide in order to spread (and weaken) the opponents’ defense, and to create space for scoring opportunities.
- Finish attacks with shots on goal.

Team Defense

- Pressure opponents to decrease their “comfort zone”.
- Delay opponents’ attack when your team first loses possession of the ball, to permit defense to regroup.
- Mark “goal-side” to defend against shots on goal.
- Cut off passing lanes to defend against easy passes.
- Do not teach “kick it out” over the sideline or endline as a defensive tactic, this teaches nothing to the players.

Kick off

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- Short pass and dribble.
- Short pass and pass back (triangle).
- The ball must move forward on a kick-off.

Throw-in

- Throw to an open teammate if possible (first look for the farthest unmarked player).
- Throw toward the other team's goal.
- Throw down the touchline.
- Take throw-ins quickly (before the defense can set up) but always be under control.

Goal kick

- Big kick to the side of the field.
- Avoid kicking the ball across the front of your goal.
- Take a 5 yd run up to kick the ball, not a 2 step kick.

Free kick

- Close to goal, direct free kick- shoot at the goal, away from the keeper.
- Far from goal - big kick toward the front of the opponents' goal.
- Far from goal – short pass to an open teammate.

Corner kick

- Big kick into the opponents' goal area.
- Short pass and dribble at the goal.

Goalkeeper Punt

- Run the ball out to the edge of the 18 yd box.
- Drop the ball to the kicking foot, don't throw it in the air, make solid contact.

Drills & Skill Games - General Guidelines

There are countless drills and games available on line. Some popular skill games are included here for your immediate use. You don't need 100 drills. Pick a few and work at them. Make them a game, not work and the players will want to do them again.

Steps: Step 1 - Introduce the drill (why it is done, how it is done).

Step 2 - Demonstrate the drill (slowly, step-by-step).

Step 3 - Execute the drill.

Step 4 - Figure out what went wrong (it's often the instructions); fix it, and start over!

- Some drills will not work well at first. Maybe they need a small adjustment (e.g. too many players, or players standing too close or too far apart).
- Repetition of drills builds skills. It can also be boring. So use variations of drills, and don't repeat the same drill too often. If your players are not enjoying and not learning from a particular drill, find another that focuses on the same skills.
- Start a drill simply and progress to the harder stuff. For example, begin with a simple passing triangle; then introduce a chaser.
- Play with the kids! Sometimes you should join in the drill as a participant rather than as a coach. Not only will the kids enjoy it, but you will gain a better appreciation of the skills you are asking them to master. You can also control the intensity by your play.
- Involve a parent from the sidelines to be goalkeeper for a shooting drill!

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- Split the team into small groups for you and your assistants to teach a drill; then rotate. This keeps more players busy and allows more individual attention.
- When organizing the players into small groups, consider their abilities. For example, in some dribbling or passing drills it might be best to have pairs with similar abilities. Conversely, in competition (e.g. 2v2) you might pair stronger and weaker players for balance.
- Start a drill slowly. WALK through it first, then do it at half speed, and finally at full speed.

Scrimmages - General Guidelines

General:

- Scrimmages are not the best for improving skills (many players, only one ball). But the kids love scrimmage and its great fun for them. So allow plenty of time for scrimmage during every practice, but don't make it the only activity.
- Excellent for learning positions and game simulation.
- Good way to teach the rules (you are the referee!), but try not to stop play too often.

Small-sided scrimmage:

- Fewer players, thus each player gets more touches on the ball.
- Small field and small goal requires more control and passing.
- Small goal encourages accuracy.
- HIGHLY RECOMMENDED IN PRACTICE FOR ALL AGES!
- If you have a large team and sufficient space, run two games simultaneously.

Scrimmage with conditions:

- Minimum 2 touches per player: to encourage control (no one-touch "passes").
- Minimum 5 touches per player: to encourage dribbling.
- Must pass 3 times before allowed to shoot: rewards passing and good spacing.

Uneven scrimmage:

- 5 v 2 or 4 v 2 with no goals: forces passing, objective is to maintain possession.
- 4 v 2 on each half where players can't cross mid field.

Freeze!

- Blow the whistle and call "freeze".
- All players must stop where they are.
- Coach makes observation, e.g. players open on right flank, too bunched up, etc...
- Excellent teaching tool (if not used too often).

Open scrimmage:

- Full game simulation, all players, one game.
- Enforce rules more strictly to encourage fair play; it also gives players free kick practices.
- Play another team occasionally, if possible; practice subs and positions.

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Games and Drills

Dribble/Ball Control: (Good for Div 1 & 2)

1. “Sharks and Minnows” – create rectangular “pond” area with cones. All but one player in the pond, each with a ball. The “minnows” in the pond dribble around the pond. The one remaining player is the “shark”. The “shark” enters the pond and tries to kick the “minnows” ball from the pond. When a “minnow” loses their ball, they become a “shark”. Allow each player a turn as a starting “shark” (increase the number of starting “sharks” if the game runs long).
2. Dribbling races and relay type races through cones.
3. “Red Light – Green Light” (use hands for signals to encourage players to look up. (have jumping jack penalty for losing control of ball)

Warm up Game: (Good for Div 2)

1. “Ducks Fly South” – (a kicking dodge ball game) start with all players lined up at one side of field. Coaches are stationed on the sides of the field with numerous balls. The players run to the other side of the field while dodging balls kicked at them by the coaches (keeping the balls low and not too hard). Once a player is touched by a kicked ball, they join the coaches on the sides and kick balls at the remaining players.

Passing/Receiving: Good for Div 2 & 3)

2. “Monkey in the Middle” – . Three players in a line. Player in the middle receives a pass from one side and returns. Then turns to receive a pass from the other side and return its. (rotate the player in the middle)
3. “Coach in the Middle” – Three/Four players in a box, play keep away from the coach by passing the ball and moving to open space. If coach steals the ball, jumping jacks for everyone.
4. “Cone Man” – Put a ball on a cone with a player on each side of the cone. The players use another ball to attempt to knock the first ball off of the cone using good passing skills. First team with 5 knock offs wins.
5. The Number Game/”MadDog”:
 - a. Arrange a field with a goal at each end and boundaries.
 - b. Two teams: A player on each team is given the number 1, 2, 3 etc. (matching skill levels and use pinneys)
 - c. Coach calls player number - For example “2” and throws a ball into play. Player “2” from each side races onto the field and attempts to gain control of the loose ball and score in their opponent’s goal by shooting or dribbling through as determined by the coach.
 - d. Play is stopped upon a goal, ball played severely out of bounds, or a draw as determined by the coach. (Remember 1 vs 1 soccer is very demanding – 30 to 60 seconds of hard, aggressive play will be tiring. So if the players have a good session of equal play without scoring, whistle a draw.
 - e. Give everyone several 1 vs 1 chances...then increase to calling 2 numbers at time to finally calling all of the numbers and the game will turn into a scrimmage.