Coaching Curriculum for Age Group: 6 and Under

Although sometimes we may mistake 4-6 year olds for little adults, they are clearly not little adults. They have many years of childhood and development to enjoy before they are able to look at life in a similar fashion to adults. The reason for this is they need time to intellectually, emotionally and physically develop. Although we do live in the same world, when seen through our own eyes, the world both adults and children experience is quite different. In order to fully understand these wonderful children and to make trainings run smoothly and happily as possible, it is extremely important for us to understand the following characteristics of children under 6.

Typical Characteristics of players 6 and under:

- **focused on themselves (egocentric)** - reality to them is solely based on what they see and feel. They have little concern for “team” activities
- **unable to see the world from another perspective** - it is the world according to ME. Asking them to understand how someone else is seeing something or feels is unrealistic
- **enjoy playing, not watching** - they feel no enjoyment from watching others play when they could be playing too. Make sure every player has a ball in practice so every player is always playing
- **everything is here and now** - forget about the past and future, they live in the moment
- **often cannot identify left foot vs. right foot** - they know which foot they use most and if they point to their feet you can help teach them left and right
- **heating and cooling systems are less efficient than adults** - we need to give frequent water breaks (every 8-10 minutes) or they may just run until they cannot run anymore
- **limited attention span** - (on average 15 seconds for listening, 10-15 minutes when engaged in a task) - keep your directions concise and to the point
- **active imaginations** - if we utilize their imaginations in training activities, they will love training
- **effort is synonymous with performance** - if they have tried hard, they believe they have done well. This is a wonderful quality and we should be supportive of their enthusiasm
- **typically have 2 speeds** - full speed and stopped
- **look for adult approval** - watch how often players look to you for approval or to see if you are looking. Also be encouraging when they say “Coach, look what I can do”
- **unable to think abstractly** - asking them to think about tactics or spacial relationships is unrealistic
- **usually unaware of game scores** - we should keep it that way - the question you need to ask them is “Did they have fun?”
- **often like to fall down just because it is fun** - they are just children having fun
**Skill Priorities:**
- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft first touch

**Recommended games for Players 6 and Under:**

1. **Tag** - Every child dribbles a soccer ball in the space defined while trying to tag other players with their hand. Players cannot leave their own ball. Have them keep count of how many people they have tagged and, if playing twice in a row, see if they can tag more people than they did in the first game. *Version 2:* Players must dribble and tag the other players knees.

2. **Hospital Tag** - Same as tag in that each player dribbles a soccer ball and they try to tag each other with their hands. In this game, each time a player is tagged he/she must place their hand on the spot of their body at which they were tagged. Obviously, if tagged a third time, players have no more hands to cover those spots, so they must go to the hospital to see the doctor. The coach acts as the doctor and performs a magical task (pretend) to heal all the soccer players so they can continue to play the game.

3. **Red light/Green light** - All players have a ball and dribble in a limited space (or towards the coach). When coach says “red light” players must stop the ball and put a foot on top of the ball. When coach says “yellow light” the players dribble slowly. When coach says “green light” players dribble fast. Coach controls this game with the frequency of light changes and variety of changes. Once players catch on to this game, add light of other colors and affix different actions to them. (i.e. - purple light - hop over the ball, orange light - run around the ball, blue light - dance, etc. etc.).

4. **Freeze tag** - Break up the group into 2 teams. Everyone must dribble their soccer ball, but one team tries to tag (freeze) the other team. If they do tag a player on the other team, that player must freeze, place the ball on their head and spread their legs. Another player on their team must kick the his/her ball through the player’s legs to unfreeze their teammate. If all players are frozen, the game ends and the frozen team becomes the taggers. Otherwise stop the game after a few minutes and have the teams revers roles. *Version 2:* Coach can be the freeze monster and try to tag all the players with players unfreezing each other in the same fashion.

5. **Sharks and Minnows** - All players except 1 or 2 start with a ball. Players without a ball are sharks and try to tag the minnows. If a player gets tagged, they become a shark as well until all players become sharks. *Version 2:* Coach starts off as the only shark and tags the minnows.

6. **Snake** - In an appropriate space for the numbers you have, have all players dribbling soccer balls except for 2-3 players to start. These players hold hands and work together as one snake to tag the other players. The players with soccer balls try to avoid getting tagged by the snake. If they are tagged, they join hands with the players making up the snake and the snake grows until all players are part of the snake. The snake must stay together as one animal and not break off into little parts. Encourage fun by having the kids hiss like a snake.
7. **Capture the Gold** - Set up 3 or 4 home bases (squares) with cones (or whatever) roughly 2-3 yards wide. Break the players up into teams and have each team get together in their home base. Place all the balls in the center of the space between the home bases. On the coaches command the teams free to gather as many soccer balls as they can into their home base. Players cannot use hands and there is no pushing each other or sitting/laying on the balls. Teams try to gather as many balls as possible into their home bases. Teams can steal from each others’ home bases. Coach calls time after a minute or two. Have the teams count the balls they have but DO NOT declare a winner. Reset the balls to the middle and ask the players to figure out a way to get more balls the second time. Play the game again and at the end, ask them if they were able to get more ball. DO NOT declare a winner.

8. **Moving Goal** - 2 coaches use a pennie or an extra piece of clothing to form a moveable goal with each coach serving as a post and the shirt serving as a crossbar. Players each have a ball and try to score by kicking their ball through the goal. However, the coaches constantly move and turn to force the players to keep their head up and to change direction as they dribble.

**Every training session should end with a scrimmage**

**US YOUTH SOCCER recommendations for 6 and under:**

- Play 3 vs. 3 (without a goalkeeper)
- Field Size: 20-30 yards long x 15-20 yards wide
- Ball: Size 3
- Training time: Limit to 45 minutes