



United States Youth Soccer Association

U8 Practice Plan

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Age Group: U8 Theme: \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity**

**1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) Ball Retrieval**

The coach tosses the ball for each player to bring back with his or her hands, elbow, forehead, etc. Have all the players gather closely around you, but not in a line. Each one hands you their ball, which you toss randomly into an open area where they have to go retrieve it and bring it back to you in the manner that you specify as quickly as possible. Progressions: Bring the ball back with two hands, one hand and one forehead, right foot only, etc. The coach should move around the area. Play in pairs now that the children are older.

**Coaching Points**

- After a few commands the coach should move to force the players to look up before heading back
- This game is great for teaching body awareness, it's fun for the kids too!
- Start off by just asking the players to bring the ball back, see if anyone thinks to just pick it up and run it to you?

**2<sup>nd</sup> Activity Hospital Tag**

All players have a ball and are dribbling in an area. The coach is the doctor and stands outside the area. Players dribble in the area and try to tag each other. When tagged, the person has to hold that body part. Once a player is tagged for the third time they go to the doctor and do a task before coming back in. Play to see who can visit the doctor the least.

- Typically, this game is an elimination game. The players that get their balls kicked out first have to sit. The players that are eliminated first though are the players that need the most help with their shielding technique. The hospital gives them a chance to get back into the game and continue to practice.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Activity Crew vs. Riverhounds (from U6)**

Progressions: Can only dribble with one foot, outside of feet, soles.

Split the team into two groups and have them spread out and face each other. Between the two groups set up several large cones. One of the groups needs balls. On the coaches command one of the groups (make up names for them) strikes the ball and tries to topple as many cones as they can. The other team collects the balls and after the coach sets the cones back up they do the same activity.

- If the teams are having trouble hitting cones put more down
- Can the players lock their ankles (oes should be pointed up) and follow through in the direction of the target?

**4<sup>th</sup> Activity Soccer Marbles**

Progressions: Must strike ball with laces or inside of foot only.

Everyone needs to be in pairs with a ball for everyone. One player plays their ball and the other person tries to play their ball and hit the first ball while it is still moving. If the person misses the first person quickly goes to their ball and tries to play it to hit the second players ball. Players get a point each time they hit the ball. Progressions: Must strike ball with laces, inside of foot, left foot only, etc.

- Can the players lock their ankles (oes should be pointed up) and follow through in the direction of the target?

**5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) GK Game**

Set up several small 10 x 20 yard fields and have the team play 2v2 in them. When a team is on defense they have to have one person drop back and be a goalie. When the defender steals the ball he passes the ball back to the goalie and they then start to attack. While this is happening the other team is having someone drop back into their goal. Comments: Have several games going at once and rotate the teams so everyone two person teams gets to play all the other teams.

- Physically demanding game
- The nature of the game demands instant transition from attack to defense



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**Coaching Points**

**1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) Simon Says**

In a rectangular area play Simon Says with the team. If a player does something they are not supposed to issue them a "Gotcha!" Play to see who can get the least "Gotcha's". Examples of activities include dribbling in the area, change direction, stop the ball with your .... Even throw in some trick one's like kick the ball as far away as you can.

Progressions: 1 min. w/o ball, 1 min. w/ball at hands, 4 w/ball at feet

- Great game the kids will already know that can be used to improve body awareness

**2<sup>nd</sup> Activity Sharks and Minnows**

Mark off an area on the field as the pond. Choose a couple of players to be sharks – they won't have balls, but they are on the prowl for someone else's. All the other players are minnows dribbling around in the pond. The sharks must try to take someone else's ball away or kick the person's ball out of the pond. If they succeed, then they become a minnow, and the person whose ball was kicked becomes the shark.

- When someone is trying to stop their ball from being taken away, can they keep their body in between the ball and the defender?
- Can we spin away from pressure (a defender)?

**3<sup>rd</sup> Activity Gate Dribbling**

Divide the players into pairs. Set up a series of small goals or gates using disc cones throughout a 30 x 30 yard area. Each pair has one ball. In order to score a point one of the partners must dribble the ball through a goal. Can one player dribble the ball through a goal can the other get in front of another goal and receive a pass so he can then dribble through a goal? Play for 30 seconds at a time. Progressions: Specify how players must dribble.

- Don't tell the players they can't dribble through the same gate twice, wait and see if anyone can figure it out

**4<sup>th</sup> Activity Gate Passing**

Using the same set-up as above, except now in order for pairs to score one partner must pass the ball through a gate to their partner on the other side. Make sure you have more goals than pairs. Play for 30 seconds at a time.

- Don't tell the players they can not pass the ball through the same gate twice
- Is it possible to pass the ball through two gates with one pass?
- Encourage the players not to get close to the gates when passing the ball through

**5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) Outta There**

In a 25 x 15 yard grid with a goal at each end, play 1v1. The coach stands on the touchline with a supply of ball and a small line of players on each side. The coach plays a ball in and the first person from each line plays 1v1. If a player scores they stay on and the other person leaves. A ball is immediately played back into the game. If the ball goes out of bounds both players are "outta there." This should be a very fast paced game.

