

REACH FORTH

Sports played. Lives changed.

U6 DIVISION (Ages 5-6)

This practice manual is setup for teams to work on specific skill areas for 2-3 weeks in a row to allow coaches adequate practice time to teach the skill fundamentals. With each skill set, example drills have been suggested. Many of these have been provided through the Byte Size Coaching resource and have been effective for coaches in the past. This manual is intended to provide a guideline for coaches when planning practices over the course of the summer. Teams may vary on the drills they use or the focus of their practice however we hope this resource provides some consistency within this age group and provides a starting point for coaches to work from.

Weeks 1-3

Dribbling/Ball Control and Throw In Focus

1.) Dribbling/Ball Control

- A.) Rules and Technique: players need to develop a sense of the field around them – field boundaries, net and other players (opposing and fellow team). Practices to help stop the ball, run with the ball, and use both feet in controlling the ball are essential to mastering this skill
- B.) Practice (Drills) - Square Dance - Red Light/Green Light - Numbers

2.) Throw Ins

- A.) Rules and Technique: awareness of field boundaries and ball possession rules are very important to establish. When teaching throw ins, ensure kids understand that their feet must remain behind the line and on the ground and that they must bring the ball behind their head when throwing.
 - B.) Practice (Drills): Mack 1&2, Other ideas: Have team line up (side by side) facing the coach. Each child should have a ball. Coach moves along the length of the line (from in front and away) and indicates to each child to throw in the ball. Quickly go along the line having each child throw-in right after one another, correct incorrect techniques. After all players have thrown, they retrieve balls and return to the line (repeat multiple times) - Have players divide into pairs and stand “throwing distance” apart. Players alternately take turns throwing the ball to their partner with proper technique.
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Weeks 4-6

Passing and Shooting Focus

1.) Passing

A.) Rules and Technique: Coaches should work with players to ensure passes are being made using the inside of the foot rather than the toe. It is also a challenge for players to fully understand the team mentality of the game as the focus usually remains on keeping the ball if they have it or trying to steal it if they don't. Much of this understanding can be taught by coaches in the game setting as they work with players on the field to look for their open teammates when they have the ball.

B.) Practice (Drills): King's Court, Carl's Keep Away, Soccer Golf, Nutmeg Tag

2.) Shooting

A.) Rules and Technique: It is important that players learn both the basics of how to properly shoot as well as the awareness of their position on the field when doing so. Teaching the players to be aware of the distance between themselves and the net and how to drive to the net with (and without the ball) are essential foundational skills. Drills should focus on driving to the net around obstacles ex: around pylons and then progressing to weaving around defenders and a goalie. When teaching the proper shooting technique, ensure that kids understand the concept of kicking the ball with the side of their foot and not the toe. Players should practice the technique of lining up their body to the target they want to shoot at and step into the kick.

B.) Practice (Drills): Circle Game, Mack 1, This Way That Way, Soccer Golf

Weeks 7-8

Defending, Goal Keeping, and Positioning Focus

1.) Defending

A.) Rules and Technique: It is important that players at this level develop an awareness of defending positioning. It may be helpful to refer to them as "goalie defenders/guards" and explaining that it is their job to defend the goalie. Encourage them to engage the ball as soon as it comes to defensive mid-field – this prevents the standing-on-the-spot that can occur. Again, a coach on the field encouraging action is the best way to reinforce.

B.) Practice (Drills): Cow Dogs, Carl's Keep Away, Soccer Golf with Defenders, Cat and Mouse, Catch the Coach

2.) Goal Keeping

A.) Rules and Technique: Players should be encouraged to always keep their focus on the ball in play. A coach on the field to remind them when the ball crosses into the defending half of the field of "Sally – see the ball coming! Get your hands ready and grab the ball as soon as you can! It's your ball to take away from them!" A reminder during every practice that the only person on the field to use their hands is the goalie – unless it is a throw in. When positioning in the net,

always have the player take one big step out from the line rather than having them stand on the line between the two posts. When in reception of the ball to throw/kick back into the game, create awareness by helping them scope the field and kick/throw where there are no players, unless to those on their own team.

B.) Practice (Drills): King's Court, This Way That Way

3.) Positioning

A.) Rules and Technique: Goalie – every child should have a chance at this position – a great rotation is to have 3-4 kids trying per game – it is the desired position for most kids as they can stand vs. run esp. in hot weather. Defenders – as listed above. Forwards – need to be made aware of running forward together as a team if the ball is being moved up by a team member. A coach engaging them on the field can encourage “Go to the net!”. As well, when the ball is pushed back by the opposing team to have the forwards come back as well to help out. When the opposing goalie has the ball, encourage the forwards to back up and give the goalie some space to clear the ball vs. standing right beside them, as often is the case.

