

PRACTICE MANUAL

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- the purpose of this manual is to provide sample practices from which a coach can structure sessions. Each practice should start with a warm up exercise, then a fundamental skill, then game oriented drills, and finally end with a free play game
- practices should build on a concept and eventually end with a real game in which the lesson for that practice is reemphasized.
- every child should bring a ball to practice
- in order not to have too many players, many of the games should be played by dividing into 2 groups and having the assistant coach run the second group; make even more groups if necessary so that no player is standing around watching
- convert any drill or game into a competitive one: divide into groups that compete against each other. This makes the exercise more fun and challenging
- these instructions are just ideas- use your imagination and modify them as needed- see what works best for you
- Refer to the JKYSC coaching manual for additional information and guidelines
- see this website for other helpful drills and games:
http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/coaches/coachconnect_lessonplans.asp

U6

- Remember: there are no goalies at this age so do not practice with goalies
- maximize the number of touches that each child gets with the ball; in order for kids to learn in these games each player must bring his/her own ball to practice (size 3)
- suggested practice time should be 30 to 45 minutes

I. Warm Up/Fundamental Skill (~ 10-15 minutes)

Choose 1 or 2 out of 3

1. Relay Dribble:

-practice dribbling around cones that are setup in a line; each player takes ball dribbles to end of line of cones the turns around and dribbles back and gives ball to next player in group; in order to maximize time with ball make each group small, no more than 3 players; make it into a relay race after a practice round.

coaching points: practice ball control with one foot and use both feet if possible; try not to kick the ball too far ahead, use instep of foot to control ball with a soft touch

2. Red Light/Green Light ("Traffic Lights", "Driving School")

- each player dribbles his/her ball within a defined area and when the coach says "red light" they must stop the ball with their foot and stand still. When the coach says "green light" they start dribbling again.

coaching points: demonstrate how to stop the ball; give praise for creative movement, encourage change of direction with ball; in order to stop ball on command don't let it get too far ahead of you when dribbling

3. Hit the Cone

- set up a number of cones around a square and each player has a ball and tries to hit one of the stationary cones. After hitting one cone they must move on and try to hit another cone. Coordinate this activity so that everyone isn't kicking their ball at the same cone. Make teams and keep score to add some element of competition.

coaching points: teach accuracy with passing or shooting the ball; encourage use of the side of the foot for control

II. Game Oriented Drills (~15-20 minutes)

Choose 2

1. "Hit the Coach"

- each player has a ball and within a defined square the team of players gets a point every time they hit the coach with the ball. The coach runs around for a set time (1 to 2 minutes) and the players chase. Make 2 groups and after a practice round then make the 2 groups compete to see which one can score the most points.

coaching points: encourage movement with the ball and have fun by pretending to be hurt by each shot that hits you; often you may want to "pass" the ball to the side as it is coming towards you to hit you- this makes the player chase his or her ball after they have scored a point

2. "Sharks and Minnows"

- within a set square all "minnow" players have a ball and one player is the hungry shark who must chase the minnows and hit their ball out of the square; after a minnow's ball is out that player must sit with their ball until the round is over; after each round rotate the shark player until all players have had a chance to be the shark

coaching points: ball control and shielding the ball from the shark: players must use their body and arms to keep the shark away and then change direction to run away with their ball; vary size of square depending on proficiency (if shark can't catch minnows make square smaller)

3. Sharks and Minnows Variation

- All players with a ball line up at one end of a 10 yard long by 15 yard wide grid. One player in the middle of the grid is the shark and when the coach says go the minnows must dribble their ball safely to the other side of the grid. If a shark steals a ball from a minnow or kicks it out of the grid

then that minnow becomes a shark and the family of sharks grows for the next round. The minnows that make it to the opposite side of the grid get to swim again in the next round and play continues until all of the players become sharks

coaching points: minnows must keep the ball close when being pressured by sharks and should shield the ball from the sharks using their bodies and arms; minnows must recognize and use open space to escape the sharks and make it to the other side

