

Fitchburg Youth Soccer Practice Plans Overview Spring 2018 Pre K-2nd grade

Layout:

- Each week there will be a “skill of the week” at practice. Examples include dribbling, passing, trapping and shooting. We structure the practices this way so as the season goes on, players will become more comfortable with each key skill. Also, young players’ attention spans are short and need variety throughout their instruction. The goal for teams should not exclusively be winning at this level, it should be about teaching the basic skills of the game in a fun and exciting way so they are motivated to learn and continue to play.
- Suggestions of skills to introduce through practice sessions:
 - *Techniques*: dribbling (starting and stopping), shooting, experiment with qualities of a rolling ball (rolling slow/fast, bouncing high/low), trapping, passing
 - *Psychology*: Sharing, fair play, “how to play” and emotional management (losing is OK- and a part of the game and LIFE!)
 - *Tactics*: Where is the field? Boundary lines, which goal to shoot at, how to get open (move without the ball!)

Successful coaching characteristics/qualities:

- As coaches of young players, you must show excitement towards the sport. Make little competitions out of the activities, with others and within themselves. Practice should be fun while at the same time an opportunity to learn new skills to apply in their games.
 - Good humor
 - Friendly helper
 - Sensitive teacher
 - Organizer
 - Stimulator
 - Ability to see soccer from a child’s perspective
 - Patient
 - Able to demonstrate movements and simple skills

- Enthusiastic
- Imaginative

Universal expectations:

- Every player should have a ball
 - Ball is always at their FEET
 - Players must use BOTH FEET
 - Practices should be organized and planned out, yes even with the young players! They will learn more from organized, repeated instruction
 - Circulate at practice, interact with each player in a positive and supportive way
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Structure of practice sessions:

- **Key teaching points:**
- **Warm Up: 5 minutes**
 - This can be anything from balancing, running, walking, bending, twisting, changing direction, skipping, hopping, high knees or a fun quick game to get the kids moving + heart rate up

For examples of warm up games + activities, please see document titled "WARM UP GAMES + ACTIVITIES"*

- **Activity #1-Individual work + time to explore the skill/technique: 10-15 minutes**
 - Instruct skill/expectation – SHOW them the right way AND the wrong way
 - Allow players to explore the skill independently, assisting and correcting when necessary → *empirical data has shown that young players learn best when they experience time on their own*
 - Good time for personal competitions! (ex. "You dribbled through 5 cones in 10 seconds now try to get through 6!")
- **Activity #2/#3- Small group activity: 10-15 minutes**
 - Build off of the above activity
 - Have players rotate so they are playing with/against other players on their team
 - Lead up to the **3v3** / 5v5 scrimmage

- **Scrimmage:** *10-15 minutes*
 - Emphasizing on the “skill of the day” throughout a live game
 - Good time to teach the rules of the game
 - Organize teams similar to how their games are (**3v3**, 5v5)
 - Players should experience extended time of uninterrupted play

- **Team chant, shout outs:** under 2 minutes
 - Quickly review what the players learned that day → ask them questions!
 - Give shout out to players that did exceptionally well that day (effort, attitude, abilities), boost their confidence and desire to return the next week

PK-2nd Grade Player Characteristics- Overview

Adopted from massyouthsoccer.org

In order to make practices run smoothly and fun, it is important to have a basic understanding of the intellectual, emotional, and physical developmental stage of the players we are coaching. Here are some typical characteristics of the PK-3rd grade player:

