



U12 Guidelines

Main Objective: The focus of this age group is continued **individual** skill development with the introduction of small group principles of play and individual tactical awareness.

Game Size: 8 V 8, 2 x 30(U12) or 11v11, 2 x 35 (U13) Minute halves, large fields/goals. Competitive play with scores recorded

Playtime: Each player should see a minimum of 50% per game.

Formations: Recommended System: put players on the field for the love of the game, without spending much time coaching a system. Focus on teaching principles of play as opposed to systems. If playing 8 v 8, then play a 2-3-2. If playing 11v11 then play a 4-4-2 or 4-3-3. Most importantly, players should enjoy the great game!

Terminology: Simple: “Go to goal, Relax, Good job., Goal side, Defend, Head on a swivel, Skill. Hold It (overlap), Start Something (players off the ball) man on, time, turn, support, through, line”

Practice Time: 3 Practices per week or 1 game and 2 practices. 1 Hour 30 minute’s maximum.

Seasons aim: Skill development, tactical awareness and fun.

Technical Aspects:

Important to establish a good strong solid base. Development of individual skills under the pressure of time, space, and an opponent. Increase technical speed.

- 1) Motor skill development: Juggling with feet, thigh and head- no bounces. Controlling and turning with the ball in the air, on the ground and at all speed and all angles.
- 2) Ball Mastery: Fast footwork, Ball familiarity and high repetitions. 1 ball 1 player!
- 3) Passing: Short with inside and outside of foot. Long driven passes- laces or lofted. Working on weight and accuracy. Combination Play (Give & Go, Overlap) and possession play, triangle work.
- 4) Receiving: Ground and Air balls. All surfaces, from a partner and on the move
- 5) Beating Players 1v1: Step Over, Scissors, In Out, Side Step, Fake Shot, Combinations
- 6) Beating Players Running Beside You – change of pace, hip swivel, stop & go
- 7) Beating Players on your back – Step over, Double moves,
- 8) Beating players approaching from angles – Cut moves, Cryuff Move, Cut & Spin
- 9) Shielding:
- 10) Shooting: Proper striking technique, all surfaces of foot, ball moving away, across and towards player. Volleys. Control of shots. Finishing from crosses – ground and air, far post shooting
- 11) Heading: Fore head, up and away (defensive), Controlled heading (Control) and Down to the corners (attacking). Introduction of opposition- Be careful!
- 12) Defending: Basic individual and small group pressure, depth, balance, goal side cover, delay and tackle.
- 13) Tackling: Block Tackle, Poke Tackle, Proper Technique, in balance, no fear
- 14) Goalkeeping: Footwork, ball handling, diving technique, decision making (controlling your box)

All practices should begin unopposed, lead to opposed and finish in game like situations where you coach. Coaching (Not Commentating) in the small games is a key to development. Increased competition during practices and a promotion of the use of both feet. **Coaches to establish the need to work with ball at home.**

Tactical Aspects:

Individual: 1v1 situations in attack and defense. Play 1v1 frequently

Small Group: 2v1, 2v2, 3v1, 3v2, 3v3, 4v2, 4v3, 4v4.

Play a variety of positions; Develop an awareness / Complete player. Basic principles of play.

Attacking: Keep possession; Encourage risk taking; Take players on 1v1 in proper areas of the field. Support. Basic combination play (Wall pass, takeover). Promote attacking soccer. Mobility, Width in attack, penetration, depth, improvisation

Defending: Proper pressure (in front and behind); Channel player; Immediate chase.; Cover; Marking. Balance

Team: Team tactics do not take priority at this age. Focus is placed on maintaining balance and playing skillful soccer. Players play a variety of positions and emphasis is placed on player development instead of getting results as a team.

Physical Aspects: All fitness work done with the ball, in partners, and in fun engaging activities. Flexibility, Agility – with and without the ball, Speed , Strength, Endurance, Balance

Psychological Aspects: Keep it FUN and ENJOYABLE to foster a desire to play (Intrinsic motivation). Encourage decision-making Imagination / Creativity. Increase demands. Discipline. Encourage players/teams to watch professional and national team games on tv.