B.) Practice (Drills): Numbers Game, 3 vs 3, Me and My Shadow

Weeks 9-10

Dribbling/Ball Control and Throw In Focus

1.) Dribbling/Ball Control

A.) Rules and Technique: at this point in the season, coaches should work with players to further develop their sense of: field boundaries, net and other players (opposing and fellow team). Review foundational skills from the beginning of the season including: stopping the ball, running with the ball, and using both feet to control the ball. Go back and redo specific skills and drills that appear necessary.

B.) Practice (Drills): Square Dance, Red Light/Green Light, Numbers

2.) Throw Ins

A.) Rules and Technique: continue to emphasize awareness of field boundaries and ball possession rules. Review skill foundation for throw ins from the beginning of the season including: feet must remain behind the line and on the ground and ball must be brought behind the head before throwing. Review and redo skills and drills as necessary.

B.) Practice (Drills), Mack 1&2, Other ideas: Have team line up (side by side) facing the coach. Each child should have a ball. Coach moves along the length of the line (from in front and away) and indicates to each child to throw in the ball. Quickly go along the line having each child throw-in right after one another, correct incorrect techniques. After all players have thrown, they retrieve balls and return to the line (repeat multiple times) - Have players divide into pairs and stand “throwing distance” apart. Players alternately take turns throwing the ball to their partner with proper technique.

Weeks 11-12

Passing and Shooting Focus

1.) Passing

A.) Rules and Technique: Continue to work with players to ensure passes are being made using the inside of the foot rather than the toe. This skill foundation will require regular practice and reminders from coaches over the course of the season. It is also a good idea to review lessons on passing to teammates during gameplay (from the beginning of the season). B.) Practice (Drills): King's Court, Carl's Keep Away, Soccer Golf, Nutmeg Tag

2.) Shooting

A.) Rules and Technique: At this point in the season, you may be able to attempt more challenging drills with the players that involve driving to the net around while weaving around defenders and a goalie. As with passing, a review of the proper shooting technique and regular practice with this is very important.

B.) Practice (Drills): Circle Game, Mack 1, This Way That Way, Soccer Golf

Week 13

Defending, Goal Keeping, and Positioning Focus

1.) Defending

A.) Rules and Technique: Continue to stress the fundamentals of positioning as defenders and engaging the ball as soon as it comes to defensive mid-field. Review effective techniques and drills from earlier in the season.

B.) Practice (Drills) - Cow Dogs - Carl's Keep Away - Soccer Golf with Defenders - Cat and Mouse - Catch the Coach

2.) Goal Keeping

A.) Rules and Technique: Return to a review of the goalie's responsibility to protect the net and that he/she should always take one big step out from the line rather than stand on the line between the two posts. Allow all players the opportunity to try the position of goal keeping and learn the basics over the course of the season.

B.) Practice (Drills)

King's Court, This Way That Way

3.) Positioning

A.) Rules and Technique: review the key responsibilities of each position and return to the drills from earlier in the season that emphasized the importance of playing proper positions on the field. Players will require repetition will this skill throughout the summer, as it is common for players of this age to want to follow the ball rather than play their assigned position.

B.) Practice (Drills): Numbers Game, 3 vs 3, Me and My Shadow

Drills and Games 3 vs 3

Organization:

- Field size 20 x 30 yards.
- Goal is 3-yards wide.
- No goalkeepers.
- Goals only count below knee height.
- When ball goes out of play, game is restarted by:
 - Sideline - throw-in (or pass-in - opponents must be 5-yards away).
 - Endline - goal kick or corner kick (5-yard rule), depending on which player last touched ball.
- After a goal, re-start with center kick (opponents must retreat within two paces of own goal).
- In practice with numbers greater than twelve have two 3 vs.3, or if less than 12, have 3 teams and a separate practice operating and rotate teams in and out of the 3 vs.3 game.