- Egocentric – ME ME ME! Players won't play with each other, instead they will play next to each other
- At times enjoys working in pairs/partners
- Some have the ability to take another's perspective (little ones still may not be able to!)
- Still unable to think abstractly – be patient!
- Cooling system still less efficient than adults – still make sure to give frequent water breaks
- Still prefer playing to watching – keep everyone active during practice
- Limited attention span
- Have an understanding of time and sequence – “if I do this, then that happens”
- Some now have a third or fourth speed in addition to stopped and as fast as possible
- Very aware of adult reactions – be very aware of your reactions
- Seek out adult approval and need reassurance – be supportive
- Begin to become aware of peer perception – a social order is beginning to develop
- Wide range of abilities between children at this age
- Beginning to develop motor memories
- Some become more competitive
- Individual and group play is essential
- **Don't over coach!** Introduce in simplest terms, let players discover their own abilities
- Discover their ability to balance, control the ball and overall movement
- Keep practice and games fun to foster a desire to play
- Practice sessions must be player centered

SAMPLE WARM UP GAMES + ACTIVITIES

- Warm Up should only last approximately 5-7 minutes
 - Begin without a ball then quickly incorporate a ball at each players feet
- The games outlined below are just suggestions. You only need to play one quick warm up each practice.

-Balancing
-Running
-Walking
-Bending
-Twisting
-Changing direction
-Skipping
-Hopping
-High knees
-Reach to the sky, touch toes

Sample warm up script:

“I need everyone in a straight line starting here (point) in 3...2...1!!!” Facing this way: Now I need everyone to reach reach reach for the sky!!! Now touch your toes... now twist your trunk... now let’s balance on our left foot (make sure they are on their left foot) now switch to your right.... Now let’s hop like a bunny this way... now let’s skip back to where we started...etc.”

–with enthusiasm and fun spirit

Warm Up game #1: Every step touch the ball

Set Up: Create a small space with the cones that players can dribble around. Start out large, and as time goes on make it smaller.

Players dribble a ball slowly in a defined area. Then tell them to try to touch the ball with every step they take – (not as easy as it sounds!). On the command ‘Go’, the players must leave their ball and find another (put extra balls in area to begin). Let them try this a few times then take one or two balls away. The players who end up without a ball have to do 5 push-ups, star jumps, etc.

Warm Up game #2: Pass and follow

Set Up: Have half the players make a large circle with no ball, the remainder of group inside the circle with a ball.

A player in the center of the circle passes to a player standing on the outside of the circle. They will follow their pass and exchanges places with the player she passed to. That player then dribbles into the center of the circle and passes to another player on the outside.

Warm Up game #3: Red light green light

Set Up- Have players spread out along one end line of your practice area, each with their own ball.

The coach stands at the opposite end line, facing away from the team, and yells "Green Light". Players begin dribbling towards the opposite end line, but as soon as the coach yells "Red Light", they must freeze with control of their ball under their foot. Upon yelling "Red Light", the coach turns around and tries to spot any players who have not yet frozen. Any "caught" players have to go back to the initial end line and start over. Play continues until all players have made it to the finishing end line. Make it fun!

I recommend that cones or discs be used to set side boundaries as well also, you might want to play this game first without balls until the players get the hang of it. The speed of dribbling can be mixed up as well.

Warm Up game #4: Freeze Tag

Set up- Create a defined dribbling area. Each player has their own ball.

The game begins with all players dribbling around within the defined area. The coach then chases the players trying to tag them. When a player is tagged, they must freeze, hold the ball high above their heads, and spread their feet apart. The player remains frozen until a teammate dribbles their own ball through the frozen player's legs, after which the player is unfrozen and continues dribbling around.

This is a great dribbling game that also encourages teammates to help each other out.

Warm Up game #5: Monster Attack

Set Up: Set up a boundary area using cones.

Tell the players that a Monster is coming to try to steal their ball and that they must keep it away from the Monster by dribbling it around the field (tell them they must stay inside the field). The Coach is the monster. This game teaches dribbling under pressure, turning with the ball, controlling the ball ("small touches" when dribbling)

Ideas: drag your leg like Frankenstein, make monster noises, make a face, and say things like "Don't let me get your ball!!" But don't actually scare them. The idea is just to have them try to get away. Don't catch the players, just have fun.