

# Training Sessions for Middle School Teams (6th-8th Grade)

*Practical, ready-to-use sessions for boys and girls teams*

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## Session Design Principles for 11-14 Year Olds

### Developmental Considerations:

- **Physical:** Variable maturity levels, growth spurts, coordination challenges
- **Cognitive:** Developing abstract thinking, can handle more complex tactics
- **Social:** Peer relationships critical, self-conscious, seeking identity
- **Attention:** 60-75 minutes optimal, variety needed every 10-15 minutes

### Session Structure (75 minutes total):

- Warm-up: 10 minutes
- Technical Practice: 15-20 minutes
- Tactical Game: 20-25 minutes
- Small-Sided Game: 20-25 minutes
- Cool-down: 5 minutes

### Key Coaching Tips:

- Keep instructions brief (30-60 seconds)
  - Use demonstrations frequently
  - Create positive competition
  - Mix individual and team challenges
  - Allow player input and creativity
  - Balance structure with freedom
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## **WEEK 1 SESSIONS: Foundation & Culture Building**

### **Session 1.1: Team Culture & Ball Mastery**

**Theme:** Building team identity while developing comfort on ball

**Equipment:** 1 ball per player, cones for grid, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Getting to Know You Dribbling"

- 30x30 yard grid, every player with ball
- Dribble around, when coach calls out, find partner and share:
  - Name + favorite team
  - Position they want to play + why
  - One goal for this season
- Variations: Different surfaces of foot, speed changes, moves
- **Coaching Points:** Head up, close control, personality encouraged!

**Technical Practice (15 min):** Ball Mastery Circuit

- Set up 4 stations, groups rotate every 3 minutes
- **Station 1:** Toe taps & roll-overs (coordination)
- **Station 2:** Inside-outside touches (ball control)
- **Station 3:** Step-overs & scissors (moves)
- **Station 4:** Pull-backs & turns (changing direction)
- Players work at own pace, challenge themselves
- **Coaching Points:** Light touches, rhythm, balance, confidence

**Tactical Game (20 min):** "Numbers Game"

- 20x20 yard grid
- 6v6, each team has players numbered 1-6
- Normal game, BUT when coach calls a number, that player must touch ball within 5 seconds or other team gets point
- Progression: Call 2 numbers, both must touch before anyone else
- **Coaching Points:** Awareness, support, communication, finding space

### **Small-Sided Game (25 min): 5v5 to Small Goals**

- 40x30 yards, 2 small goals each end (no GK)
- Free play with minimal stoppages
- Observe: Who are your leaders? Who struggles? Who's confident?
- **Coaching Points:** Let them play! Minimal interruptions, just observe

### **Cool-Down (5 min): Team Circle**

- Static stretching
- Each player shares: One thing they liked about practice
- Set expectations for next practice
- Build team cheer/chant together

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Learn names and begin building relationships ✓ Assess current technical abilities ✓ Observe personalities and team dynamics ✓ Establish positive, fun culture

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### **Session 1.2: First Touch & Support Play**

**Theme:** Receiving the ball, supporting teammates

**Equipment:** 1 ball per 2 players, cones, small goals, pennies

#### **Warm-Up (10 min): "Partner Passing Relay"**

- Partners 10 yards apart
- On coach signal, pass back and forth 10 times
- Then both sprint to opposite cone and back
- First pair done wins point
- Variations: Different passing surfaces, distance changes
- **Coaching Points:** Firm passes, good first touch, quick movement

#### **Technical Practice (20 min): First Touch Mastery**

- **Setup:** 10x10 grids, groups of 4 (1 ball per group)
- **Part 1 (5 min):** Inside of foot control

- Player in middle, receives from 3 feeders
- First touch to side, pass back to different feeder
- Rotate middle player every minute
- **Coaching Points:** Open body shape, cushion the ball, look before receiving
- **Part 2 (5 min):** Outside of foot control
  - Same setup, outside of foot first touch
  - **Coaching Points:** Drop shoulder, turn with ball, protect ball
- **Part 3 (5 min):** Directional first touch
  - Feeder calls "left" or "right" before passing
  - Middle player must take first touch that direction
  - **Coaching Points:** Scan before ball arrives, decisive touch
- **Part 4 (5 min):** Pressure added
  - One feeder becomes passive defender
  - Can't tackle but makes it realistic
  - **Coaching Points:** Shield ball, body position, quick decision

#### **Tactical Game (20 min): "3-Team Possession"**

- 25x25 grid
- 3 teams of 4-5 players (different colors)
- Two teams possess, one team defends
- If defending team wins ball, they join possession with team that lost it
- Previous possession team now defends
- **Coaching Points:** Constant support angles, movement off ball, communication, "Show for me!"

