



SSA Under 5 Practice Structure

Young players need to learn to dribble within a variety of playing situations, such as dribbling forward unopposed, changing speed and direction, shielding the ball from opponents, dribbling past an opponent, and using dribbling to get away from pressure. The ability to dribble is absolutely critical since dribbling is the foundation and preparation for the other fundamental skills of soccer, such as controlling, passing and shooting. Players have to learn to combine body control, agility, coordination and balance with the mechanics of dribbling. This process of learning to dribble involves trial and error. Overtime, players will discover the contrast between a 'soft' touch and a 'hard touch' on the ball and will develop a 'feel' for the ball providing them the basis to develop new skills.

Technical, Tactical, Physical, and Psychological Characteristics

Technical:

- Every player should have a ball
- The focus is on dribbling the ball in a variety of situations
- Basic motor skills should be developed with and without the ball.
- No heading what-so-ever
- Players should be touching the ball as many times as possible
- Involve the ball in as many activities as possible
- No elimination games. All players engaged

Tactical:

- No tactics taught as players only understand themselves and the ball
- Positional coaching of any kind is irrelevant and detrimental to their fun, enjoyment and progress
- Rather than be told what position to play, young players should be encouraged to move in the correct direction to score or defend

Physical:

- Development for boys and girls are quite similar
- Constantly in motion, but, with no sense of pace. They will chase something until they drop They are easily fatigued but recover rapidly (frequent, brief breaks)
- Love to run, jump, roll, hop, etc
- Catching or throwing skills not developed
- Physical coordination is immature. Eye - hand and eye - foot coordination is not developed
- Can balance on their "good" foot

Psychological:

- Short attention span
- Can attend to only one problem at a time, (typically controlling their ball and body)
- Only go in one direction
- May understand simple rules that are explained briefly and demonstrated
- May or may not understand/remember: what lines mean on the field; what team they are on; what goal they are going for
- Most are very egocentric (me, mine, my). Therefore, don't want to share ball, as they don't think they will get it back
- Prefer "parallel play" (Will play on a team, but will not really engage with their teammates)
- Easily bruised psychologically. Shout praise often. Give "hints", don't criticize
- Need generous praise and to play without pressure

Under 5 Practice Structure

- Select 4 or 5 activities from the U5 Practice Activities curriculum document or US Youth Soccer U6 Manual/DVD
- Be prepared with an additional 1 or 2 activities that you can swap in if an activity isn't quite working out
- Always end with some type of scrimmage for the last 1 or 2 activities
- Each activity should last between 8-12 minutes
- Give players a short water break (1-2 minutes) after each activity
- Dribbling is the main focus, and shooting
- Individual activities (1 player, 1 ball)