THE PRACTICAL PARENT
COACH PLAYBOOK

THE COACH'S WORKBOOK

Soccer edition: printable plans, checklists, and forms for your first season coaching 7 to 9-year-olds



Print the pages you need. Skip the rest.

A free companion to *Coaching Youth Soccer for Beginners*

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HOW TO USE THIS

Print the pages you need. Not all of them, and not in order.



Before your season starts, fill in the league rules page (3) and the goals page (4). Those two shape everything else.

Print several copies of the practice plan (5) and the substitution sheet (14). You will use those repeatedly.

Practices 1, 2, and 3 (pages 6 to 8) are three complete practices. You can run them as written. You do not need to plan anything for your first three practices.

The one-page cheat sheet (18) is the page worth keeping on your clipboard all season.

You do not need to have read the book to use this workbook. Every page works on its own.

Find the page you need

Before the season
League rules 3
Season goals 4
Roster and attendance 15
Parent messages 16
Soccer bag 17

Practice
Practice plan 5
Practices 1, 2, 3 6–8
Drill cards 9–10

Game day
What nobody tells you 11
Restarts and referee signals 12
Game-day checklist 13
Substitution sheet 14

Anytime
One page to keep with you 18
End of season 19

YOUR LEAGUE'S RULES

Fill this in before your first practice



Get the answers from your league's coach handbook, website, or coordinator. Do not guess, and do not assume the other coach knows either. Typical answers for this age are shown in gray, but yours may differ.

Ball size *typical: Size 3 or Size 4*

Field size and number of players *younger often 4v4, no goalie; older often 7v7*

Are goalkeepers used? Does the position rotate? *often rotated through the roster*

Build-out or retreat-line rules, if any

Heading restrictions *often: no heading, indirect free kick if deliberate*

Minimum playing-time rules *often close to equal time*

Substitution pattern *often at stoppages*

Game structure *halves or quarters, how long*

Restarts and fouls: free kicks, penalty kicks? *throw-in, pass-in, or kick-in at the touchline?*

Mercy rule or score-management rule

Your practice day, time, and space

Cancellation policy, and who to contact

Ask this first

What does your league require of adult volunteers? Background check, safety training, two-adult rules? Clearances can take weeks, and some leagues will not let you run a practice until yours clears.

YOUR THREE SEASON GOALS

Small and specific beats big and vague



Pick up to three things you want your players to be able to do by the end of the season. Write them down now. At the end of the season you will come back and see how it went.

Good goals at this age are small and specific. For example: "Every player can dribble across the field without losing the ball." Not: "Win the league."

1 **Goal 1**

2 **Goal 2**

3 **Goal 3**

End of season: how did it go?

PRACTICE PLAN

One page, one practice. Fill it in before you leave the house.



PRINT SEVERAL COPIES OF THIS PAGE

Date

Today’s focus (one or two skills, no more)

Plan about 45 minutes of activity for a 60-minute slot

The other 15 minutes disappear into late arrivals, water, explanations, and general chaos. That is not wasted time. That is reality.

1. **Warm-up** *about 10 min*

2. **Skill 1** *about 10 min*

3. **Skill 2** *about 10 min*

4. **Game or scrimmage** *about 10 to 15 min*

One coaching cue I will repeat today

Backup activity if something falls apart

Equipment I need

PRACTICE 1: BALL CONTROL

Run this as written. About 45 minutes of activity.



1

Warm-up: ball mastery and dribbling

0 to 10 min

Every player with a ball, spread out so nobody can touch the person next to them. Play Dribble and Freeze. Players dribble using both feet. When you call “freeze,” they stop the ball and hold it still under their foot.

Say this: “Chin up. Peek at me between touches.”

2

Teach one skill: direction, speed, and gates

10 to 25 min

Same dribbling. Call out turns and changes of pace: “slow,” “fast,” “turn.” Correct one thing only: keep the ball close, or keep eyes up. Pick one. Not both. Then scatter small gates, two cones a big step apart, around the space. Players dribble through as many gates as they can and pick their next gate before they get there.

3

Dribbling game

25 to 35 min

Red Light, Green Light with soccer balls. Green light means dribble. Red light means stop and hold the ball under your foot. This is a dribbling drill that does not feel like one.