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min): 6v6 with Target Players**

- 40x30 field
- Each team has a "target player" (different pinnie) at each sideline
- Target players play for their team but stay on sideline
- Provides wide support option
- **Coaching Points:** Use wide players, switch play, create passing angles

- **Progression:** Target players can come in if ball is played to them

**Cool-Down (5 min):** Partner Stretching

- Each pair stretches together
- Quick pair share: "One way I supported my teammates today"

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Improve first touch quality under varying pressure ✓ Understanding supporting positions ✓ Decision-making: When to play forward vs. keep possession ✓ Communication habits starting to form

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### **Session 1.3: Passing Combinations & Movement**

**Theme:** Playing 1-2 combinations, movement off ball

**Equipment:** Cones, balls (1 per 3 players), small goals, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Passing Gates"

- 30x30 grid with 8-10 "gates" (2 cones 2 yards apart)
- Partners have 1 ball
- Pass through gates to score points
- Can't use same gate twice in a row
- **Coaching Points:** Weight of pass, communication, movement after pass

**Technical Practice (20 min):** 1-2 Combination Patterns

- **Setup:** Groups of 3, one ball, 10x10 area
- **Pattern 1 (5 min):** Basic Wall Pass
  - A passes to B, runs forward
  - B one-touch back to A
  - A passes to C, repeat
  - **Coaching Points:** Timing of run, firm wall pass, quality final ball
- **Pattern 2 (5 min):** Overlapping Run
  - A passes to B
  - A overlaps around B
  - B passes into space for A

- A dribbles to next cone
- **Coaching Points:** Communication ("Go!"), timing, pass into space
- **Pattern 3 (5 min):** Third Man Run
  - A passes to B
  - C makes run behind B
  - B one-touch to C
  - **Coaching Points:** C's timing, B checks to ball, disguised pass
- **Pattern 4 (5 min):** Under Pressure
  - Add passive defender to any pattern
  - Execute combinations with pressure
  - **Coaching Points:** Quick thinking, protect ball, use partner

#### **Tactical Game (20 min):** "End Zone Game"

- 40x25 field with 5-yard end zones
- 7v7, score by passing to teammate in end zone
- Receiving player must control in end zone
- Player who receives can't score next time
- **Coaching Points:** Looking for runner, timing of runs, weight of pass, creating space
- **Progression:** Only 1-2 combinations can score (forces pattern use)

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min):** 6v6 to Goals

- 50x35 field, small goals (or full goals with GKs)
- Free play, recognize combinations happening naturally
- Freeze 2-3 times when good combinations occur: "See what they just did?"
- **Coaching Points:** Celebrate successful combinations, encourage creativity

#### **Cool-Down (5 min):** "Combo Challenge"

- Groups of 3, demonstrate their favorite combination from practice
- Vote on coolest one (fun ending!)

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Execute basic passing combinations ✓ Understand movement off ball ✓ Timing of runs  
✓ Creative problem-solving

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## **Session 1.4: Defending Basics & Transition**

**Theme:** Individual defending principles, winning ball back

**Equipment:** Cones, balls, pennies, small goals

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Shadow Defending"

- Partners, one ball
- Attacker dribbles slowly, defender shadows 2 yards away
- Focus on defensive footwork: side-on stance, small steps
- Switch roles every 2 minutes
- **Progression:** Attacker can change speed, defender must adjust
- **Coaching Points:** Knees bent, on toes, see ball and player

**Technical Practice (15 min):** 1v1 Defending Progressions

- **Setup:** 10x10 grids, pairs with 1 ball
- **Part 1 (5 min):** Delay
  - Attacker tries to dribble through grid
  - Defender focuses on slowing down (not winning ball)
  - **Coaching Points:** Stay on feet, patient, force away from goal
- **Part 2 (5 min):** Channel
  - Same setup but defender tries to force attacker one direction
  - Mark with cones where to force toward
  - **Coaching Points:** Body angle, show inside/outside, be strong
- **Part 3 (5 min):** Win Ball
  - Now defender tries to win ball
  - When to tackle vs. when to delay?
  - **Coaching Points:** Wait for heavy touch, stay balanced, timing

**Tactical Game (25 min):** "Win-It-Back Game"

- 35x25 grid, 5v5 + GKs
- Normal game BUT: When team loses ball, they have 5 seconds to win it back
- If they win it back within 5 seconds = 2 points if they score
- If they don't win it back = normal game (1 point if score)
- **Coaching Points:** Immediate pressure on ball, surrounding ball, working together, reading when ball is loose

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min):** 6v6 Transition Focus

- 40x30 field, goals at each end
- Play normal game
- Coach stops play when ball turns over
- Ask: "Who should press?" "Who should cover?" "Where should we be?"
- Restart quickly
- **Coaching Points:** Defensive organization, who presses, supporting defenders, recovery runs

