

Training Priorities for the U-6 player

Five- and six-year olds are too young to be involved in any structured, organized soccer program. At most, they should be involved in fun activities that encourage the children to explore their physical abilities, while also including a ball with which to play. Make sure these are activity based games that emphasize exploration and experimentation with the rolling, spinning, and bouncing qualities of the ball. The soccer ball should be considered a toy. There should be no activities where players wait in lines to perform a pre-determined movement or required action. Five- and six- year olds, although still young, are beginning to gain more control over their bodies.

At the same time, it is still new to them and they will require a lot of time and energy figuring out what their bodies can do, and how to use this developing coordination. Children at this age also love to use their imagination when they play. Keep this in mind when designing games. They enjoy playing on their terms, and as a by-product of their play, they will gain some limited comfort with the ball. Although they love to play, their ability to stay focused on any one thing is very limited. Keep your activities short and simple. Finally, even as they are steadily developing physical and mental abilities, they are still very young. Always treat children with care, patience and give plenty of encouragement. It can be helpful to include parents in the practice/play time so they can take ideas home with them to their backyards or parks. If children must be involved in these organized practice times, they should be having so much fun that when they go home, the soccer ball becomes one of their favorite toys.

■ DURATION OF PRACTICE; RATIO OF BALL TO CHILD AT PRACTICE

30 to 45 minutes is the best option for these ages. Most of the practice should be spent in ratios of one ball per child or one ball per two children.

■ GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING DURING PRACTICE

The children should be having fun with the ball. There should be periods of active playing where everyone is involved, and there should be ample opportunities for short breaks for water and for catching their breath. If there is more than one adult/coach, the children should be divided into smaller groups, with at least one adult per group. At these young ages, children work hard and tire quickly. Allow them to have "active rests," where they are not running but are trying to do something specific with the ball, often sitting or standing. Everyone should be occupied with something, even when resting. Keep the numbers from 1 v 1 to 3 v 3 and keep as many children actively involved with a ball as possible. Let them go to small goals with no goalkeepers. When possible, a size 3 soccer ball should be used.

Coaching Suggestions

Preseason-

- Contact your player's parents via phone or email. Have your practice schedule and location prepared for them.
- Set goals for yourself and your team.
- Organize the parents. Ask someone to arrange snacks for the Saturday "Matches"
- Prepare and plan your first couple practices

Practices-

Practice Plan: Objective, Activities, Progression, Coaching Pts, Communication Style, and Field Setup

- 1) State objective.
- 2) Choose approximately 4 activities (build up in pressure, coaching points)
- 3) Write down coaching points (visualize communication with players)
- 4) Organize field setup (pennies, cones, transition between activities, coaching position, etc.)

Please prepare written practice plans. Create and experiment with activities to help players learn from the game. Limit stoppages and keep the players moving. Each session address technique. If in doubt, warm-up with skills and let them play .

Saturday "Matches"-

During open play-

- Coaches stay on end lines with extra balls in hand to restart play.
- Ask parents to spread down the sidelines and toe poke the ball back in.
- Ask the parents to cheer for **ALL** players.
- Have an assistant parent keep the subs sitting together and rotating them in the game.
- During lopsided games have the weaker team add a player
- During restarts the coach looks to distribute the ball to the player that finds open space and to players that have not had many touches.
- Have snacks and drinks arranged for halftime and the end of the game.



Practice Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Age Group: _____ Theme: _____