4

Scrimmage

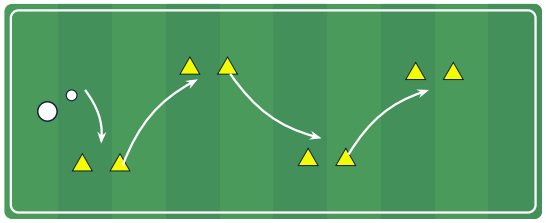
35 to 45 min

Let them play. Do not stop it every twenty seconds.

Your one cue: “Ball close.”

Finish

Bring everyone in. Name one thing that went well. Send them home.



PRACTICE 2: PASSING

Run this as written. About 45 minutes of activity.

1

Ball mastery warm-up

0 to 10 min

Same as last time. Individual dribbling, right foot, left foot, moving forward, stop and start. Repetition is the plan working, not the plan failing. If it looks rusty, that is normal.

2

Partner passing and receiving

10 to 25 min

Pairs, one ball each pair. Start close together. Plant the non-kicking foot beside the ball, lock the ankle with the toe up, strike with the inside of the foot, follow through toward the target. Once they are accurate, move them further apart. Do not let distance become more important than accuracy.

Say this: "Plant your foot. Toe up, ankle locked. Strike with the inside."

3

Pass and move

25 to 35 min

Groups of three. Pass, then move to open space. Pass again. If everyone follows the ball, stop and reset. The rule: do not stand next to the ball.

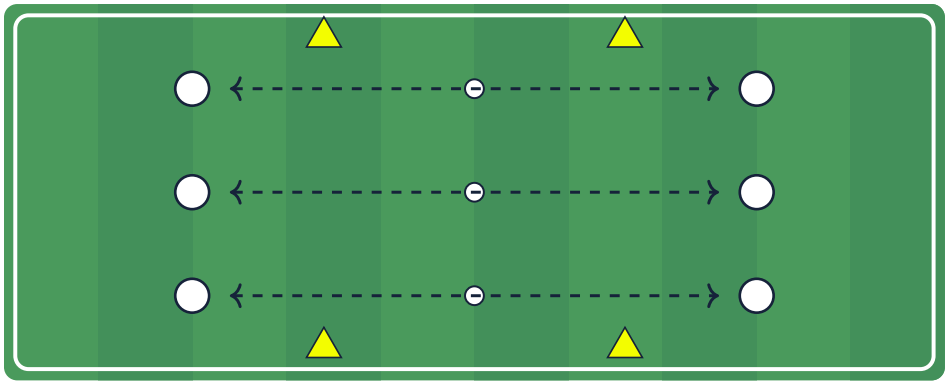
4

Small-sided passing game

35 to 45 min

Give each group a target: "How many good passes can you complete in one minute?" Only count passes the teammate controls. Try to beat the score.

Your one cue: "Pass and move." Praise the movement, not just the pass.





PRACTICE 3: ADD DEFENSE

Run this as written. About 45 minutes of activity.

1

Ball mastery warm-up

0 to 10 min

Every player with a ball. Same dribbling as the last two practices. Quick and familiar.

2

Passing and receiving review

10 to 20 min

Pairs, one ball each pair. Short passes with the inside of the foot. First touch where you want to go next.

3

One-on-one defending

20 to 30 min

Make a channel about 10 yards wide and 15 long. Attacker dribbles toward the end line. Defender starts a few steps in front: knees bent, eyes up, stay between the attacker and the goal, slow them down and wait for a mistake. Swap roles each turn.

Say this: “Slow them down. Stay on your feet.”

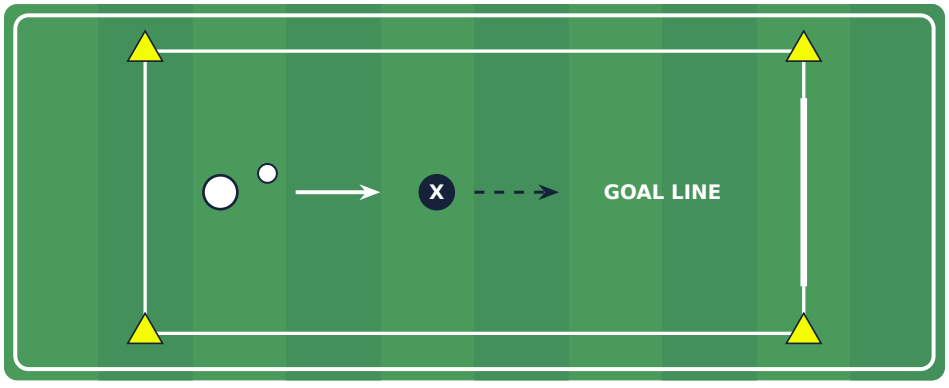
4

Small-sided game

30 to 45 min

Start with a few minutes of two-on-two, then play three-on-three. Fewer players means more touches and more chances to defend. Pause only to correct one thing.