4. Easter Egg Hunt

- scatter all of the balls over a half field and players start at one end; players must gather a ball and shoot it into the open goal and then go and look for another ball; as players score the coach must retrieve the ball from the net and quickly toss it to another part of the field for players to collect; see how many a group can score within a set time

coaching points: players build confidence scoring goals and learn to retrieve and dribble and shoot

III. Game (~ 10 minutes)

_____ End practice with 2 v 2 or 3 v 3 games . Make big goals and discourage any player from playing goalie.

coaching points: let them play and have fun; briefly review and emphasize applying the skills learned in the earlier games when there are breaks in the action

U8

- build on concepts detailed in U6 practices; passing and receiving the ball should be emphasized

-size 3 ball

- suggested practice time 45 minutes

I. Warm Up/Fundamental Skill (~ 10 minutes)

Choose 1

1. Traffic Lights: see U6 page

- instead of calling out stop and start use visual signals for start and stop, such as red and green flags, or a cone and a shirt, etc.; each player dribbles his/her ball within a defined area and stops or starts based

on the visual cues from the coach; as players get better introduce the “drag back” as one of the maneuvers that may be signaled: players must stop the ball and drag it backwards and change direction of their dribble 180 degrees

coaching points: visual signals encourage players to keep head up while dribbling; keep knees bent in order to change direction easily; demonstrate how to stop the ball; give praise for creative movement, encourage change of direction with ball; in order to stop ball on command don't let it get too far ahead of you when dribbling

2. Juggling

- start sitting down: Each player sitting down holds a ball over his or her shoelaces; Strike the ball and catch, Work up to a total of five kicks, Try both feet; later progress to juggling while standing; also work on juggling with thigh as the striking surface instead of feet; after players can juggle and catch the ball then progress to juggling where instead of catching it they let it bounce and hit the ground once and then strike it again (touch- let it bounce- touch- let it bounce, etc).

coaching points: sitting: Eyes on the ball, bend at the waist, bend the knee of the kicking leg, toe of the kicking foot out, drive the knee of the kicking leg to the chest; standing: keep balance, soft touch

3. “Pong”, “Tunnel Passing”

- Two players, one ball, place two cones anywhere from 2-8 yards apart. They choose! Players pass back and forth to each other. The rules are that the ball must never stop, must always stay on the ground, and must go thru the two cones without touching them; make pairs compete for maximum number of passes completed in a set time interval

coaching points: teach passing with side of foot (max surface area for max control): arms out for balance, toe up, ankle locked, opposite foot points to target, striking foot at 90 degrees to ball, leg swings through the ball and strikes ball at equator or slightly higher so that it rolls and does not go up in air

4. Triangle Passing

- 3 players in a triangle, 2 balls, and one “server” player in the middle; pass one ball to the server in the middle who must receive it and pass it to the other player in the triangle without a ball; rotate the server after 2

minutes; can make it competitive by seeing how many passes can be completed

coaching points: must receive the ball properly and "prep touch" it in the direction of the open player that you must pass it to; passes should roll and stay on the ground

II. Game Oriented Drills (~ 20 minutes)

Choose 1 or 2

1. Pass by Numbers

- large 20x20 square, one ball, 4 to 6 players; assign every player a number; player #1 starts with the ball and dribbles around while other players jog around the square; player #2 yells out "two" and player #1 must find #2 and pass the ball to him/her, and this continues on until the last player gets ball, and then player #1 calls for it, then #2, etc.

coaching points: Vary the number of players and the speed of the call outs depending on proficiency; teaches players to be aware of team mates as they are dribbling and to receive the ball and make their first touch in the direction of the next numbered player; encourage movement

2. Gates Passing

- within a playing area such as a half field set up a number of small "gates" of 2 cones a few yards apart; pairs of players have one ball and the player with the ball must dribble to a gate and pass the ball through the gate to their partner; the partner then dribbles to the next gate and passes the ball through the gate; pair move through the gates in sequence; can make it competitive by making two teams of 3 pairs and compete for speed in completing the circuit of gates

coaching points: head up to see next gate and your partner; movement to other side of gate so that partner can pass the ball easily