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) <i>Identifiers</i></p> <p>All the players run around in a rectangle at random. The coach calls out the identifier or a group of players or individual players, who then become hunters. The hunters see who can tag the most players within one minute. The identifiers could be: color of the players' vests, hair color, T-shirt color, first letter of the players' names, etc.</p> <p>Progressions: Everyone has a ball.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity <i>Dog and Master</i></p> <p>Each player (master) dribbles with a ball (dog). The coach calls out various commands: Keep him on a short leash (dribble keeping the ball close), the dog runs away and then is caught by his master (kick ball and run after it, catching it before it stops rolling), run with the dog, walkers swap dogs, etc.</p> <p>Progressions: Introduce tall cones as trees that the masters have to keep their dogs away from or an evil dog catcher that kicks dogs out of the game. The players have to see a park ranger before coming back in.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity <i>Tigers in the Jungle</i></p> <p>Each child chooses to be a type of animal that lives in the jungle and makes the sound of that animal. Only tigers are not allowed. The tiger is going to kick the other animals' balls into the surrounding alligator infested swamp. When an animal gets their ball kicked away they have to do the alligator, go get their ball, and stand holding the ball over their head making their animal noise. Another animal can unfreeze them by dribbling the ball through the frozen animals legs.</p> <p>Progressions: Animals dribble using only left foot, outside of feet, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Swamp</p>
<p>4th Activity <i>Tunnel Soccer</i></p> <p>Each player has a ball. The coach has no ball but moves about the field with the players. From time to time the coach stops and spreads his legs to form a tunnel. The players dribble after him and try to shoot through the tunnel whenever he stops. After three shots or so the coach moves on again. Who can score the most points in one minute?</p> <p>Progressions: The coach specifies how the players must kick the ball (laces, inside of foot).</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) <i>Disney Game</i></p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.</p> <p>Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

Scrimmage 2v2 or 3v3



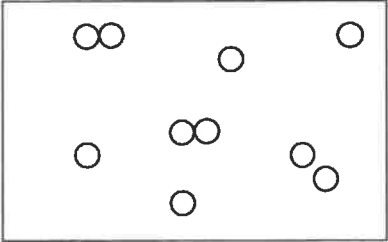
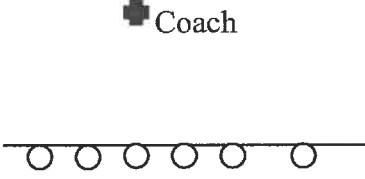
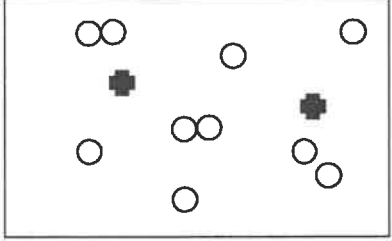
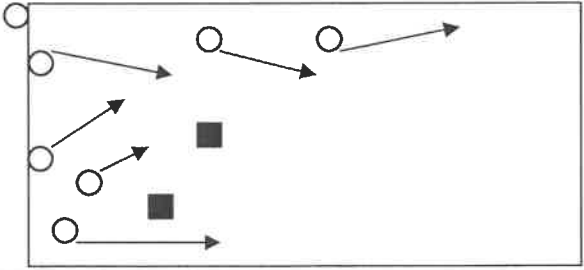
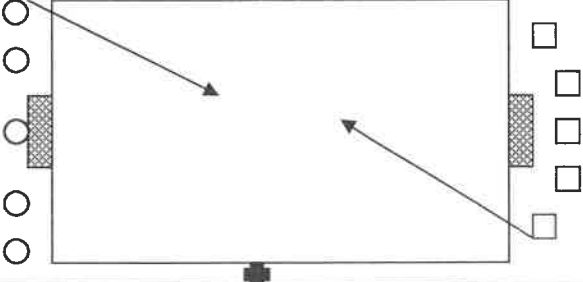
Practice Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Age Group: _____ Theme: _____

Activity

Diagram

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) <i>Greetings Game</i></p> <p>All the players run around randomly inside a rectangle. The coach calls out various types of greetings, which each players then has to carry out with others: shake hands, high fives (one hand), high fives (other hand), shoulder to shoulder, back to back, etc. Progressions: Add dribbling.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity <i>Red Light, Green Light</i></p> <p>All the players start on a designated line with the coach about 15 yards away. With his back to the players the coach yells green light and the players try to dribble to the coach. When the coach yells red light he waits a moment and then turns his back to face the players. Anyone who is not stopped moving has to go back to where the person farthest away from the coach is. Progressions: Add a ball. The coach can move around to make the game more challenging.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity <i>Ouch!</i></p> <p>Each player has a ball. The coach jogs around in a rectangle and the players try to kick their ball so that it hits the coach. The players get a point each time they hit the coach. The coach should yell "ouch" each time they are hit to make the game more exciting. Progressions: The coach can stop for three seconds or vary how fast they are moving depending on the level of the players. Specify how the players must strike the ball (laces, one foot, other foot)</p>	
<p>4th Activity <i>Frog Attack</i></p> <p>The game takes place in a rectangle; all the players start off on one side of the rectangle and try to get to the other side. Two players who are frogs must hop and try to tag the other players as they try to get to the other line. When a player is tagged they become a frog as well. Play until only two children are left. Those children become the frogs for the next game. Progressions: Add a ball (for the players, not the frogs)</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) <i>Disney Game</i></p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1. Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