#### **Cool-Down (5 min):** Defending discussion

- Circle up
- "What makes good defending?"
- Players share ideas
- Coach reinforces key principles

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Understanding individual defending ✓ Delay, channel, win ball ✓ Immediate pressure after losing ball ✓ Team defending concepts introduced

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## **WEEK 2 SESSIONS: Building Tactical Understanding**

### **Session 2.1: Width & Penetration**

**Theme:** Creating and using width to penetrate

**Equipment:** Full field, cones, balls, goals, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Switching Play"



- 30x20 grid, two groups on each sideline
- Ball starts with one side, they must complete 5 passes
- Then switch ball to other side
- Other side must complete 5 passes and switch back
- **Coaching Points:** Quick switches, accuracy, communication

#### **Technical Practice (20 min): Width Patterns**

- **Setup:** Half field, full width
- **Pattern 1 (7 min):** Outside Back to Winger
  - Outside back dribbles up line
  - Winger checks away then back to ball
  - Receives, drives at defender
  - **Coaching Points:** Winger's movement creates space, timing, receive on back foot
- **Pattern 2 (7 min):** Switch of Play
  - Center mid receives centrally
  - Switches ball to opposite winger
  - **Coaching Points:** Open body shape, weight of pass, winger position
- **Pattern 3 (6 min):** Overlap
  - Winger receives ball
  - Outside back overlaps
  - Winger plays ball into space for overlap
  - **Coaching Points:** Communication, timing, quality of through ball

#### **Tactical Game (20 min): "Wide Zones Game"**

- 50x40 field, divided into 3 vertical zones (left, center, right)
- 8v8, must have at least 1 player in each zone at all times
- Score double points if goal comes from wide area cross/pass
- **Coaching Points:** Stretching defense with width, patience to use width, when to penetrate centrally vs. wide

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min): 7v7 with Wide Goals**

- Full field width, goals at each end but 10 yards wide
- Can score anywhere in wide goal
- Encourages using full width
- **Coaching Points:** Stretching defense, switching play when congested, overlaps

**Cool-Down (5 min):** Width discussion

- "Why is width important?"
- "When did we use it well today?"

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Understanding importance of width ✓ Creating and exploiting space ✓ Combination play on flanks ✓ Switching point of attack

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## **Session 2.2: Pressing as a Unit**

**Theme:** Team defending, pressing together

**Equipment:** Cones for grids, balls, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Numbers Pressing"

- 25x25 grid, 6v4 possession
- Defending four try to win ball
- When defender wins it, call out number and that attacker becomes defender
- **Coaching Points:** Pressure, cover, communication, work together

**Technical Practice (20 min):** Pressing Patterns

- **Setup:** 30x20 grid, 5v3 scenarios
- **Part 1 (7 min):** First Defender Pressure
  - When attacker receives, nearest defender presses
  - Focus just on first defender's approach
  - **Coaching Points:** Speed of approach, body angle, arc run to ball
- **Part 2 (7 min):** Second Defender Cover
  - Add second defender covering behind
  - 2-3 yards behind first defender, inside position

- **Coaching Points:** Cover passing lanes, provide security, communication
- **Part 3 (6 min):** Third Defender Balance
  - Add third defender balancing the press
  - Prevent switches and through balls
  - **Coaching Points:** Reading play, adjusting position, team shape

#### **Tactical Game (20 min): "Pressing Zones"**

- Half field, 8v8
- Divide field into 3 zones (attacking, middle, defending)
- Defending team gets 3 points if they win ball in attacking zone
- 2 points in middle zone, 1 point in defending zone
- Regular points for goals
- **Coaching Points:** Trigger to press (bad touch, back pass), hunt in packs, squeeze space, prevent forward progress

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min): 7v7 with Offside Line**

- 60x40 field
- Mark offside line 20 yards from each goal
- Creates higher press opportunity
- **Coaching Points:** Stepping up together, compressing space, winning ball high

#### **Cool-Down (5 min):** Pressing review

- Draw on whiteboard/ground: Where should we press?
- Players contribute ideas

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Understanding pressing principles ✓ First, second, third defender roles ✓ Working as defensive unit ✓ Triggers for pressing

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### **Session 2.3: Possession & Control**

**Theme:** Keeping the ball, playing out of pressure

**Equipment:** Cones, balls, pennies

### **Warm-Up (10 min): "Continuous Possession"**

- 30x30 grid
- 6v3, attackers keep ball from 3 defenders
- When attackers complete 10 passes, three defenders do 5 push-ups
- When defenders win ball, rotate
- **Coaching Points:** Movement, support angles, scanning