3. "Pac-Man"= variation on "Hit the coach"

- large square, start with 2 "pac-men" who each have a ball and must try to hit the other players by passing it into them; the 4 to 6 other players must run around and dodge or jump to avoid being hit by the ball; if a player is hit by a ball then he/she can get a ball from outside the area and become another pac-man; play continues until all of the players are hit.

coaching points: keep ball rolling, eyes up to find space, change direction and speed, try fake passes to deceive target players; vary size of

square depending on proficiency (if pac-men can't hit targets then make square smaller)

4. "Sharks and Minnows"

- make it more difficult than U6 version by having more than one shark to start; within a set square all "minnow" players have a ball and one player is the hungry shark who must chase the minnows and hit their ball out of the square; after a minnow's ball is out that player must sit with their ball until the round is over; after each round rotate the shark player until all players have had a chance to be the shark

coaching points: with 2 sharks players must look for open space to get away; ball control and shielding the ball from the shark: players must use their body and arms to keep the shark away and then change direction to run away with their ball.

III. Game (~ 15 minutes)

_____ End practice with 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 games

-Add a variation such as a game with multiple goals: set up 4 goals instead of 2, so each team can score on 2 different goals; this encourages movement and discourages goal keeping by one player

-Add a variation where a team must make 2 or 3 consecutive completed passes between teammates before they can score a goal.

coaching points: movement lessons from "pass by numbers" and "gates passing" should be emphasized when there are breaks in the action

U10

- build on concepts detailed in U6 + U8 practices
- size 4 ball
- introduce tactical awareness and team positions during play
- suggested practice time 45 to 60 minutes

I. Warm Up/Fundamental Skill (~ 15 minutes)

Choose 2

_____ 1. Volley game

- Set up small grids. Two players and one ball in each grid. Two players freely passing a ball inside the grid by volleying it in the air. Other player must receive it and can then use hands to catch it and volley it back to partner. Try to keep the ball in the air. The ball may not bounce more than twice before it is played. Count the passes inside the grid each pass is a point. Go for thirty seconds. Try to get more points than other pairs. As proficiency improves don't allow use of hands

coaching points: Get in "line of flight" of the ball quickly; get ready and stay balanced to receive, select controlling surface early, relax body part at impact and cushion ball by withdrawing surface as ball hits; work on using chest and thigh as receiving surface

_____ 2. Group Ball Receiving

- sets of 3 players- coach tosses the ball away and then calls out the number of passes they must make to each other while retrieving the ball and bringing it back to the coach; last pass is made to the coach; as proficiency progresses then limit the players to 2 touches

coaching points : players must try to make a triangle shape as they retrieve and must think about spacing between each other

3. Square Passing Drill

- 4 players in a square passing the ball around; make variations such as ball must be received with left foot and then passed to the next player using the right foot and vice versa; once proficiency increases increase to 2 balls among 4 players so that speed increases; can make groups compete for highest # of passes within a minute

coaching points: proper side of foot passing and receiving technique (see "pong" game in U8 practice); emphasize the "prep" touch-- receive the ball in the direction of the next player

4. Juggling

- start sitting down: Each player sitting down holds a ball over his or her shoelaces; Strike the ball and catch, Work up to a total of five kicks, Try both feet; later progress to juggling while standing; also work on juggling with thigh as the striking surface instead of feet; after players can juggle and catch the ball then progress to juggling where instead of catching it they let it bounce and hit the ground once and then strike it again (touch- let it bounce- touch- let it bounce, etc).

coaching points: sitting: Eyes on the ball, bend at the waist, bend the knee of the kicking leg, toe of the kicking foot out, drive the knee of the kicking leg to the chest; standing: keep balance, soft touch