Scrimmage 2v2 or 3v3



Practice Plan

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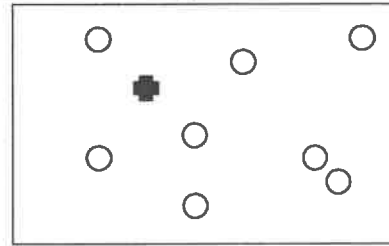
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Activity

Diagram

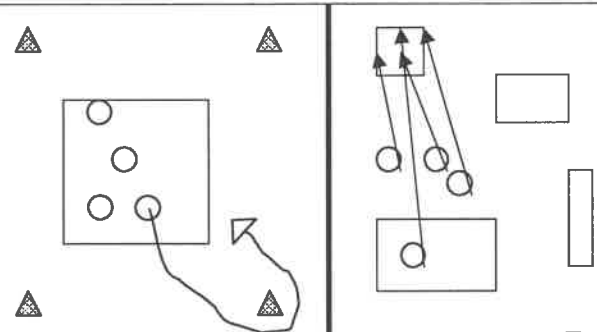
1st Activity (warm-up) *I Can, Can You?*

Coach asks players, "I can do something without the ball, can you?" At this point the coach does some sort of physical movement without the ball (skip, walk and clap hands through legs, etc). After the coach does several examples he should ask the players if they have any suggestions and allow them to demonstrate.
Progressions: Introduce the ball and have them move it with their hands, then have them play with the ball on the ground.



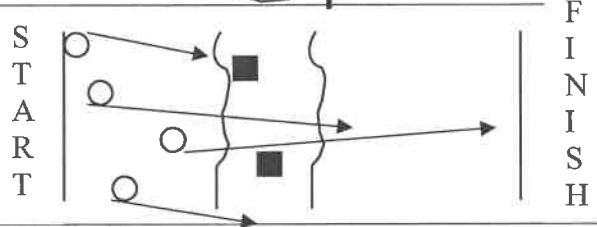
2nd Activity *Around the World*

Set out four or five cones on the perimeter of a large area. Ask the children for names of towns in their area. Assign each cone a town name. As the players dribble in the area the coach calls out a town name and the players must dribble around that cone and then return to dribbling in the area.
Progressions: This can be started without balls until the children get used to the game. Also, instead of having the cones there could be multiple small grids, each a different size. The children would have to dribble with speed when going from one town to the next.



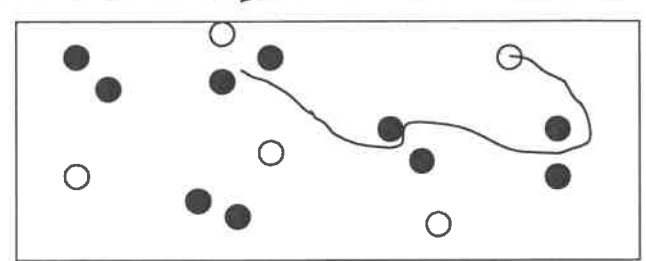
3rd Activity *Cross the Ohio River*

The players go boating (run) from one shore (a line) to another shore. In the river between there are piranhas (start off with two) that try to tag the boaters. If tagged, the boaters either become a piranha as well or the two can switch places.
Progressions: Add a ball for the boaters.