### **Technical Practice (20 min): Rondo Progressions**

- **Setup:** 15x15 grids
- **Rondo 1 (5 min): 4v1**
  - Four on outside, one in middle
  - Keep away from middle player
  - **Coaching Points:** First touch away from pressure, quick passing, body shape
- **Rondo 2 (5 min): 5v2**
  - Five outside, two middle
  - Pass through middle players or around
  - **Coaching Points:** Creating passing lanes, splitting defenders, weight of pass
- **Rondo 3 (5 min): 6v3 with Target**
  - Six pass around three defenders
  - Play to target player in middle for 3 points
  - **Coaching Points:** Patience, when to play forward, recognition of opportunity
- **Rondo 4 (5 min): 7v3 with Zone**
  - 20x20 grid divided in two halves
  - Start in one half (3v3), others wait in other half
  - When ready, play ball to other half (becomes new 3v3)
  - **Coaching Points:** Switch play to relieve pressure, control tempo

### **Tactical Game (20 min): "Possession with End Zones"**

- 50x30 field with 5-yard end zones each end
- 8v8, teams get 1 point for 6 consecutive passes

- 3 points for dribbling into opponent's end zone
- **Coaching Points:** Keeping possession under pressure, patient build-up, when to penetrate

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min):** 6v6 with Neutrals

- 40x35 field, 6v6 + 2 neutral players (always play with team in possession)
- Creates 8v6 scenarios, easier possession
- Score in small goals
- **Coaching Points:** Using extra player, maintaining possession, building attacks

#### **Cool-Down (5 min):** Possession principles

- "What helped us keep the ball today?"
- Players identify keys: movement, communication, support

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Possession under pressure ✓ Creating passing angles ✓ Patient build-up ✓ Recognition of when to penetrate

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### **Session 2.4: Attacking Transitions**

**Theme:** Exploiting space after winning ball

**Equipment:** Full field, balls, cones, goals, pennies

#### **Warm-Up (10 min):** "Quick Attack"

- Half field
- Coach starts with ball at midfield
- Plays ball to either team (4v4)
- That team attacks quickly, other team defends
- **Coaching Points:** Immediate forward thinking, speed of play, decision-making

#### **Technical Practice (15 min):** Counter-Attack Patterns

- **Setup:** 40x30 field, goals at each end
- **Pattern 1 (5 min):** Direct Counter
  - Start with GK/defender

- Play long ball to forward
- Midfielders sprint to support
- Finish quickly
- **Coaching Points:** Quality of long ball, forward's hold-up play, supporting runs
- **Pattern 2 (5 min):** Speed Dribble Counter
  - Win ball in midfield
  - Dribble at speed into space
  - Support players join
  - **Coaching Points:** Driving at speed, heads up, decision: dribble or pass?
- **Pattern 3 (5 min):** Quick Combination Counter
  - Win ball, quick 1-2 combination
  - Play in behind defense
  - **Coaching Points:** Speed of combinations, penetrating passes, forward runs

#### **Tactical Game (25 min):** "Transition Game"

- 50x40 field, 7v7 with GKs
- Team scores = possession restarts from GK
- BUT: Defending team gets 10 seconds to win it back for "golden goal" (worth 2)
- After 10 seconds, whistle and reset
- **Coaching Points:** Immediate transition thinking, reading turnover moments, explosive attacking, quick decisions (shoot or pass?)

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min):** 6v6 with Counter-Attack Zones

- 50x35 field
- Central zone (15 yards wide)
- If team wins ball in central zone and scores within 10 seconds = 3 points
- Normal goals = 1 point
- **Coaching Points:** Explode forward on turnover, players ahead of ball sprint, supporting players join attack

#### **Cool-Down (5 min):** Transition discussion

- "When did we counter-attack well?"
- "What makes a good counter-attack?"

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Recognizing transition moments ✓ Speed of play after winning ball ✓ Supporting counter-attacks ✓ Quick decision-making

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## WEEK 3 SESSIONS: Position-Specific Development

### Session 3.1: Defenders Workshop

**Theme:** Center back and outside back development

**Equipment:** Full field, balls, cones, goals, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Defensive Footwork"

- Cone courses with defensive movement patterns
- Backpedaling, side shuffling, turning, sprinting
- With ball: Jockeying attacker
- **Coaching Points:** Low center of gravity, quick feet, balance

**Technical Practice - Center Backs (20 min):** *Split team by position - this is CB group*

- **Part 1 (7 min):** Heading Progression
  - Partner service
  - Defensive headers (power, distance, direction)
  - Practice attacking crosses
  - **Coaching Points:** Eyes open, forehead contact, attack the ball, body shape
- **Part 2 (7 min):** Passing Under Pressure
  - Two CBs build from back
  - 2 forwards press
  - Must complete 10 passes then play to target
  - **Coaching Points:** Body position (open hips), weight of pass, communication, when to go long
- **Part 3 (6 min):** 1v1 Defending Scenarios
  - Attacker runs at goal

