



**YOUTH SOCCER**  
**GRADES 4-5 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**

The SLARA 4-5 league starts the shift from basic technique to more advanced techniques and gameplay. Games are played on a larger field with more players. At this point, the majority of players on your team will have previous experience with team sports and/or soccer. With this league being the final age group for SLARA, the focus is on improving learned techniques, introducing in-game situations, strategies, and positioning, and adapting to a more structured setting.

This curriculum will cover basic skills as well as the next tier of skills to be learned. As a coach, focus on helping the kids master beginner skills learned previously and begin to teach more advanced skillsets and game scenarios. As always, the focus is on fun and player development!

## **GAME FORMAT**

### **7 v 7 Basics**

SLARA's 4-5 league utilizes a 7 v 7 format for all gameplay, consisting of 7 field players and a goalkeeper. The goal of 7 v 7 is to help growing players experience gameplay closer to that of adult soccer, while still remaining scaled down to best fit the age group. This format maximizes active participation and minimizes inactivity, while beginning to prepare younger players for the coming transition to full sized fields and rosters. Additionally, a referee will be present, and rules of the game will be followed more strictly.

### **Goalkeepers**

It is important to make sure all players have a good concept of being a field player before taking a turn in goal. The nets will be 6 x 8 in size. Goalkeepers should be taught when it is acceptable to use their hands and start to learn some basic goalkeeping techniques.

### **Repetition**

The 7 v 7 format allows for maximum repetition of learned skills with a greater emphasis on structured gameplay. Players will begin to get a feel for positioning and strategies on the larger field. Violations will be called more strictly and will occur more frequently at the beginning of the season. As a coach, repetition of proper positioning and adherence to the rules of the game will be a priority. While basic skills are still important, players need to begin to understand where they need to be on a soccer field during the game as well as what they can and cannot do.

## **RULES OF THE GAME: WHEN AND WHAT TO ENFORCE**

Gameplay should become more structured in the 4-5 league. A referee will be present to assist you, but as a coach it is your responsibility to help players understand what they can and cannot do on the field. Rule violations will happen but be positive and use them as teaching moments!

### **Rule 1 – Starts and Restarts**

Kick offs should be utilized at the beginning of each quarter and after each goal.

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 at least 5 yards off the ball.

### **Rule 2 – No Hands**

The only player on a soccer field permitted to use their hands is the goalkeeper. 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.

### **Rule 4 – Direct/Indirect Kicks**

When restarting play after a violation an indirect or direct kick may be used. At least 2 other players must touch the ball before a goal can be scored on indirect kicks. A goal can be scored on a direct kick, which typically is caused by a contact foul or hand ball.

### **Rule 5 – Penalty Kicks/Corner Kicks**

Corner kicks and penalty kicks may also be awarded. If the ball goes out of play across a goal line, a corner kick or goal kick is awarded. If the offensive team kicks the ball out, a goal kick from the goalie box will restart play. A corner kick restarts play if the defensive team kicks the ball out. Penalty kicks can be awarded should a foul be committed within 6 yards of the goal.

### **Rule 6 – 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.

### **Rule 7 – Offside**

Offsides will be called in the SLARA 4-5 league. An offensive player is ruled offsides if they are active in the play and ahead of the ball without a defender between them and the goalkeeper. Players cannot be called offsides on their side of the field and the rule applies to when the ball is kicked rather than when the player receives the ball.

## **WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION/DRIBBLING**

**Objective – Introduction to league format, get kids familiar with new rules, and review dribbling.**

### **7 v 7**

Introduces a more structured style of play for the kids as they get older and more experienced with the game. Introduces the concepts of positioning on the field and in-game strategies.

### **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. Different skillsets will be covered each week along with a scrimmage to work on positioning, in-game strategies, and various game situations. 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.

### **Rules of the Game**

The kids should have a good idea of basic rules by this point. Be sure to cover new rule additions such as direct kicks and offsides. Corner kicks should be covered as a refresher. Help the kids get familiar with the rules listed in the “Rules of the Game” section of this curriculum.

### **Warm-Up**

Cone off a square on the field approximately 20-yard x 20-yard. Give each player a ball and have them dribble. The purpose of this drill is to have players comfortable keeping control of the ball and anticipating their next move due to the space restrictions

### **1 v 1 Dribbling**

Pair up players and cone off a square on the field about 30-yards x 20-yards. Give each pair one ball. One player tries to dribble around or past the other player. After the player either dribbles past or has the ball stolen, switch roles and repeat. This drill will teach players to dribble with their head up and how to approach a 1 v 1 situation.

### **Speed with the Ball – Relay Races**

Divide players in to groups of 2 or 3 (depending on players present). Make sure teams are of equal skill. 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. Focus on heads-up dribbling and keeping the ball within a controllable distance.

### **Scrimmage**

Have the team divide into two groups and scrimmage. Focus on player positioning and introduce various in-game situations for players to react to. Do not be afraid to stop play for team teaching points, but do not single any player out.