5. Triangle Passing Drill

- 3 players in a triangle, 2 balls, and one "server" player in the middle; pass one ball to the server in the middle who must receive it and pass it to the other player in the triangle without a ball; rotate the server after 2 minutes; can make it competitive by seeing how many passes can be completed; as proficiency increases allow the player in the middle to only take 2 touches

coaching points: must receive the ball properly and "prep touch" it in the direction of the open player that you must pass it to; passes should roll and stay on the ground

II. Game Oriented Drills (~ 20 minutes)

Choose 2

_____ 1. Pass by Numbers

- large 20x20 square, one ball, 4 to 6 players; assign every player a number; player #1 starts with the ball and dribbles around while other players jog around the square; player #2 yells out "two" and player #1 must find #2 and pass the ball to him/her, and this continues on until the last player gets ball, and then player #1 calls for it, then #2, etc.

coaching points: Vary the number of players and the speed of the call outs depending on proficiency; teaches players to be aware of team mates as they are dribbling and to receive the ball and make their first touch in the direction of the next numbered player

2. Touch, Turn, + Play

- setup a circle with 7 or 8 players at the perimeter and half of them have a ball; 3 or 4 players start in the middle of the circle and run near a player with the ball, receive a pass, then turn, dribble and pass to a perimeter player who has no ball; groups of players can compete on # of completed passes;

variation: players at perimeter use their hands and toss bouncing balls to players in the middle so that they have to receive lofted balls

coaching points: First touch and importance of cushioning ball; get in line with the ball (in line of flight) quickly, select controlling surface early, relax body part at impact.

3. Multiple Goals

- set up 4 goals with cones, spread around the field; 2 teams of 4 players compete and score goals by passing the ball through a goal to a teammate; can't use the same goal 2 times in a row

coaching points: must move to open space; teach awareness of team positions; encourage use of playing terms to communicate with other teammates- "man-on", "square pass", "drop pass", etc

4. Keep Away

- the "it" player must get the ball; stack the numbers as needed depending on ability (5 to 1, 6 to 1, etc); coach may have to help out

coaching points: Take first touch away from where pressure is coming from; must move to open space; encourage use of playing terms to communicate with other teammates- "man-on", "square pass", "drop pass", etc

III. Game (~ 15 to 25 minutes)

_____ End practice with free play games:

- 4 v 4 without goalies-- Add a variation where a team must make 2 or 3 consecutive completed passes between teammates before they can score a goal.

coaching points: movement lessons from "pass by numbers"; use playing terms to communicate

- 6 v 6 plus goalies; Play 4 v 2 field players in each half; No one allowed over half line. Four players from each team go into their offensive half of the field and the other two players stay in the defending half.

coaching points: Take first touch away from where pressure is coming from; can use teammates in defensive half to pass back and spread out point of attack

U12

- size 4 ball
- introduce fitness - interval training

- suggested practice time 60 minutes

I. Warm Up/Fundamental Skill (~ 15 minutes)

Choose 2

_____ 1. Volley game

- Set up small grids. Two players and one ball in each grid. Two players freely passing a ball inside the grid by volleying it in the air. Other player must receive it and volley it back to partner. Try to keep the ball in the air. The ball may not bounce more than twice before it is played. Count the passes inside the grid each pass is a point. Go for thirty seconds. Try to get more points than other pairs. As proficiency improves don't allow use of hands

coaching points: Get in "line of flight" of the ball quickly; get ready and stay balanced to receive, select controlling surface early, relax body part at impact and cushion ball by withdrawing surface as ball hits; work on using chest and thigh as receiving surface

_____ 2. Juggling

-Try both feet; also work on juggling with thigh as the striking surface instead of feet; initially players may let it bounce and hit the ground once and then strike it again (touch- let it bounce- touch- let it bounce, etc). but should progress to the point of true juggling where the ball does not hit the ground

coaching points: keep balance, soft touch; hit ball with slight backspin to keep control