Your one cue: “Slow them down.”



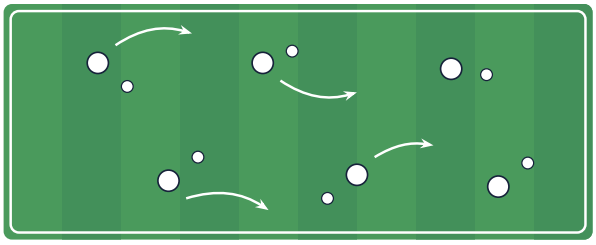


DRILL CARDS (1 OF 2)

Five drills is enough for a whole season. You do not need a hundred.

Dribble and Freeze

ball control **1 ball each**



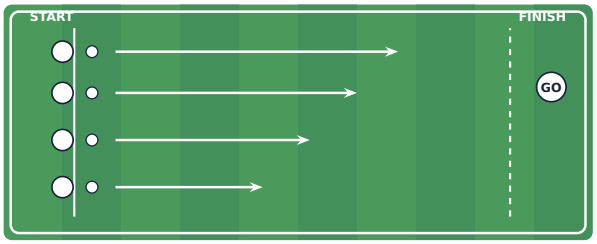
Players dribble in their own space using both feet. On “freeze,” they stop the ball and hold it under their foot.

Easier: everyone stands still and dribbles in place.

Harder: they move while dribbling and you call direction changes.

Red Light, Green Light

dribbling, speed **1 ball each**



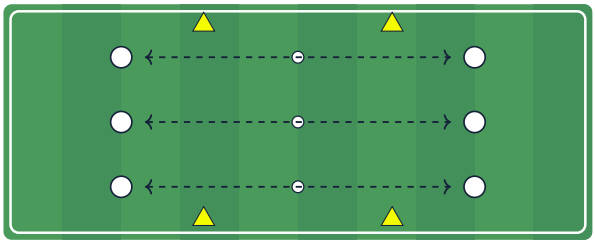
Green light: dribble forward. Red light: stop and hold the ball under your foot. Anyone who loses control goes back a few steps.

Easier: walk instead of run.

Harder: add “yellow light” for slow dribbling.

Partner Passing

passing, receiving **1 ball per pair**



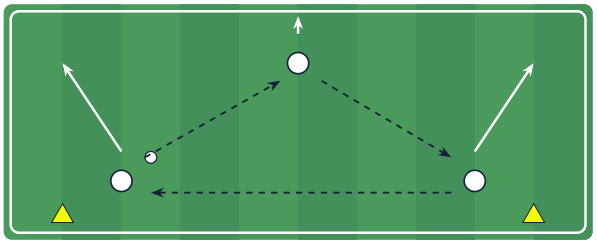
Pairs pass back and forth. Plant the non-kicking foot, toe up and ankle locked, strike with the inside of the foot, follow through toward the target.

Easier: stand closer together.

Harder: move further apart, or add a first-touch redirect before passing back.

Pass and Move

passing, movement **1 ball per 3**



Groups of three. Pass, then immediately move to open space. Pass again.

Easier: tell them exactly where to move after passing.

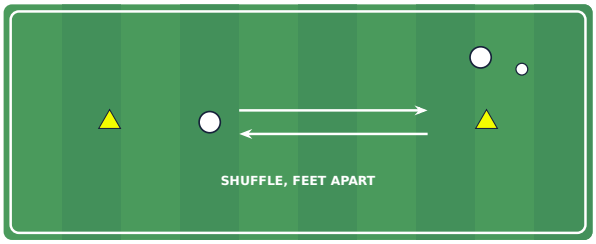
Harder: add a defender.

DRILL CARDS (2 OF 2)

Add these when the first drills feel easy

Jockeying

defending **cones**



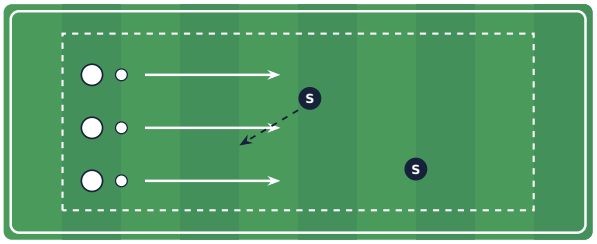
Shuffle between two cones, side-on and balanced, feet never crossing.

