



WILLIAMSON COUNTY SOCCER ASSOCIATION GENERAL COACHING GUIDELINES

We welcome your ideas on improving this information. Please contact us at doc@williamsoncountysoccer.com or 791-0590.

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN LEARN THE GAME

“THE GAME IS THE GREATEST TEACHER OF ALL” – This old soccer maxim advises coaches to plan practice activities that lets players learn on their own. Players learn much more by doing than by listening to a coach. The coach’s responsibility is to develop game-like practice activities that encourage many ball touches and personal decision-making.



CREATE A FUN-FILLED, ACTIVE PRACTICE ENVIRONMENT – When players have fun, they learn faster and are motivated to play (practice) on their own.

CONCENTRATE ON SKILLS MORE THAN TACTICS – Players who do not have skills have to concentrate so much on controlling the ball that they cannot look up to see the field. If your practices concentrate mostly on improving skills, most aspects of game tactics will take care of themselves.

PRE-SEASON TIPS

PURCHASES:

- First Aid kit for practices and games.
- Clipboard.
- Cones and disks for practice boundaries and goals.
- Scrimmage vest “pinnies” for practices.
- Three size-3 balls for those players who forget to bring their ball to practice.



COMMUNICATION – Create an e-mail list for easier communication with families.

HOST FAMILIES – Assign a different family to supply non-carbonated drinks for re-hydrating the players at half-time and after the game.

PARENT PARTICIPATION – Invite parents to attend practices and enlist their help. Giving them a role saves you time and encourages their support for the team. Examples: assistant coaches, coordinating drinks for games, team communication, post-season parties, and coordinating registration forms.

ASSISTANT COACH – Observe your parents as they participate during earlier practices. Select an assistant who is an encourager, who agrees with your coaching philosophy, and who does not focus too much on their own child.



PRACTICE RULES FOR PLAYERS

BRING – A properly inflated ball, shin guards, soccer shoes and water supply.

NO JEWELRY – This includes earrings. This prevents snagging and is not allowed at games.

BE ON TIME.

BE QUIET WHEN THE COACH IS TALKING.

OBEY THE FIRST TIME.

DO NOT CARRY THE BALL DURING PRACTICE – This forces them to use their feet rather than their hands.

DO NOT SIT ON THE BALL – This warps it.

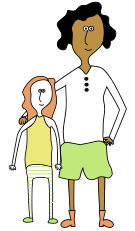
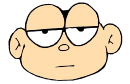


INTERACTION WITH PLAYERS

TRAINING HABITS – Teach positive training habits. To create a positive atmosphere, players need to listen and cooperate. Players that consistently cause distractions may need a “time out.”

PHYSICAL CONTACT – Be careful. An occasional side-to-side shoulder hug is OK.

ENCOURAGE – Your players want to please you and encouragement will motivate them.



PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

NO LINES – Plan activities with everyone constantly moving. Waiting in line for a turn wastes time that could be spent dribbling and passing.



NO LAPS – Players can get physical conditioning by running as they dribble, pass and shoot. A player running far without a ball is wasting practice time by not getting ball touches.



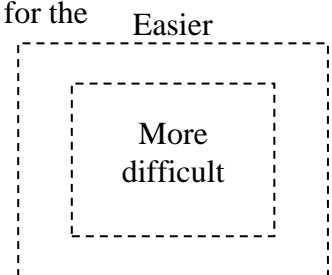
NO LECTURES – Be concise. Children learn soccer much better by doing than by listening. After twenty uninterrupted seconds of explanations, you have lost them.



ACTIVITIES SHOULD BE SIMPLE, EASY TO EXPLAIN, AND SIMILAR TO THE GAME – If activities are game-related, players will learn tactics through their experiences.

USE CONES OR DISKS FOR RECTANGULAR BOUNDARY GRIDS FOR MOST PRACTICE GAMES – This helps players to learn faster. “Paint the picture” by utilizing enough cones for the players to visualize the playing area.

For most games, the smaller the rectangle, the greater is the difficulty. The rectangle should be small enough for some difficulty, but large enough for success. Begin with a larger rectangle and make it smaller as skills improve. If the activity is too easy or too difficult, just quietly move the cones without stopping the action.



DON'T INSIST ON PERFECTION ... JUST ON LEARNING THE CONCEPT – Over time, their skills will catch up with their understanding.

CHANGE ACTIVITIES FREQUENTLY – The younger the players, the shorter the attention span.