_____ 3. Heading

- 3 players in a line, 2 balls, and one player in the middle; server player on each end tosses the ball to the player in the middle who must head it back to the server, then turn and head the ball back to the other server; rotate middle player

coaching points: eyes open, mouth closed, arch trunk back and snap forward to contact ball with forehead

_____ 4. Triangle Passing Drill

- 3 players in a triangle, 2 balls, and one "server" player in the middle; pass one ball to the server in the middle who must receive it and pass it to the other player in the triangle without a ball; rotate the server after 2 minutes; can make it competitive by seeing how many passes can be

completed; as proficiency increases allow the player in the middle to only take 2 touches

coaching points: must receive the ball properly and "prep touch" it in the direction of the open player that you must pass it to; passes should roll and stay on the ground

5. Wall Passing "Give and Go", "1-2"

- 2 cones, 2 target players; server player with ball must pass to the target player and then run around the cone, receive the ball and pass it to the next target player, run around 2nd cone and receive ball; make 2 or 3 groups of players practicing this so that no one is standing around inactive

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cone

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coaching points: teaches players to move immediately after passing; both server and target player must receive and weight their passes properly; as proficiency improves replace the cones with defenders and allow them to move forward from their spot, but not backwards (introduces pressure)

II. Game Oriented Drills (~ 20 minutes)

Choose 2

_____ 1. Pass by Numbers

- large 20x20 square, one ball, 6 players; assign every player a number; player #1 starts with the ball and dribbles around while other players jog around the square; player #2 yells out "two" and player #1 must find #2 and pass the ball to him/her, and this continues on until the last player gets ball, and then player #1 calls for it, then #2, etc.

coaching points: Vary the number of players and the speed of the call outs depending on proficiency; make first touch in the direction of the next numbered player; Off the ball players must get into the field of vision of the teammate with the ball. A dynamic run should be made to show for the ball.

2. Keep Away

- 2 teams, one ball; initially may have to stack the numbers (6 v 3, for example) but should progress to evenly matched sides as proficiency improves; can score by completing x number of consecutive passes or can see which group can make the most number of consecutive passes before losing possession

coaching points: work on disguise, feints, weight and shape of pass; Take first touch away from where pressure is coming from; must move to open space; encourage use of playing terms to communicate with other teammates- "man-on", "square pass", "drop pass", etc

3. Target Game

- 4 v 4 in a large square; each team has a target player at one end of the field; score by passing it to your target player and receiving it back; can't use the same target player twice in a row; target player free to move along the endline, even when they have the ball, but can not enter the field; rotate the target players

coaching points: spatial awareness, communication; can vary the number and location of target players (can put one on each border of the square)

4. Passing For Possession (keep away variation)

- 5 v 5 with 2 neutral players that play with the team that has the ball; score goals by completing x number of consecutive passes; as proficiency progresses limit the number of touches that offense can make (for example only 3 or 4 touches allowed by a player in possession of the ball);

III. Game (~ 25 minutes)

1. End Zone Game

-setup an "end zone" at each end of the field; Each team tries to score in other team's end zone by getting the ball in end zone under control, pass or dribble.

2. All Up & All Back

- Play a full field match with goalies; Use a painted/chalked line or small disc cones to mark the halfway line. For a goal to count all field players of the attacking team *must* be over the halfway line. If any of the field players are not over the halfway line and in the opponent's half of the field then the goal does not count and a goal kick follows.

coaching points: The intent of these conditions is to work on team communication, off the ball runs, vision, fitness and most importantly compactness; defenders must follow the ball and support the attack

3. - 6 v 6 plus goalies; Play 4 v 2 field players in each half; No one allowed over half line. Four players from each team go into their offensive half of the field and the other two players stay in the defending half.

coaching points: Take first touch away from where pressure is coming from; can use teammates in defensive half to pass back and spread out point of attack

4. Regular game- full field with goalies; may add variations such as must make 4 consecutive passes before you can shoot; or may limit the number of touches

coaching points: offense works on spreading point of attack, creative movement and runs; defensive principles such as team shape, zonal defending, compactness