Easier: move the cones closer, go slower.

Harder: add a partner with a ball to shadow.

Sharks and Minnows

ball protection **balls, cones**



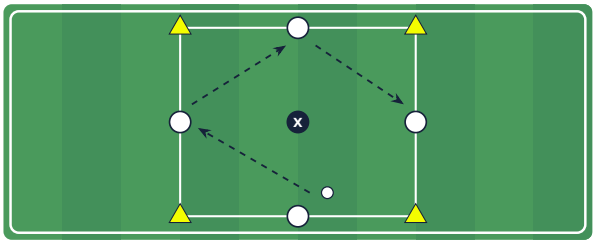
Minnows dribble across a grid while one or two sharks try to kick their balls out. A minnow whose ball goes out becomes a shark.

Easier: make the grid bigger and let sharks walk.

Harder: add a shark, shrink the grid.

Rondo (Keep-Away Square)

passing, support **4 cones, 1 ball**



Make a 10 by 10 yard square. Four passers stand on the edge, one per side, with one defender inside. Keep the ball away. Win it or touch it, or swap after 30 to 45 seconds.

Easier: make the square bigger; defender stays passive.

Harder: add a second defender (4v2) or use a smaller square.

If a drill is not working

Stop it. Do not let it limp along for five more minutes.

Make the group smaller. Two groups of five beats one group of ten.

Take something away. Remove the defender, the movement, or the ball.

Move closer. Shorter passes, closer shots, smaller space.

Give one instruction, not five. If nothing works, switch to something they can already do and come back to it next practice.

WHAT NOBODY TELLS YOU

Game-day basics that are obvious to everyone except the new coach



Arrive early. Thirty minutes before kick-off is a good default. Goals may need setting up, and kids need time to find their shin guards.

Shin guards are required. Check every player has them on, under their socks. Cleats or turf shoes, no single front toe cleat, no jewelry. Pack spares.

Jersey colors. One team usually wears light, the other dark. Ask your league coordinator who changes, and keep pinnies in your bag.

Which way you attack. Teams switch ends at halftime. Ask the referee whether there is a coin toss.

Where you stand. Most fields have a coaching area on one touchline and spectators on the other. Ask your referee or coordinator.

Say hello to the referee. Ask: "Anything you want me to know about the rules today?"

Handshake line. Teams line up at the end and say "good game." Remind players before the game.

Water first. At halftime, water and shade first. Coaching second.

Heading is usually not allowed. Many leagues prohibit deliberate heading at this age, so do not teach it. Where it is banned, a deliberate header usually gives the other team an indirect free kick, and the referee raises one arm straight up.

RESTARTS AND REFEREE SIGNALS

The messiest few seconds of the match



On every restart, tell them: "Find space. Do not stand next to the ball." One player close, everyone else wide.

Restart	Who gets it	What to tell your team
Kickoff	Starts each half and follows a goal	Stay in your own half until the ball moves
Throw-in	Team that did not touch it last	Spread out. One close, others wide
Goal kick	Defending team	Ours: spread wide, one near the build-out line. Theirs: wait behind the line until they kick
Corner kick	Attacking team	Find space in front of the goal
Free kick	Team that was fouled	Give space. Wait for the whistle

Referee signals

Arm pointing sideways: direction of a throw-in or free kick. Arm pointing at the goal area: goal kick. Arm pointing at the corner: corner kick. Arm straight up: indirect free kick. Both arms swept forward: play on, advantage.

GAME-DAY CHECKLIST

Work down the list. Tick as you go.



Before the game

- [ ] Know when and where to arrive.
- [ ] Have your roster and parent contact information.
- [ ] Confirm the meeting point with parents.
- [ ] Bring soccer balls, cones, and pinnies.
- [ ] Check shin guards and footwear for every player.
- [ ] Know your league's rules for substitutions, restarts, and fouls.
- [ ] Plan a simple warm-up.
- [ ] Decide on one or two things to emphasize. Not six.

During the game

- [ ] Watch all the players, not just the ball.
- [ ] Keep instructions short.
- [ ] Track substitutions on your sheet.
- [ ] Coach one thing at a time.
- [ ] Praise the behavior you want to see again.

After the game

- [ ] Bring the team together.
- [ ] Name one thing that went well.
- [ ] Name one thing to work on next.
- [ ] Line up for the handshake line.
- [ ] Let them go. Keep it short.