Teaching:

- Encourage at least one player to go fully wide on goal kicks.
- Encourage attacking teams to always have a rear-supporting player.
- Encourage players to pass, dribble and communicate with each other.
- On throw-ins, encourage one of the non-throwing attackers to look for a forward shooting chance - and not to go too close to thrower. Target:
 - To outscore opposing team. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Carl's Keep Away

Organization:

- Mark a grid 15 x 15 yards depending on numbers.
- Assuming there are 10 to 12 players split group in half, say two groups of 6.
- Use pinnies to distinguish the two groups.
- One group of 6 goes into the square and just one of the other group also goes into the square. The rest wait in line for their turn.
- The 6 players try to keep the ball away from the one defender. • When the defender wins the ball or forces the ball to be played out of the area he/she changes with the next defender. This goes on until every defender has been through and they then change with the other team.
- The team that keeps the ball for the longest time (stop watch out) is the winner.
- If a team is doing so well the defender cannot get the ball after 30 seconds shout, "Change!" and the next defender replaces the one in the middle.

- The coach keeps a supply of balls handy so after an interception or a ball is kicked out of play he/she kicks or rolls another ball in. Teaching:
- Coach must assess whether the playing area is too big or too small and make adjustments if necessary.
- For the first few minutes allow the players to play in a non-competitive way so that when a mistake is made, the coach can recreate the situation and then ask the player who made the mistake what the alternatives are. Praise him or her for coming up with the answers (as they surely will). If they can see what should be done they will learn more quickly to do it when the ball is in play.
- After a few minutes go into the stopwatch competition described above without any interventions by the coach other than putting the ball back in play.
- This practice should be used on a regular basis and progressed when the children are ready. The ways to progress are-
- Make the space smaller
- Reduce the numbers attackers, e.g., 5 vs. 1 and then 4 vs. 1
- Or increase the number of defenders, e.g., 6 vs. 2
- Condition the attackers, e.g., no more than two touches (control and pass).
- Although the defender is outnumbered encourage them to look for the misplaced or miscontrolled pass to pounce on the ball. Target:
- To keep the ball for the longest time; for the defender to win the ball as soon as possible.
(Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Cat and Mouse This game is similar to British Bulldog. Choose one player to be the "Cat" and all other players are the "Mice." The mice have to cross a certain area on the field and when they do the "Cat" attempts to take away the ball from each of the "Mice." If he/she is able to steal a ball, that "Mouse" becomes a "Cat" for the next crossing.

Catch the Coach This has been a favourite for many Tyke players. Always preempt the drill with the reminder to get the ball away from the coach and no grabbing the coach – without this reminder, kids have a tendency to try and tackle the coach vs. developing the skill to get the ball. Start off by explaining the rules and then have them all line up, with the coach being 20 paces away – blow the whistle to start and run away from the team with the ball, as they try and get the ball from you. Let them get close and then move away quick, doing fast turns and dodges, and finally allowing the pack to get the ball away from you. Once this is done, you can reverse it and try to get the ball from the pack. Signal with the whistle when complete.

Circle Game

Organization:

- Mark a circle having a center mark (line intersection; a coin; a scratched "X").
- A center circle works well, but may be too big for young players.

- 5-yard radius for 6-year olds; 6-yard for 7-year olds, etc.
- Use marker disks to make a circle.
- From center spot pace out the radius by going North, South, East and West. Then fill in the rest of the circle.
- Each player on one side of the circle has a partner directly opposite.
- If there is an odd number the coach joins in.
- Each pair has one ball between them.
- One player passes the ball towards his or her partner, but tries to knock over a cone in the center circle.
- The partner retrieves the ball and returns the pass through the center circle, again trying to kick over a cone.
- The ball must be passed from outside the circle.
- The game is stopped when all cones are knocked down. Teaching:
- Encourage the players to use pace as well as accuracy of pass.
- Suggest they continue to kick towards the ball even after they have actually kicked (follow through).
- Encourage them to approach the ball at a slight angle to the direction they are kicking (45 degrees). Target:
- The coach uses a stopwatch to set the "team" record of knocking all cones down. Later, winners are the pair to first knock over the cones 5 (6, 8,10) times. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Cow Dogs

Organization:

- Mark an area 30 yards by 20 yards.
- Players at one end with the ball must try to dribble to the other end without their ball being kicked out of the area by the Cow Dogs in the middle (Graphic A).
- If a player's ball is kicked out they become a "Cow Patty" and have to sit or kneel in the area (Graphic A).
- The "Cow Patties" can also kick the balls out, but only from a kneeling or better still, a "crab" position (Graphic B).
- The one or two "winners" have the choice of whether they become a Cow Dog or not. The previous Cow Dogs become dribblers. Teaching:
- Dribblers must pick their time to make their runs forward and must use fakes, changes of pace and screening to retain possession.
- Cow Dogs should "hunt" in pairs. Target:

- Not to be caught by the Cow Dogs. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