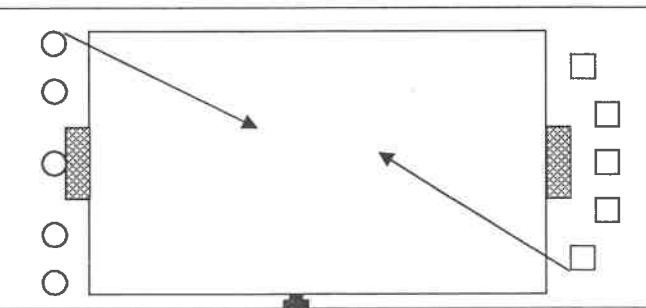
4th Activity *Goal Chase*

The coach sets up several small goals or gates (two cones a yard apart) inside a larger area. There should be at least one or two more gates than there are players. Have the players start running around; on the coaches signal the players try to run through as many gates as possible, keeping track of how many. Play for 30 seconds at a time.
Progressions: Each player has a ball.



5th Activity (the game) *Disney Game*

Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.
Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.





Practice Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

Age Group: _____ Theme: _____

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) <i>Ball Retrieval</i></p> <p>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.</p> <p>Progressions: Bring the ball back with two hands, one hand and one forehead, <u>right foot only</u>, etc. The coach should move around the area.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity <i>Traffic Officer</i></p> <p>Set up four small grids in a large area. Have a group of players running around in each grid. The coach (traffic officer) stands in the middle of the large area and directs the traffic (players) where to go. Have a different colored vest for each group of players.</p> <p>Progressions: Add a ball for each player. Have the different grids be different sizes. Sent multiple groups to the same grid. Dribble with outside of feet only.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity <i>Steal the Bacon</i></p> <p>Set up a square and have one player stand at each corner. A supply of balls should be in the middle of the square. On the coaches command the players must run to the middle and grab balls with their hands and take them back to their corner. After all the balls are gone from the middle the players can take balls from other corners (no one can defend their own goal)</p> <p>Progressions: Players must dribble the balls.</p>	
<p>4th Activity <i>Bumper Cars</i></p> <p>All players dribble a ball around in an area. Each player tries to kick his or her ball and have it hit another player's ball. If they hit someone else's ball they get a point.</p> <p>Progressions: Specify how players must kick the ball (laces, inside of foot).</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) <i>Disney Game</i></p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.</p> <p>Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 <u>games happening</u> at the same time.</p>	



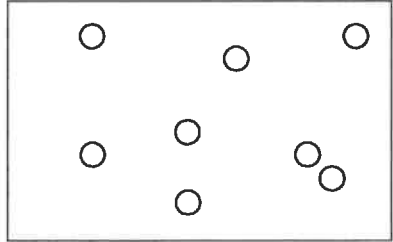
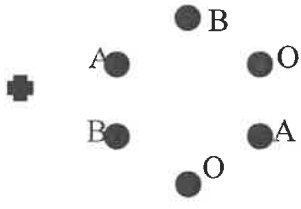
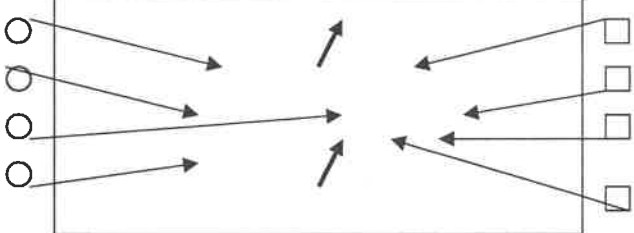
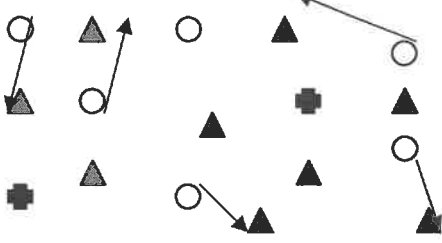
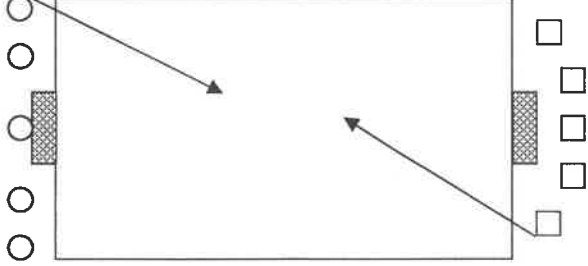
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Name: _____ Date: _____

