

U6-U8 Training Session Ideas

Keep it Fun

Having interesting and varied coaching sessions is important for keeping the kids interested. At the same time, the coaches want to “stretch” the players by teaching them new skills and, of course, keep on practicing the basics. This document has some ideas, all tried and tested, for putting together sessions that seek to achieve these two objectives. At the end of the day, if you want the kids to come back next week, they’ve got to have fun and enjoy the sessions you organise.

Training Activities

This section of the website has a whole range of activities, all focusing, on a particular skill (although in practice, they bring in other skills as well). The activities aim to be fun and where possible introduce an element of competition. These can form the building blocks of a training session. Use the coaching points to gradually increase the pressure on the players.

The activity sheets are organised in terms of the main skills required at these age groups, namely:

Skill	Description
Handling	Being able to pass and receive the ball. Picking up the ball. Avoiding knock-on and forward passes.
Tackling	The ability to correctly tackle players in different situations.
Running	Speed and agile running with the ball.
Evasion	Being able to avoid being tackled. Side step.
Alignment	Holding position. Avoiding offside.

Planning

A training session normally consists of a warm-up, some activities, some real games and a warm-down. Having a pre-defined plan is very useful as it enables a session to have some kind of rhythm or objective. It also allows all of the coaches to understand what is happening and what the objectives are.



When creating a plan, it is always best to “over stock” the programme. As a rule of thumb, a training activity should not be more than 10 minutes. You can always make a good activity overrun, but trying to keep a activity going when its “past its shelf-life” is tedious for coach and players alike.

Organise activities so that the layout of cones does not have to be rearranged, except during breaks. The kids don’t want to hang around watching an aged coach pulling muscles trying to get a straight line of cones! Most of the activities use a grid. This same grid could be two halves of a pitch. With a bit of practice, the same basic layout can last the whole session, with just minor adjustments.

Session Formats

Below are some formats that have been used successfully:

1.	<p>Skill Of The Week</p> <p>Organise a week focusing on one skill. Explain this to the players at the start of the session. Pick some activities that focus on the chosen skill. Through out the session keep emphasising the skill.</p>
2.	<p>Activity Bases</p> <p>For a more varied session, organise activity bases, each one focusing on a particular skill. Split the players into groups and rotate them around the circuit - 10 minutes at each base.</p>
3.	<p>Coaching Clinics</p> <p>Start the session with real games. The lead coach should try to identify players with particular weaknesses. After the break, splits the players off into skill groups best suited for their particular skill-weakness (e.g. some players to handling base, some to passing etc.) – this should be done sensitively/constructively. Play a game at the end to gauge the improvement.</p>

“Real” games

All of the players want to play real games – after all, that is what it is all about. Coaches should treat games as an opportunity to coach. The referee should carefully explain infringements. Being soft on infringements is not advisable. If the players are not aware of when they are making mistakes, they will not learn. Try to be constructive – ask the players if they know “what went wrong?” and make the infringement a part of the learning process. For example, if someone does an incorrect tackle, organise a demonstration of how a tackle should be made.



Mini-games

With a full 7 aside game, some players will tend to get left behind a bit. Use “mini-games” of, say, 3 against 3, on a half size pitch, to create an opportunity for all players to have involvement in a game. Ideally, each mini-game should have two coaches – one for each team. If coaching resources are scarce, organise a parallel activity (e.g. stuck in the mud) for half the players (i.e. pick an activity that one coach can manage single-handedly) and swap over after 10 minutes or so.

Special Rule Games

Special rules can be introduced to try and pressure players into adopting good practices. The following rules have all proved beneficial:

- Can't go backwards more than x metres rule
- Quick passing rule
- Pass before tackle rule (e.g. 3 tackles, then turnover)

It is important for players to understand that these are not normal rules. If there is an infringement, the referee should make a point of emphasising that the infringement is not a “real” rule.