King's Court

Organization:

- Set out as many goals (3-yards apart) as there are players (goalkeepers).
- Two goalkeepers per area, one with a ball, both kneeling up facing one another four yards apart.
- Important that the players kneel in an upright position and not sit back on their heels. Feet/toes should be on the imaginary goal line.
- Balls must be rolled along the ground to the side of each keeper, not straight, but not so far to the side that the receiver cannot roll over and collect the ball.
- After receiving the ball the keeper should roll back to the kneeling position. Teaching:
 - Hands and arms should be pushed reach forward, palms towards ball, to stop ball in front of body.
 - Hands and arms should relax into a "crooked" position as the pace is taken off the ball.
 - Upper knee should be drawn in comfortably across the body as the ball is received.
 - Lower leg should remain loosely trailing.
 - Head and upper shoulder should be drawn over and above the height of the ball.
 - "W" hand position is employed, but with ball "trapped" by the upper hand on top of the ball and lower hand behind the ball and so use the ground as the so-called "Third Hand." (See graphic above) Target:
 - To start with, everyone is practicing the side dive technique and there is no pressure.
 - Then the "battle" begins. The top field is designated the King's Court (coach decides the top and bottom).
 - Ball must be rolled, not thrown.
 - Goals only count if they are "clean" (must not touch the cone).
 - Service must be from a position where the attacker has his/her feet touching the goal line.
 - Each "round" goes for 2- to 3-minutes and a winner is declared (coach needs a tie breaking method - "paper, scissors, stone") and the changes are made as follows: The winner in the King's Court retains the #1 position. The loser goes all the way to the bottom court. The other winners move up one place. The battle recommences.
 - With large groups have two or three King's Courts with 3 or 4 fields per sub-group. Keep it fun and therefore downplay the "winning at all costs" attitude. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Mack 1

Organization:

- Two marker cones placed five yards in front of each sideline 15 yards from the goal.
- No goalkeeper and goals may be narrowed.
- First player on right does a "throw-in" to coach, who rolls ball for a first-time, right-footed shot.
- Player retrieves ball then goes to back of the left line.
- First player at left marker cone does the same exercise, but shooting with left foot, then retrieves ball and goes to back of the right line. Teaching:
- No goalkeeper, so players don't sacrifice accuracy for power and poor technique.
- Encourage careful, accurate shooting.
- For weaker players, roll ball closer to goal.
- As all players improve, roll ball at 90-degree angle or greater, or move cones back to force a more powerful shot without losing accuracy.
- Don't change practice conditions too soon. Each team should try beating its record. Target:
- Record results for future competition (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Mack 2

Organization:

- Identical practice to Mack 1, except every player must first control the ball before shooting. Shot must be left-footed from left, right-footed from right.
- Coach can vary service to encourage different types of controlling touches:
- Initial practices - roll ball for ground control.
- Later, bounce or roll ball quickly at the incoming player to force quick decisions regarding the controlling surface.
- Serve ball in the air for control with thigh, chest or foot. Teaching:
- The controlling touches can be affected with the foot or any part of the body except hands.
- The shot must be with the right from the right, and with the left from the left. Therefore, control ball to the appropriate side to provide the correct angle for shot.
- Cushion ball with part of body controlling the ball.
- Encourage "two-touch" play - the first to control, the second to shoot - whenever possible, but don't make it compulsory.
- This is a much more difficult exercise than Mack 1, so initially allow players as many touches as they need before shooting with the right or left foot, whichever is required.

Target:

- To control the ball and to score; keeping results is optional (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Me and My Shadow**Organization:**

- In pairs with a ball between two.
- If there is an odd number make one a trio or coach joins in.
- On a signal the player with the ball (the Dribbler) tries to lose his/her Shadow.
- Shadow must be disciplined and persistent.
- After a few seconds the coach shouts "Change!" and the Shadow becomes the Dribbler, and vice-versa.
- Don't go for too long (30 seconds) as the activity is very demanding.
 - Introduce other pairs activities in between the runs, e.g., try to head the ball back and forth; play Keep-Up; play Nut Megs (ball is played through the legs of straddling partner). Teaching:
- Try to burst away from the Shadow by change of pace and direction.
- Shadow tries to stay "touch tight." Target:
- To lose the Shadow; conversely not to lose the Dribbler. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Numbers Game**Organization:**

- Use the 3-a-side Micro Soccer® field.
- Widen the goals.
- All players start on goal line.
- Each player on each team is given a number.
- Coach calls out number (e.g., "Three!") and rolls the ball into play.
- The two opposing number "Three" players leave the goal line immediately and compete for possession for a maximum of 20 seconds.
- Coach keeps some balls by him and so can roll another ball into play if one is kicked out.
- Call two numbers - "One!" and "Three!" - to create 2 vs 2.
- Remaining players defend goal without using hands and they must stay within one yard of goal line. Goals only count below knee height.
- If one player fails to respond to the number, a penalty - a free shot at open goal from half-way line - is called to keep players on their toes and make it fun. Teaching:
- If organization is working, let them play, enjoy the game and learn by trial and error.