Age Group: _____ Theme: _____

Activity

Diagram

<p>1st Activity (warm-up) <i>Body Part Dribble</i></p> <p>Each player has a ball in an area. The coach yells out a body part and the players must move the ball with that body part. Examples include: hands, elbows, shoulders, feet, buttocks, patella (see what they do, it should be the knee).</p> <p>Progressions: Introduce tick-tock (passing the ball between the inside of the left foot and the inside of the right foot back and forth) and tap dance (lightly touch the ball with the bottom of the right foot and then the bottom of the left foot, the ball should not move).</p>	
<p>2nd Activity <i>Fruit Salad</i></p> <p>The coach makes a circle with cones; each player needs to stand by a cone (they should not be any extra cones, just one for each player). The coach assigns a fruit name to each player (apple, orange, banana). The coach calls out a fruit name and any player who has that fruit name must run to a different cone. When the coach yells fruit salad every player must run to a different cone.</p> <p>Progressions: Add a ball for each player.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity <i>Cross the Bridge</i></p> <p>Divide the players into two groups, one on each endline of a field. Mark the centerline with a flag on each sideline, this is the bridge. On the coaches command the teams switch places, dribbling across the bridge. Which team can switch places the fastest?</p> <p>Progressions: Slide the cones towards the center of the field to make the bridge shorter. Add a bridge keeper to kick balls away.</p>	
<p>4th Activity <i>Bingo</i></p> <p>A number of tall cones are distributed throughout the field. Two coaches are replacers. Each player has a ball. The players dribble around and try to knock down as many cones as they can, yelling "bingo" as they do so. The coaches stand the cones back up immediately. Who can get the most bingos?</p> <p>Progressions: Must be three yards away to knock a cone over, use the laces to strike the ball.</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) <i>Disney Game</i></p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1.</p> <p>Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	



Practice Plan

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Age Group: _____ Theme: _____

Activity	Diagram
<p>1st Activity (warm-up) <i>Musical Balls</i></p> <p>Everyone has a ball and is dribbling. The coach should sing or play music. When the music stops everyone stops dribbling and goes to find another ball. After a while, the coach can take a ball away each time. Whoever does not get to a ball must go report to the coach. The player should have to do some sort of task (Tick tock, tap dance, something with the ball) before they can get back in. Comments: Tell them they will get their ball back at the end.</p>	
<p>2nd Activity <i>Dribbling Maze</i></p> <p>The coach sets up several small goals or gates (two cones a yard apart) inside a larger area. There should be at least one or two more gates than there are players. Have the players start running around; on the coaches signal the players try to run through as many gates as possible, keeping track of how many. Play for 30 seconds at a time. Progressions: Each player has a ball.</p>	
<p>3rd Activity <i>Torpedo</i></p> <p>Have the players form two teams and face each other. Everyone on one of the teams needs a ball. Two coaches should pass the ball between the two teams. The players with the balls try to pass their ball (torpedo) to hit the ball the coaches are passing. If the player misses the person standing across from them collects the ball and tries to hit the coaches ball on the next pass. Progressions: Kick with the laces, kick using a specific foot.</p>	
<p>4th Activity <i>Moving Targets</i></p> <p>Everyone has a ball and is dribbling in an area. Two coaches hold a practice vest between them, forming a goal. The players must try to kick their ball through the goal. However, the coaches should move around into open space so that the players have to dribble around and kick their ball through a moving target.</p>	
<p>5th Activity (the game) <i>Disney Game</i></p> <p>Two teams of equal numbers stand at either end of a 25 x 18 yard field of play. Give each player a Disney character name (make sure there's a matching character at the other end). Coach sends in a ball and calls out a Disney character and that character from each end goes onto the field and plays 1v1. Progressions: Try calling out different characters (Goofy from one side and Mickey from the other side). Call multiple names from each side so there are a couple of 1v1 games happening at the same time.</p>	

Scrimmage 2v2 or 3v3