



YOUTH SOCCER

PRESCHOOL/K-1 COACHING CURRICULUM

INTRODUCTION

League Philosophy

SLARA sponsored leagues and activities are formed and operated on the principles of good sportsmanship, fair play, courtesy to others, healthy activity, tolerance and inclusiveness, and all other policies pertaining to community understanding and development. SLARA reserves the right to make decisions which it feels are in the best interest of the league and community.

What to Expect?

SLARA soccer leagues aim to serve as introductions to the sport of soccer for the youth in the community. For many of the players in the league, this will serve as their first experiences with soccer as well as organized sport. It will be a learning process for all of them. Some will pick up the game and skills quicker than others. Be patient and keep the focus on fun! Players should play equal amounts of every game, receive equal instruction, and be provided with an environment suitable for skill development and recreation.

Role of the Youth Coach

SLARA thanks you for your decision to serve as a coach! SLARA coaches are vital to the implementation of all youth leagues. As a coach, your role is to serve as a communicator to parents and players alike, facilitate a learning environment, and provide supervision. It is not uncommon for youth players to view a coach as a role model, use this opportunity to teach fair play, sportsmanship, and a love for the game. Keep practices fun, yet instructional. Use gameplay as teaching moments for young players. Coaching youth sports can be a very rewarding experience, remember to have fun with this!

Curriculum Focus

Children at this age have distinct developmental characteristics. They have short attention spans, learn more easily through active participation, are just beginning to learn the concept of group games and activities, and are the most focused on having fun. As a coach, you will need to keep them focused on one task at a time. Demonstrations of rules or skills are critical to their comprehension. To maximize their learning over the course of the season, repetition and constant, reassuring praise are critical.

The SLARA Preschool/K-1 leagues are designed to be instructional leagues that introduce basic technique and keeps the focus on fun. This curriculum will focus on teaching basic techniques (dribbling, passing, receiving, shooting, defending, etc.) over the course of our five-week program. While basic “rules of the game” should be taught, the focus should be placed on these basic techniques and having fun!

GAME FORMAT

5 v 5 Basics

Both SLARA's Preschool and K-1 Youth Soccer leagues utilize a 5 v 5 format for all gameplay (fewer may be used in certain situations). The goal of 5 v 5 is to provide young players with an environment that is fun and conducive to learning. This format maximizes active participation and minimizes inactivity. With less players on the field, players have more time with the ball in their possession. Goals are scored at a much more frequent pace and skill repetition is high. As a coach, you will be responsible for dictating the play. Keep things moving, keep all players engaged, and keep the rules simple! Focus on basic technique is critical.

Goalkeepers

No goalkeepers are used in these leagues. This is to allow for more goals to be scored and to boost the confidence of young players.

Repetition

The 5 v 5 format allows for maximum repetition of learned skills. Less players and a small space maximizes the time a player will spend with the ball. Gameplay should be focused on skill repetition, active participation, and less on enforcement of rules. You will want to use obvious rule violations (ex. Hand balls) as teaching moments but let gameplay occur naturally and keep the play moving as much as possible. The more time spent in gameplay, the easier of a time player will have picking up on basic technique.

RULES OF THE GAME: WHEN AND WHAT TO ENFORCE

Gameplay should be unhindered as much as possible in the Preschool and K-1 leagues. However, there will be times where play must be stopped, and violations must be called. The following list will detail what violations should be called and when to call them with regards to these two leagues.

Rule 1 – Starts and Restarts

A kick-off is used to start a soccer game or restart it. For the purpose of this league, a kick-off should only be utilized at the start of each quarter. Without goalkeepers present, goals will be common. You can simply allow the team who was scored on to take possession of the ball.

To start a kick-off, place the ball at the center of the field. All players must be on their side of the field. Opponents of the team taking the kick must stay 10 yards off the ball.

Rule 2 – No Hands

The only player on a soccer field permitted to use their hands is the goalkeeper. Since there are no goalkeepers in this league, no one should be permitted to use their hands. If a player handles a ball with their hands rather than their feet, an indirect kick shall be awarded to the opposing team at the point of the infraction. ****Please note – if a player does use their hands in a game, take a moment to explain to them what they did wrong and what to do next time. Be encouraging and make sure the player understands to use their feet!***

Rule 3 – Throw Ins

If the ball is kicked out of play, a throw in shall take place. Players should keep both feet on the ground and throw the ball back into play with both hands over the head. At the beginning of the season, it may be a better idea to allow players to kick the ball in. Once throw ins are taught, allow players more than 1 attempt to correctly throw the ball in play.

Rule 4 – Indirect Kicks, Corner Kicks & Penalty Kicks

The K-1 league does not utilize any corner kicks or penalty kicks. When restarting play after a violation (hand ball, etc.) an indirect kick should always be used. This means at least 2 other players must touch the ball before a goal can be scored.