SUBSTITUTION SHEET

Do not rely on memory while you are coaching



PRINT SEVERAL COPIES OF THIS PAGE

Write your roster down the left. Tick each period a player is on the field. Use two columns for halves, four for quarters.

Player	1st	2nd	3rd	4th

Check your league's playing-time rules before your first game. Many require close to equal time for every player.

TEAM ROSTER AND ATTENDANCE

One list, one photo on your phone



Player	Parent and phone	Allergies / notes	Attended

PARENT MESSAGES

Copy, change the details, send. Pick one channel and use only that one.



Before the season

Hi everyone, I'm [name], coaching [team] this season. Practices are [day, time, location], starting [date].
Please bring a water bottle, shin guards, and soccer-appropriate footwear to every practice. I'll send updates through [text group / email / app] only, so please make sure you're on it.
My goal this season is for the kids to learn the basics, get plenty of playing time, and enjoy it enough to want to play again next year. Looking forward to meeting everyone.

Practice cancelled

Practice tonight is cancelled due to [reason]. Next practice is [day, date, time] as normal. Sorry for the short notice.

Game-day details

Game this [day] at [time], at [location]. Please arrive by [time] so we can warm up. Wear [uniform]. Bring a water bottle and shin guards.

"Why isn't my kid playing more?"

Thanks for asking, and I understand. I'm trying to give everyone close to equal time across the season, and I track it every game so nobody gets missed. If you'd like, I can walk you through what I've got written down for [child]. Happy to talk after practice, just not during the game.

Handle disagreements privately and later, never on the sideline in front of the kids.



COACH'S SOCCER BAG

Pack this the night before. Take a photo of this page.

- [ ] Soccer balls (right size)
- [ ] Cones
- [ ] Pinnies or training vests
- [ ] Whistle, if your league uses one
- [ ] Today's practice plan
- [ ] Clipboard and pen
- [ ] Substitution sheet, on game days
- [ ] Water for yourself and extra bottles
- [ ] Spare shin guards
- [ ] First-aid supplies, per league policy
- [ ] Roster with parent contact information
- [ ] Emergency contact information
- [ ] Fully charged phone
- [ ] Sunscreen and weather clothing
- [ ] This book or the Quick Reference
- [ ] A reminder to parents: shin guards and soccer footwear

If you only do one thing tonight

Put the soccer balls and the roster in the bag. Everything else on this list is recoverable if you forget it. Those two are hard to improvise.



ONE PAGE TO KEEP WITH YOU

If you print only one page, print this one. Clip it to your clipboard.



How to teach anything

Explain it in one sentence. Show them. Let them try. Watch. Correct one thing. Let them try again.

The five reminders

1. With the ball: keep control and look up.
2. Without the ball: find useful space.
3. After you pass: move and support.
4. On defense: slow the attacker and protect the goal.
5. After a mistake: next play.

When it falls apart

1. Stop.
2. Make sure everyone is safe.
3. Get their attention.
4. Give one instruction.
5. Restart with something simple they can already do.

Three drills you can run without thinking

Dribble and Freeze • Partner Passing • Red Light, Green Light

The practice shape

Plan 45 minutes of activity for a 60-minute slot. Warm-up, one skill, a second skill, then a game. The missing 15 minutes are late arrivals, water, and chaos. That is normal.

On every restart

“Find space. Do not stand next to the ball.”

After the game, ask three questions

What did we do well? What did we learn? What will we work on next?

You do not need to be a soccer expert. You need a plan.

END OF SEASON

Fill this in once, while it is still fresh. It makes next season much easier.



Look back at your three goals. How did the team do on each?

Three things that worked well

Three things you would change

Did the players improve? Name someone specific and what changed.

Did they have fun? Be honest. What is your evidence either way?

One thing to carry into next season

Notes to future you



WHAT'S IN THE FULL BOOK

This workbook covers the forms. The book covers the reasoning.

Coaching Youth Soccer for Beginners covers the rest:

- How to actually teach dribbling, passing, shooting, first touch, defending, and movement off the ball to kids who have never played
- What to do when a practice falls apart, a player cries, or a drill you spent twenty minutes planning does not work
- Coaching your own child without wrecking the car ride home
- Handling parents, assistants, and the ones who coach from the sideline
- Game day in full: substitutions, restarts, referees, and what to say when you are losing by a lot
- Finishing the season so the kids want to play again next year

Soccer Coach's Workbook

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