Progressions: Start with 1v1 and progress to 2v2.

- This game should be very fast paced
- As soon as the ball goes out of bounds throw another ball in immediately
- The coach is the master of the balls, look to see for players that aren't having a lot of success and distribute the ball straight to them
- Vary how balls are distributed into the playing area



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**Activity**

**1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) Island Game**

Use disc cones to set up small islands (small squares) in a large playing area. Have everyone dribble around in the area. On the coaches signal everyone must dribble with speed to an island; however, only two people are allowed per island. The player (or two) who does not get to an island scores one minus point. Play to see who has the least minus points.

Progressions: Start game without balls and then add them.

**Coaching Points**

- When dribbling for speed the players do not have to dribble the ball as close
- Their should be about five or six steps in between each touch of the ball

**2<sup>nd</sup> Activity Tail Tag**

Players run around in a 20 x 15 yard area. Players have a "tail" (practice vest) tucked into the back of their shorts. All of the players try to steal the other player's "tail". When a player loses their "tail" they keep on playing. Play to see who can steal the most "tails".  
 Progressions: Who is the last player to have their "tail" taken? Each player has a ball. Have players dribble in a specified way.

- Can anyone think to just pull out their own tail?
- Each player could have three tails, one in back and one on each side
- Is it better to hide in a corner where there is no space or go into the middle where your back is exposed?

**3<sup>rd</sup> Activity Pac Man**

Players are in a confined area, running around. Two players are Pac Man and have a ball outside of the area. On the coaches command the Pac Men (or Women) dribble into the area and try to pass their ball so that it hits one of the players below the knees. When a player is hit they go get a ball and join the original Pac Men.  
 Progressions: Specify how players must strike the ball (laces, inside of feet, outside of feet)

- Can we fake like we are going to pass the ball and try to make the players jump, and then hit them right when they land
- Players must lead the people who are running (pass the ball in front of them where they are going, not right at them so by the time the ball gets their the player is already gone)

**4<sup>th</sup> Activity Moving Target (In pairs)**

Players are in pairs and share a ball. The coach and a chosen assistant are holding a vest between them above waist height. The coach and assistant form a goal, and move around in an area. The players try to pass their ball through the moving goal to their partner. Obviously the players will bunch around the goal so the goal must move to open space to spread out the players.  
 Progressions: Specify how the ball has to be played through the goal. Add a second moving goal.

- The coaches can move towards certain players who aren't having much success
- The coaches can vary their speed to make the game easier or more demanding

**5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) German Game**

Set up several 20 x 10 yard playing areas. Have the players play 2v2 inside the areas. Instead of scoring by kicking the ball through goals, players must score by dribbling the ball over his opponent's endline. Play for two minutes and then the teams rest for one minute. Switch who plays who as well.  
 Comments: The pair that wins the most games could be the tournament winner.

- By changing how goals are scored different demands are placed on the players
- By taking away the goals, players must take on defenders and beat them to get to the line behind them, they can't just fire shots off and hope one gets through into the net



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## Activity

## Coaching Points

### 1<sup>st</sup> Activity (warm-up) Island Game

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Progressions: Start game without balls and then add them.

- When dribbling for speed the players do not have to dribble the ball as close
- Their should be about five or six steps in between each touch of the ball

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Activity Ball Stealing

Split the team into two groups and give one group red vests and one group blue vests. Give one of the teams balls to dribble. Those players try to dribble inside the area without losing possession of their ball to the other team. The objective is to see which team, red or blue, has the most balls at the end. Players from the same team can work together to steal balls or to keep possession (passing??).  
 Progressions: Rotate who starts with the balls.

- When someone is trying to stop their ball from being taken away, can they keep their body in between the ball and the defender?
- If you are going to lose your ball can you find a teammate to give your ball to?

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Activity Everyone vs. Everyone

Set up several small gates in the playing area. Give half to three-quarters of the team a ball. Players with a ball try to dribble/shoot through as many of the small gates as they can. Players without a ball try to steal a ball from someone who has one and then they try to score. Play multiple games and allow everyone to have a chance to beat their own score.  
 Progressions: Define how goals are scored - by dribbling or shooting.

- Don't tell the players that they can't dribble through the same gate twice, see if anyone is creative and dribbles through the same gate back and forth
- As soon as players go through a gate they should look up to find an open gate and then go for it!

### 4<sup>th</sup> Activity Edge of the World

Each player gets a ball and stands on one sideline of an area. The objective is for everyone to pass their ball so that it stops as close to the other sideline as possible. If the ball goes past the sideline it falls off the edge of the world. Players gets points for getting their ball within one yard (distance depends upon ability) of the line without going over.  
 Progressions: Players play ball with laces, inside of foot, etc.

- Instead of having a line you could also have an end zone that the players try to get their ball to stop in

### 5<sup>th</sup> Activity (the game) Outta There

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 Progressions: Start with 1v1 and progress to 2v2.

- This game should be very fast paced
- As soon as the ball goes out of bounds throw another ball in immediately
- The coach is the master of the balls, look to see for players that aren't having a lot of success and distribute the ball straight to them
- Vary how balls are distributed into the playing area