- Encourage attackers to take on opponents and Go for the Goal!
- Defenders should stay on their feet as long as possible, rather than slide-tackling.
- Defenders must try to run back and recover even when beaten. Target:
- To outscore opposing team. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Nutmeg Tag

Description: select one player to be IT and everyone else has their own ball. If the player who is IT tags another player, he/she must stop running and stand with his/her feet apart until another player comes by and passes the ball between their legs to free them.

Red Light-Green Light

Organization:

- Players start on end line each with a ball.
- The coach starts five yards in front of them. He turns so now his back is to the players and shouts "Green Light."
- This is the signal for the players and the coach to move forward.
- The coach will then shout "Red Light!" and turn quickly with the ball. If he catches anyone moving they must move back four paces.
- When the coach gets to the end of the field and shouts "Red Light!" and turns, the winner is the player nearest to the end-line who is not moving and has the ball under control.
- Then reverse the direction to start the next phase. Teaching:
- Encourage players to make short fast movements, with the ball under close control.
- Advise them to keep an eye on the coach and their ball.
- Encourage them to quickly put their foot on the ball on the "Red Light!" shout. Target:
- Not to get caught out on the Red Light, but also to get ahead of team-mates. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

Soccer Golf Description: setup pylons around the practice field and have kids take turns attempting to knock over the pylons with passes. Form two teams and keep track of which team can knock over the most.

Square Dance

Organization:

- Mark a square approximately 15 yards by 15 yards, depending on numbers.
- Each player should have a ball.
- If not, use the "Change Soccer" principle: half the players inside the square, each with a ball, the remaining half outside the square, without a ball. Trade places when coach shouts "Change!"
- Players can dribble around anywhere within the square, but should not walk.
- Three instructions are given to the players inside the square:
 - "STOP" - Put foot on top of ball quickly and freeze like a statue.
 - "GO" - Move right or left with the ball, fast, for three or four yards.
 - "TURN" - Quickly turn 180 degrees with the ball, moving three or four yards. Teaching:
 - Encourage players to keep the ball close to their feet.
 - Occasionally insist on using left foot only or right foot only.
 - See how many different ways they can turn with the ball.
 - To avoid giving players too much information at once, introduce instructions one at a time and incorporate practice time between.
 - Later, incorporate your own ideas.

Target:

- Stay in the area with the ball and make no contact with other players or other balls. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)

This Way That Way

Organization:

- Set out the practice as shown in Graphic A.
- If sufficient balls (one per player) work in pairs (Graphic A).
- Try to keep groups as small as possible for greater repetitions.
- Player facing the goal initiates the practiced by pointing to the ball "This Way" or "That Way."
- In Graphic B the coach demonstrates by pointing to one ball.
- You can see the good technique of the keeper in Graphic B.
- However, it is Graphic C where we see the full drill:
 - Goalkeeper (at the front of the file) comes out and dives at the ball simulating the requirement in a real game.
 - The Pointer having pointed, runs to the ball indicated, but does not try to kick the ball.
 - The players then change.
 - Or if more than two players, move to end of file and wait their next turn.

- Don't keep the activity going for too long, as it is basically a drill - a very important one nevertheless. Teaching:
- You can see the good technique of the keeper in Graphic B.
- Hands must always lead, as they are the "protectors" and well as the "collectors."
- Hands and head cover the near post and the body and legs cover the middle off the goal and the far post (in case they have to make a block in later years).
- Goalkeepers have to come on a line inside the ball to enable them to dive outwards on their side - otherwise they are diving headfirst.
- They must go down early and slide on their side into the collecting/blocking position.
- If they go down late their legs will swing round and they may dive over the ball.
- Watch for the player who "corkscrews" and swings around to dive on the wrong side of the ball, i.e., that the body and legs are outside the line of the near post. Target:
- To learn the correct way of diving at an incoming player's feet that will protect the goal, but also protect the goalkeeper. (Courtesy of ByteSize Coaching Resources)