- CB must delay, channel, win ball if possible
- **Coaching Points:** Patience, body angle, don't dive in, force away from goal

**Technical Practice - Outside Backs (20 min):** *This is OB group, working simultaneously*

- **Part 1 (7 min):** Overlapping Runs
  - Winger has ball
  - OB times overlap run
  - Practice timing and communication
  - **Coaching Points:** "Go!", sprint in behind, get goal-side of winger
- **Part 2 (7 min):** Defending 1v1 Wide
  - Winger attacks OB down line
  - OB must show inside, prevent cross
  - **Coaching Points:** Force inside to help, protect goal-side, tackle or delay?
- **Part 3 (6 min):** Recovery Runs
  - OB pushed high, ball turns over
  - Sprint back to goal side
  - Track runner or cover space?
  - **Coaching Points:** Sprint angles, recognize danger, communicate with CBs

**Tactical Game (20 min):** "Defensive Shape Game"

- 8v8, full field
- Coach awards bonus points for:
  - Good defensive headers
  - Successful building from back (5+ passes from GK)
  - Stopped overlaps
  - Recovery runs
- **Coaching Points:** Defenders recognize game situations from their training, apply techniques learned

**Small-Sided Game (15 min):** Backs vs. Forwards/Mids

- Defenders plus GK vs. rest of team
- Defenders build from back, must complete 8 passes before going to goal



- Attacking players try to win and score quickly
- **Coaching Points:** Defenders work on all skills practiced, game pressure

**Cool-Down (5 min):** Defender debrief

- "What was hardest today?"
- "What improved?"

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Position-specific skills for defenders ✓ CB vs. OB different responsibilities ✓ Defending and attacking from back ✓ Communication and partnerships

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### **Session 3.2: Midfielders Workshop**

**Theme:** Central and wide midfielder development

**Equipment:** Full field, balls, cones, goals, pennies

**Warm-Up (10 min):** "Midfielder Movement"

- 30x30 grid
- Midfielders work on:
  - Checking away and back to ball
  - Turning on half-turn
  - Playing on the move
- **Coaching Points:** Create space with movement, scanning, readiness

**Technical Practice - Central Mids (20 min):** *CM group*

- **Part 1 (7 min):** Receiving on Half-Turn
  - Server plays to CM who has defender behind
  - CM must receive and turn
  - Play forward to target or retain possession
  - **Coaching Points:** Check shoulder, open body shape, protect ball, quick turn
- **Part 2 (7 min):** Switching Play
  - CM in middle, servers on both sides
  - Receive from one side, switch to other side

- Add pressure progressively
- **Coaching Points:** First touch across body, weight of switch, disguise
- **Part 3 (6 min):** Box-to-Box Runs
  - Start at defensive third
  - Receive, drive forward
  - Play forward pass or shoot
  - Sprint back and repeat
  - **Coaching Points:** Timing of runs, endurance, quality at speed

### **Technical Practice - Wide Mids/Wingers (20 min):** *Wing group*

- **Part 1 (7 min):** 1v1 Attacking Moves
  - Winger receives, defender closes
  - Beat defender with move and cross or shoot
  - **Coaching Points:** Variety of moves, change of pace, end product
- **Part 2 (7 min):** Crossing Technique
  - Different crossing scenarios:
    - From standstill
    - At speed
    - Cut-back
    - Early cross
  - **Coaching Points:** Quality of delivery, picking out teammates, different types
- **Part 3 (6 min):** Tracking Back
  - Winger attacks, ball turns over
  - Must recover and defend OB
  - **Coaching Points:** Work rate, defensive responsibility, team defending

### **Tactical Game (20 min):** "Midfield Battle"

- 30x30 central zone, 6v6 midfield only
- Score by playing ball to targets at each end
- Bonus: Switches of play = double points

- Must complete 4 passes before playing to target
- **Coaching Points:** Midfield control, switching play, combining, working hard

#### **Small-Sided Game (15 min): 7v7 - Midfield Emphasis**

- Full field
- Coach freezes game when midfielders do something excellent
- Highlight: good movement, turns, switches, runs
- **Coaching Points:** Recognition of midfielder roles in game

#### **Cool-Down (5 min): Midfielder discussion**

- "What makes a good midfielder?"
- Box-to-box concept, engines of team

**Session Objectives:** ✓ CM vs. winger different skills ✓ Technical development for each role ✓ Work rate and transitions ✓ Creating and using space

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### **Session 3.3: Forwards Workshop**

**Theme:** Striker and attacking player development

**Equipment:** Full field, balls, cones, goals, pennies

#### **Warm-Up (10 min): "Finishing Circuit"**

- 4 stations, quick finish at each
- Right foot, left foot, header, volley
- Rotate through stations
- **Coaching Points:** Technique first, power second, different finishing types