## **WEEK 2 – PASSING/RECEIVING**

**Objective – Continue development of passing and receiving skillsets.**

### **Warm-Up – Passing Ladder**

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.

### **Passing to Space – 3 v 1**

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.

### **Receiving**

Cone off a 20-yard x 20-yard square. Pair each player with a partner and give them one ball. One partner will be inside the square with the rest of the group and the other partners will line up on the sides of the square with the ball. The partner on the outside of the square will throw the ball up into the air while the second partner practices receiving the ball with different parts of their body. This drill is designed to help teach receiving the ball in close quarters.

### **Passing/Receiving**

Line up cones at the center line of the field. Split the team into two groups, one on each side of the cones. Players will take turns passing the ball over the cones to their partner. Partners without the ball will receive the pass and then send one back over the cones to the other side. The focus will be on putting a good first touch on the ball, aligning one's self with the path of the ball, and maintaining body control while receiving the ball.

### **Scrimmage**

Have the team divide into two groups and scrimmage. Focus on player positioning and introduce various in-game situations for players to react to. Do not be afraid to stop play for team teaching points, but do not single any player out.

## **WEEK 3 – SHOOTING/POSSESSION**

**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. Maintain possession of the ball when under pressure.**

### **Warm-Up – Shooting on Goal**

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.

### **Pass, Dribble, Shoot – Combining Basic Techniques**

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.

### **Possession**

Divide team into two groups of 6. Each group of 6 is dividing into a team of 4 and team of 2. Cone off a small area of about 20 yards x 20 yards. The group of 4 must maintain possession of the ball by dribbling and passing. The group of 2 will try to steal or kick the ball away. The group of 4 will score a point for every 3 completed passes. The group of 2 will score a point for every takeaway. Rotate roles so players do not get stuck in one role for the duration of the drill.

### **Goalkeeper Shootout**

Line up all players at the top of the goal box with a ball. One player starts at goalkeeper. Each player takes a turn shooting starting with the first person in line. The goalkeeper tries to save the ball. If the goalkeeper makes a stop, the player that shot will take over in goal. Keep going through the line until the goalie makes a stop and continue switching players into goal. If the goalkeeper is struggling to make a stop, switch in a new player after a rotation through the line. At this age, you might have established goalkeepers. If that is the case, use this as a way to have those players practice and modify it so only the players that want to play goalie are rotating into net. The goal is to give everybody a chance in net, but if there are players who do not want to do it at this point in the season, you do not have to force them to play it.

### **Scrimmage**

Have the team divide into two groups and scrimmage. Focus on player positioning and introduce various in-game situations for players to react to. Do not be afraid to stop play for team teaching points, but do not single any player out.



## **WEEK 4 – ATTACKING/DEFENDING**

**Objective – Learn to attack and defend without fouling the opponent.**

### **Attack/Defense**

Cone off a square 35-yards x 25-yards. All players must stay in the square at all times. Every player but 2 have a ball. The 2 players without a ball must go get a ball from another player. Once a player loses a ball, they must get one back from another player. Players cannot attack the player who just stole their ball, they must seek out a new player to defend.

### **2 v 2**

Split the team up into attackers and defenders. Attackers form two lines at the goal line, defenders form two lines about 10 yards away. 2 attackers will start with a ball and must work it all the way down field to the other goal line while 2 defenders attempt to stop them. If the defenders take away the ball, reset it and allow the attackers to begin again. Switch roles after each player has had a couple of turns. Switch to 2 on 1's after some practice.

### **Attacking**

Have players all spread out with a ball. Players will dribble around, keeping control of the ball. The coach will then yell out instructions (right, left, reverse, etc.) and the players must keep control of the ball while performing the instruction. Keep going until you've cycled through a few different directions.

### **Attacking the Net**

Split team up into defenders and attackers. Select one goalkeeper to cover the net. The defender will make a pass to the attacker and then attempt to defend the net from the attacker. The attacker must beat the defender and score a goal. The defender must gain possession of the ball. Rotate roles after each player has had a couple chances attacking or defending.

### **Scrimmage**

Have the team divide into two groups and scrimmage. Focus on player positioning and introduce various in-game situations for players to react to. Do not be afraid to stop play for team teaching points, but do not single any player out.

## **WEEK 5 – SCRIMMAGE/GAME SITUATIONS**

**Objective – Put all techniques learned throughout the season into various game situations.**

### **Game Situations/Player Positioning**

At this point, players will have had refreshers on basic skills and learned some more advanced techniques. Use this practice time to simulate various game-situations (corner kicks, penalty kicks, free kicks, offense, defense, 2 on 1s, etc.). Focus on player positioning and help the kids learn what to do and how to position themselves when a certain situation presents itself. Explain how the skills they have been taught come into play with each situation that is rehearsed.

### **Scrimmage**

This one is all about fun! Let the kids play how they want and have a good time! Simply stay out of the way and let them play!