Rule 5 – Fouls

Any foul called at this level should be blatant. Only stop play and explain a foul if a player has made an action that blatantly breaks the rules or could cause harm to another player. Kicking, tripping, pushing, or grabbing another player are all examples of plays that should be stopped. There will be some bumping into one another, but this should be let go if it is accidental or involves only minor contact. All fouls will result in an indirect kick, no yellow or red cards are issued in any SLARA league.

WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION

Objective – To explain the object of the game, the rules, and familiarize players with the field.

5 v 5

Allows each player more touches of the ball, opportunities to score, and experience the game in a scaled down, age appropriate environment.

Explain the Format

Explain to the kids and parents the format for the season. Tuesdays will be practice days with a specific plan in place. One basic skill will be covered each week. Thursdays are gamedays. Explain that each game consists of 4, 10-minute quarters and that each child will receive equal playing time. Ask that parents use words of encouragement only! Parents should not be shouting discouraging messages to other players or coaches on the field.

The Object of the Game

Move the ball with your feet towards the opponent's goal. Use the help of teammates to gain possession of the ball, keep possession of the ball, and ultimately score a goal by kicking the ball into the opponent's goal.

Rules of the Game

Keep this simple to start. Stress that players must use their feet and work together to score on the opponent. The ball cannot be handled using one's hands. The ball must stay in the field of play. If the ball is kicked out of bounds, then players will be able to throw it back in and resume play. Discuss throw ins (kick ins if necessary) and indirect kicks. Help the kids get familiar with the rules listed in the "Rules of the Game" section of this curriculum.

The Field

Take the kids around the playing field and help familiarize them with the area of play. Show them the lines painted on the field and let them know that the ball cannot go outside of these. Explain that if the ball does go out of bounds, they can use their hands to throw it back in.

Exercises

Throw Ins – Demonstrate a throw in by holding the ball behind your head with both hands on the sides of the ball. Throw the ball straight over your head, keeping both feet on the ground. Divide the team into 2 groups and line up across from each other, about 15 to 20 feet. One side will have the ball and practice throwing it to the other player standing across from them. The player receiving the throw in should practice receiving it with their feet. Stress that they may need to move side-to-side to properly receive the ball.

Library Soccer – Scrimmage – Divide the team into two groups and move one of the two goals up to the center line. Situate the teams and let them play. If the ball goes out of bounds, restart play with a throw-in. The principal of library soccer is that no external directions are given to players by coaches.

WEEK 2 – DRIBBLING

Objective – Strike the ball with the top of the foot (laces) while running. Dribble the soccer ball under control. Avoid using your toe to kick.

Warm-Up – Go for Ice Cream

Coaching Point: Use top of foot/laces to push ball forward lightly and close to body.

Using half the field, designate each side a favorite flavor of ice cream of the kids. Have the kids dribble around the square slowly, then call out “Let’s go get some ice cream! Chocolate Ice Cream!” The kids dribble their ball fast to the chocolate ice cream side where the coach is standing. After everyone makes it to the line, send them back to the middle to dribble slowly. Repeat several times then add a twist and make them stop the ball on the line. Repeat a few more times.

Control – Red light, Green light

Coaching Point: Chop down on ball with inside of foot to stop or change direction.

Spread the players out along one goal line. Stand in the middle of the field and call green light to have the players take off dribbling. When you call red light, they must stop the ball with the inside of their foot. Once everyone has control, call green light again. Repeat this process, occasionally calling reverse to have them change directions. Challenge players to get to the other goal line as quick as possible.

Speed with the Ball – Relay Races

Coaching Point: Use top of foot/laces to push ball forward lightly and close to body.

Divide players in to groups of 2 or 3 (depending on players present). Make sure teams are of equal skill. Let each team pick a team name so that they can cheer their teammates on. Do not let players pick their own teams. Players will dribble from one end of the field to the other, then the next player starts. Do not emphasize winning, but rather technique. As the season progresses, you can add passing and shooting elements into this drill.

Dribbling Against a Defender – Belly Dribbling

Coaching Point: Use speed to avoid a defender, use body to keep defender away from the ball.

Start at one goal line. One line of players with their balls. First 2 players are called forward. Player one starts with the ball and player 2 starts by laying on their belly. On your mark, player 1 will dribble to the center line and player 2 will get up and try to steal the ball. Repeat a few times for each player.

WEEK 3 – PASSING

Objective – Strike the ball with the inside of the foot, in a forward motion with the ankle locked. Plant foot should be pointed towards the target. Stress the follow thru and holding ankle in a locked position.

Warm-Up – Passing Ladder

Coaching Point: Plant foot pointed at target

Divide team in to groups of 2 with 1 ball between them. The object of this game is to advance the ball and players to the other end of the field by passing the ball. The player without the ball advances down field approximately 5 yards and turns to a teammate who passes it. The only way to advance the ball is to pass, it cannot be dribbled. After the pass is made, the passer runs 5 yards past their teammate and faces the ball for a pass. Repeat until reaching the other side of the field. Can be turned into a race.