#### **Technical Practice (20 min): Forward Play Progressions**

- **Part 1 (5 min): Movement to Receive**
  - Forward checks away from defender
  - Spins and receives to feet or in behind
  - Finish on goal
  - **Coaching Points:** Creating separation, timing, check shoulder, explosive sprint

- **Part 2 (5 min): Hold-Up Play**
  - Forward receives back to goal
  - Midfielder plays to feet
  - Forward holds off defender, lays off, spins
  - Midfielder shoots or plays forward back in
  - **Coaching Points:** Strong on ball, feel defender, lay off accuracy, quick spin
- **Part 3 (5 min): Running Channels**
  - Forward starts central
  - Ball played wide
  - Forward makes run into box (near post, far post, penalty spot)
  - Finish cross
  - **Coaching Points:** Variety of runs, timing, attacking ball, body shape to finish
- **Part 4 (5 min): Combination Play**
  - Two forwards combine with midfielder
  - Various patterns: 1-2s, overlap, cutback
  - Finish on goal
  - **Coaching Points:** Movement creates space, timing, unselfish play

#### **Tactical Game (20 min): "Forward Focus Game"**

- 8v8, full field with goals
- Forwards must stay in attacking third until ball enters that third
- Teaches forwards to time runs and stay high
- Bonus points for:
  - Good hold-up play leading to goal
  - Off-ball forward movement that creates goal
  - Combination between forwards
- **Coaching Points:** Patience, timing, movement off ball, partnership

#### **Small-Sided Game (20 min): 5v5 - High Pressure**

- 30x25 field, small goals

- Forwards must press aggressively
- Lots of goal-scoring opportunities
- **Coaching Points:** Finishing under pressure, quick decisions, team attacking

**Cool-Down (5 min):** Forward mentality discussion

- "What separates good scorers from great scorers?"
- Confidence, positioning, persistence

**Session Objectives:** ✓ Forward-specific movements ✓ Various types of finishes ✓ Hold-up and combination play ✓ Attacking mentality and positioning

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### **Session 3.4: Goalkeepers + Integrated Team Session**

**Theme:** Goalkeeper training + full team integration

**Equipment:** Full goals, balls, cones, GK gloves, pennies

**GK Specific Training (30 min) - *While team does technical work***

- **Part 1 (10 min):** Shot-Stopping
  - Various shots: Low, high, near post, far post
  - Reaction saves, power saves
  - **Coaching Points:** Set position, footwork, hands strong, catch or parry decision
- **Part 2 (10 min):** Distribution
  - Rolling, throwing, goal kicks, punts
  - Accuracy and distance
  - Practice finding teammates under pressure
  - **Coaching Points:** Technique, vision, when to go short/long, quick release
- **Part 3 (10 min):** 1v1 Situations
  - Striker breaks through, GK comes out
  - Timing, angle, making self big
  - **Coaching Points:** When to come, when to stay, body position, dive timing

**Team Technical Work (while GKs train) (30 min):**

- Review any skills needing work from previous sessions
- Small-sided technical games
- Individual skill development
- **Rotate groups so GKs eventually join**

### **Integrated Tactical Game (30 min): "Complete Team Game"**

- 10v10 or 11v11, full field
- Real game with all positions
- Focus on team shape, transitions, all principles covered
- **Coaching Points:**
  - Defenders building from GK
  - Midfield connecting play
  - Forwards creating chances
  - GKs organizing defense, distributing well
  - Everyone working in system

### **Cool-Down (5 min): Full team circle**

- Recognize each position group's contributions
- "How did we work together as a team?"
- Preview next week's focus

**Session Objectives:** ✓ GK-specific development ✓ Integration of all positions ✓ Full team understanding ✓ Recognition of how positions connect

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## **GENDER-SPECIFIC COACHING CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Coaching the Girls Team**

#### **Key Adjustments:**

- **Communication:** Often more receptive to explanation of "why"
- **Team Dynamics:** Relationship-focused, address conflicts quickly
- **Competition:** Frame as personal bests and team goals, less direct comparison

- **Confidence:** May need more verbal reinforcement, especially in physical challenges
- **Physical:** Wide variation in maturation, adapt for physical differences
- **Social:** Friendships very important, use partner/small group work

#### **Strengths to Leverage:**

- Often coachable and focused
- Strong tactical understanding capacity
- Team unity and support
- Technical precision development

#### **Coaching the Boys Team**

##### **Key Adjustments:**

- **Communication:** Brief, direct, action-oriented
- **Team Dynamics:** Hierarchy-conscious, channel competitive energy positively
- **Competition:** Embrace it but teach respect and sportsmanship
- **Confidence:** May be overconfident, teach humility through challenges
- **Physical:** More aggressive play, teach control and safety
- **Social:** Use humor and banter, but set boundaries

#### **Strengths to Leverage:**

- Physical intensity and drive
- Risk-taking in positive ways (trying skills)
- Competitive nature for improvement
- Energy and enthusiasm

**Both Teams:** Build culture of respect, effort, and growth mindset. Treat each individual as unique, these are tendencies not rules.