DEVELOP SKILLS BY PROGRESSING FROM EASY ACTIVITIES TO MORE DIFFICULT ONES:

- **NO OPPOSITION** – Begin by working on the new skill with no opponent.
- **LIMITED OPPOSITION** – As players gain confidence, add a little resistance. Do this by changing the space, the amount of pressure or the time.
- **FULL OPPOSITION** – This is usually a type of scrimmage. Encourage a skill that you are emphasizing. For example, reward dribbling by giving two points for a goal resulting from dribbling around an opponent.

PRACTICES SHOULD HAVE A LOT OF BALL TOUCHES – The ball is the best teacher, so every player should get hundreds of ball touches at every practice. To ensure that this happens, many activities should involve one ball per player.

PRACTICES SHOULD BE FUN.



OTHER PRACTICE TIPS

MAKE PRACTICES EFFICIENT

- Lay out your practice grids before practice.
- Get players to respond quickly to instructions by giving them a time frame. For example, say “I’ll give you ten seconds to get inside the grid with your ball” and then start counting. It works.
- Help the players to think on their own by asking questions. For example:
 - Coach: “The game ‘Red Light, Green Light’ teaches you to dribble with the ball close to you. So, how do you want to dribble?”
 - Players: “Keep the ball close.”
- For those practice activities in which the ball frequently goes out of bounds, try these ideas to reduce “down time”:
 - Place spare balls around the grid so that when the ball goes out of bounds, players can retrieve the closest ball rather than chasing the one that went out.
 - Have kick-ins rather than throw-ins, which take more time. This works especially well for “keep-away.”
 - “New Ball” – when the ball goes out of bounds, the coach throws another one in.

USE SCRIMMAGES TO REINFORCE WHAT YOU WANT TO TEACH

- Award two points if a desired activity during that possession results in a goal.
- Or change possession if a requirement is not met before shooting.
- Possible requirements, depending on the age and maturity of the players:

Beat an opponent by dribbling	Complete a pass
Support pass or support throw-in	Give-and-go pass
Switch fields with a pass	Diagonal lead pass
One-touch shot	Header goal
Communicating with a teammate about his options	Stealing the ball while keeping control
Three-touch maximum	Every player must touch the ball

COACHING GAMES

BRING – A ball and extra shin guards to each game. Some players forget them.

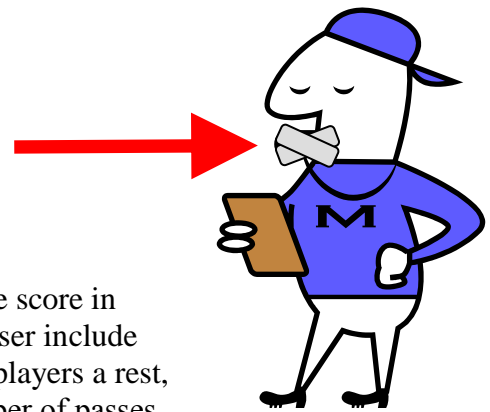
PARENT CONFERENCE JUST BEFORE THE FIRST GAME OF THE SEASON

- Ask your parents to limit their comments to cheering for the team only. They should not give any instructions to the players. For example, yelling “Kick the ball” or “Shoot” is not good since the emphasis at this age is on dribbling and a soft first touch.
- Explain that the reasoning is that, unlike most sports, soccer can easily be over-coached. If we “let the game teach itself,” players will think better on their own, be more creative, have more fun, and become better players overall.
- Tell the parents that when necessary, you will give them friendly reminders about this during the season. Ask them to remind you and each other as well.
- Explain that players should wear the complete uniform, including WCSA shorts, with the shirttail tucked in.
- Finally, remind parents of the importance of sportsmanship for players, referees, coaches and parents.



WARM-UP –Your team has a few minutes to warm up on the soccer field before the game. Use this time to get the players moving to increase their heart rate, loosen their muscles, and get comfortable with the ball. Avoid lines during warm ups.

BE QUIET DURING THE GAME – As much as possible, make coaching comments only before the game, during half-time, and after the game. Let your players learn for themselves by playing. The only exceptions are situations that younger players do not understand such as throw-ins, goal kicks, and kick-offs.



AVOID LOPSIDED SCORES – The WCSA policy is not to run up the score in games. If you are on the winning side, ways to keep the score closer include moving players to unfamiliar positions, giving the most talented players a rest, shooting only with the “off” foot, and requiring a minimum number of passes before shooting.

BE ENCOURAGING – This is a huge motivator. Any correction should be “sandwiched” by praises.