Control and Accuracy – Putt Putt Golf

Coaching Point: Lock ankle with good follow thru.

2 players with balls are the golfers, all others are holes standing about the field with their legs apart. The golfers dribble up to the holes (other players) and pass the ball in between their legs. Rotate until all players have taken a turn as golfers. Stress follow thru and plant foot pointed at the target.

Passing to a Moving Target – Duck Hunting

Coaching Point: Pass in front of the receiver on the run

One player (the hunter) stands at one sideline on the centerline with all the soccer balls at their side. The rest of the team (the ducks) line up in the corner along the same sideline. Ducks then fly in front of the hunter who passes in front of the ducks for them to receive. Ducks then dribble the ball to the other side. Continue until all ducks fly by, then switch hunters. Stress leading the receiver of the pass with the ball.

Passing to Space – 3 v 1

Coaching Point: Make it easy for passer by getting open for them

Make groups of 4, 3 attackers and 1 defender. Play keep away from the 1 defender. Attackers without the ball should be mobile and make it easy for the passer to make a clean pass. Stress attackers going to open space, rather than standing still. Once defender intercepts a pass, they become an attacker and the attacker becomes the defender. Rotate so no one gets stuck in the same role for too long.

WEEK 4 – SHOOTING

Objective – Strike the ball with the top of the foot (laces), with toe pointed and ankle locked. Plant foot should be next to the ball and pointed at target. Stress follow thru and ankle in locked position. Avoid kicking with the toe.

Warm-Up – Shooting on Goal

Coaching Point: Plant foot next to the ball and pointed at the target.

With both goals at the same side of field, divide team into 1 or 2 groups in front of goals, 8 to 10 feet back. Players will place the ball at their feet and shoot on goal. Have them try both feet. Stress the plant foot pointed at the target. After a few successful kicks, have them back up and push the ball forward, run on to it, and shoot a moving ball.

Shooting/Top of the Foot Kick – Keep Your Yard Clean

Coaching Point: Use top of foot/laces for a long kick

Divide team into 2 teams on the opposite sides of the field. Players start on their respective goal lines, balls spread out on the field. Coach calls “Play”, and the players try to send all the balls to the other side. The winner is the team who has no balls left on their side of the field. Have parents or assistant coaches retrieve balls that reach the sidelines and toss them back in play.

Pass, Dribble, Shoot – Combining Basic Techniques

Coaching Point: Provide reminders of previously covered techniques as players put them all together.

Set up provided cones in a straight line, each about 5 yards apart. Line up players at goal line with soccer balls for each player. Drill starts with each player making a pass to the coach and receiving a pass back. Players must then dribble through the cones before shooting on the goal at the opposite side of the field. Pay attention to passing, dribbling, and shooting techniques. Provide reminders to the group frequently.

Scrimmage

Divide the team into 2 separate teams and have them scrimmage. Focus on their knowledge of basic rules and execution of dribbling, passing, and shooting techniques. If poor technique is being used, stop play and give the entire group a reminder. This will be a good opportunity to review past lessons from previous weeks.

WEEK 5 – DEFENDING

Objective – Close down options of player with the ball and win back the ball without jumping in and getting beat. Defenders should close gap to attacker and wait for opportunity to steal ball. Keep eye on ball.

Warm-Up – Sharks and Minnows

Coaching Point: Take attackers path away, keep eye on ball to win it.

One player stands at the center of the field (shark), the rest of the team lines up on goal line with ball (Minnows). On your mark, minnows will try to dribble to the other goal line while the shark tries to kick the minnow's ball away. Once a ball is kicked away, that minnow becomes a shark.

Defending – 1 v 1 Keep Away

Coaching Point: Defenders take attackers path away, keep eye on the ball to win it. Attackers use body to shield ball from defender.

Divide team into pairs with one ball between them (try your best to pair players of equal level together). Player 1 starts with the ball at their right side. Player 2 will start on the left. For 10 seconds, player 2 will attempt to steal the ball while player 1 uses their body to shield it. Switch after the 10 seconds is up. Repeat and adjust pairings if necessary. The goal is to “set up each player for success”, so don't push this on certain players if they are struggling.

Defending – Frogger

Coaching Point: Defenders take attackers path away, keep eye on the ball to win it. Attackers use body to shield ball from defender and use speed to get past.

“Frogs” (attackers) spread out along goal line, each with a ball. The “cars” (defenders) are near the centerline spread out. Coach calls “Go Frogs” and the frogs try to dribble across the road to the other goal line while avoiding the cars. The cars try to steal the ball from the frogs and kick it out of bounds. Cars can only kick one ball out of bounds per round. Each frog that makes it across scores a point. The object is to create 1 v 1 situations. Switch sides and repeat after each round.

Scrimmage

Divide the team into 2 separate teams and have them scrimmage. At this point in the season, the kids should be more familiar with basic skills on the offensive and defensive side of the ball. Focus on the techniques taught over the course of the season and provide reminders to the team as you go.