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# **12-WEEK PROGRESSIVE CURRICULUM**

## **Weeks 1-3: Foundation (Above sessions + 5 more)**

- Ball mastery and first touch
- Basic passing and receiving
- Individual defending
- Small-sided games
- Team culture building

## **Weeks 4-6: Tactical Understanding**

- Width and penetration
- Pressing as a unit
- Possession principles
- Attacking transitions
- Defensive transitions

## **Weeks 7-9: Position Specialization**

- Defender development
- Midfielder development
- Forward development
- Goalkeeper integration
- Team shape and organization

## **Weeks 10-12: Game Situations & Refinement**

- Set pieces
  - Match preparation
  - Game management
  - Advanced combinations
  - Peak performance
-



## **SESSION VARIATIONS FOR DIFFERENT ABILITY LEVELS**

### **For Advanced Players:**

- Tighter spaces
- More defenders/pressure
- Time limits
- Technical restrictions (two-touch, weak foot)
- Tactical complexity

### **For Developing Players:**

- Bigger spaces
- Fewer defenders
- More time
- Free play options
- Simplified tactical focus

### **Mixed-Ability Solutions:**

- Zones with different rules
  - Bonus points for certain players
  - Rotating difficulty positions
  - Peer teaching opportunities
  - Individual challenges within team game
- 

## **EQUIPMENT NEEDS (Minimal Setup)**

### **Essential:**

- 15-20 balls (proper size)
- 20-30 cones/discs
- 2 sets pinnies (3 colors)

- 4-6 small goals (can use cones)
- Goal nets (if available)

#### **Nice to Have:**

- Agility ladder
- Speed hurdles
- Pop-up goals
- Coaching board
- Whistle

#### **Free/Low-Cost Alternatives:**

- Use cones for goals
- Make your own pinnies (colored shirts)
- Use backpacks for markers
- Draw on ground when possible

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### **PRACTICE PLANNING TEMPLATE**

**SESSION TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **THEME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE**  
**GROUP:** 6th-8th Grade

**Session Objectives** (2-3 specific, measurable goals):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

#### **WARM-UP** (10 min)

- Activity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
- Coaching Points: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **TECHNICAL PRACTICE** (15-20 min)

- Activity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
- Progressions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Coaching Points: \_\_\_\_\_

### **TACTICAL GAME (20-25 min)**

- Activity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
- Rules: \_\_\_\_\_
- Progressions: \_\_\_\_\_
- Coaching Points: \_\_\_\_\_

### **SMALL-SIDED GAME (20-25 min)**

- Activity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
- Emphasis: \_\_\_\_\_
- Coaching Points: \_\_\_\_\_

### **COOL-DOWN (5 min)**

- Activity: \_\_\_\_\_
- Reflection Question: \_\_\_\_\_

**EQUIPMENT NEEDED:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **POST-PRACTICE NOTES:**

- What worked well:
  - What needs adjustment:
  - Individual player notes:
  - Next session focus:
-

## **QUICK SESSION IDEAS (When You Need Something Fast)**

### **15-Minute Technical Focus**

1. Dynamic warm-up with ball (3 min)
2. Technical circuit - 4 stations (8 min)
3. Competition using that technique (4 min)

### **30-Minute Tactical Session**

1. Warm-up game related to theme (5 min)
2. Freeze game teaching moments (15 min)
3. Free play applying concept (10 min)

### **60-Minute Complete Session**

1. Warm-up (10 min)
2. Technical focus (15 min)
3. Tactical game (20 min)
4. Small-sided game (15 min)

### **90-Minute Extended Session**

- Use full session plans above
  - Add extra small-sided game time
  - Include more position-specific work
  - Add fitness integration
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## **WEATHER ADAPTATIONS**

### **Rain/Wet Field**

- Smaller spaces (less running)
- More technical focus (ball control in rain)
- Shorter sprints

- Safety first - cancel if dangerous

## **Heat**

- Frequent water breaks (every 15 min)
- Shorter activity segments
- More shade time
- Technical over physical
- Watch for heat exhaustion signs

## **Cold**

- Longer warm-up
- Keep moving constantly
- Layers allowed
- Shorter technical activities (cold hands)
- More running-based games

## **Indoor (Gym/Small Space)**

- Futsal-style (smaller ball if available)
- Technical focus (tight space benefits)
- Quick feet and turns
- Lower ceiling = low-driven passes
- Safety: no slide tackles

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## **MANAGING COMMON CHALLENGES**

### **Late Arrivals**

- Have early arrivals start warm-up activity
- Can join activity in progress
- Partner with on-time players

### **Low Attendance**

- Smaller games (more touches)
- Position-specific work
- Technical focus
- Opportunity for individual attention

### **Mixed Ability Wide Gap**

- Create multiple grids/games
- Different success criteria
- Peer teaching partnerships
- Position-specific groupings

### **Behavioral Issues**

- Clear expectations from day one
- Positive reinforcement emphasis
- Private corrections when possible
- Consistent consequences
- Keep them moving (less idle time)

### **Lost Focus/Energy**

- Change activity
  - Add competition element
  - Make it fun
  - Break into smaller groups
  - End with favorite game
-

## PARENT COMMUNICATION TEMPLATES

### Pre-Season Email

"Welcome to [Team Name]! We're excited for a great season. Our focus is on player development, teamwork, and love of the game. Here's what to expect..."

#### Include:

- Practice schedule
- Game schedule
- What to bring
- Your coaching philosophy (brief)
- Communication method
- Volunteer needs

### Weekly Update

"This week we focused on [theme]. Players are improving in [specific skills]. Next week we'll work on [preview]. Reminder: [upcoming event]."

### Playing Time Philosophy

"Every player will play. Playing time is earned through: effort in practice, attitude, attendance, and improvement. My goal is to develop all players while competing to win."

### Handling Concerns

"I welcome questions and concerns. Please email me or request a brief meeting after practice. I cannot discuss playing time or strategy during games. Let's work together for [player name]'s development."

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## SEASON PLANNING CALENDAR

### Pre-Season (Weeks -2 to 0)

- Parent meeting
- Team selection/formation
- Equipment check
- First practice focus: culture and assessment

### **Early Season (Weeks 1-3)**

- Establish team culture
- Technical foundation
- Basic tactics
- Team bonding

### **Mid-Season (Weeks 4-8)**

- Tactical development
- Position specialization
- Game model implementation
- Individual development focus

### **Late Season (Weeks 9-12)**

- Refinement and mastery
- Peak performance preparation
- Advanced tactics
- Competition preparation

### **Post-Season (Week 13+)**

- Individual meetings
- Season review
- Recognition and celebration
- Off-season development plans

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## **YOUR FIRST WEEK CHECKLIST**

**Before First Practice:** ☐ Field secured and confirmed ☐ Equipment gathered ☐ Emergency contact info collected ☐ Session 1.1 planned in detail ☐ Parent contact established ☐ First aid kit prepared ☐  
Roster/attendance sheet ready



**First Practice Goals:** ☐ Learn all names ☐ Establish culture and expectations ☐ Assess technical abilities ☐ Observe personalities ☐ Make it fun! ☐ End with excitement for next practice

**After First Practice:** ☐ Write notes on each player ☐ Reflect on what went well ☐ Adjust Session 1.2 as needed ☐ Follow up with any concerns ☐ Prepare for second practice

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## **MOTIVATION: YOUR COACHING JOURNEY STARTS NOW**

You have everything you need to start coaching effectively:

- **Knowledge:** This guide + your study plan
- **Tools:** These sessions ready to use
- **Mindset:** Growth mindset for you and players
- **Passion:** Your desire to help players develop

### **Remember:**

- You'll make mistakes - learn from them
- Players don't expect perfection - they expect care
- Every great coach started where you are
- Your lack of elite playing experience makes you relatable
- Focus on continuous improvement

### **Start Simple:**

1. Use Session 1.1 next practice
2. Follow the structure
3. Keep it fun and positive
4. Reflect and improve
5. Move to Session 1.2

**You've got this! Your players are lucky to have a coach who cares enough to prepare this thoroughly. Now go make a difference! 🌍**

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## **QUICK REFERENCE: COACHING LANGUAGE**

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**

- "Great effort!"
- "I like how you..."
- "That's exactly what we practiced!"
- "Keep working!"
- "Much better!"

## **INSTRUCTION**

- "Show me..."
- "Try this..."
- "Can you...?"
- "What if you...?"
- "Remember to..."

## **QUESTIONS (Guided Discovery)**

- "Why did that work?"
- "What could you do differently?"
- "Where should you be?"
- "What do you see?"
- "How can we...?"

## **CORRECTION**

- "Good try, next time..."
- "Almost! Adjust this..."
- "I noticed... can you...?"
- "Let's work on..."
- "Try again, focus on..."

## **Avoid:**

- "Don't..." (frame positively instead)

- "You always..." (specific moments only)
- "That was terrible" (focus on improvement)
- Sarcasm (they're kids!)
- Comparing players negatively

**Your Tone Matters More Than Your Words** 🎯