

**Cincinnati United**  
**Recreational Outreach Program**  
**Suggested Curriculum – Instructional (U6)**



**“From 3-6 years of age, children should be absorbed with play, in games of their own devising.” -- Plato**

General Characteristics of the U6 Player:

- constantly in motion
- short attention span
- individually oriented
- easily bruised psychologically
- primitive eye-foot coordination
- little concern for team activities
- no sense of pace; will run until they drop

Implications for the U6 player:

- give brief directions
- many activities of short duration
- lots of water breaks
- limit training sessions to 45 min.
- emphasize familiarity/confidence with ball  
(every player should have access to a ball)

**U6 Tactical Sign**     →     (we are going this way)

Soccer Knowledge:

- Ball in/out of play
- Fouls w/ emphasis on handling the ball and dangerous play

Soccer Tactics:

- moving in the correct direction to score or defend

Soccer Skills:

- Establish fundamental motor skills; ie. running, changing directions
- Kicking the ball; inside, instep
- Functions; kick-offs, throw-ins, goal kicks, corner kicks

<p align="center"><b>Principles/Practice Activities</b> <b>Instructional (4-5 yrs.)</b></p>
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**Principle #1 - Progression**

Modify the games/activities to meet the needs/abilities of the player(s).

Introducing an appropriate technique/decision to the players within an activity allows them to move, play and grow within the activity.

### **Principle #2 - Variety vs. Repetition**

Repetition for older players/adults enhances their ability to execute a particular skill or technique, but young players are not prepared for this physically or emotionally; standing in line or passing to a teammate hundreds of times is not enjoyable. -- “Drills kill Skills”

### **Principle #3 - Balance**

The children must be the focus of our attention during practice/games. Refrain from isolating/favoring an individual player. Activities that incorporate two teams require the coach to balance skill levels on each team.

### **Principle #4 - Identify Uniqueness in each Child**

It is helpful to find out and understand what motivates each child. Some players are “destroyers” that like trying to stop or defend the other team. Others are “creators” that enjoy attacking and scoring goals. -- “Find the game within the Player”

### **Activities:**

**Ball Retrieval** - The coach stands in the middle of the space with all the balls collected around him/her. The coach then throws the balls (one at a time) in different directions and each player must retrieve the ball and bring it back to the coach as quickly as possible. The coach puts various conditions on how to retrieve the ball; ie. one hand, two hands, ball against the forehead, then with their feet, short dribbles, long dribbles, etc. “Red light, Green light” is a good variation on this activity.

**Body Part Dribble** - Each player has a ball and dribbles within the designated space. While they dribble, the coach calls out a body part; ie. forehead, elbow, knee, etc. The players stop the ball with the identified body part as quickly as possible. This reinforces listening and knowledge of body parts. “Simon Says...” is a good variation on this activity, as well as playing Tag while dribbling.

**Keep your Yard Clean** - Divide the teams into two groups, each on one half of the space (which is divided by cones). Each player starts with a ball at his/her feet. On command, the player start to kick the balls from their “yard” to the other team’s yard. After a few minutes, call the game and count how many balls each team has in their yard, the team with the least amount of balls in their yard wins.

## **Instructional Practice Activities (4-5 yrs.)**

### **Overview:**

Most, if not all, of these activities can be executed within a box-shaped grid. Having some sense of boundary is good, but some activities do not need a strictly defined area. As you become familiar with these activities you will be able to innovate and create variations on your own. Many of these dribbling activities are wonderful as warm-ups, as it is wise to incorporate the ball as much as possible. These activities should not be performed for longer than 5-8 minutes each, as the players typically do not have the attention span for longer activities.

### **Dribbling:**

**Ball Retrieval** - The coach stands in the middle of the space with all the balls collected around him/her. The coach then throws the balls (one at a time) in different directions and each player must retrieve the ball and bring it back to the coach as quickly as possible. The coach puts various conditions on how to retrieve the ball; ie. one hand, two hands, ball against the forehead, then with their feet, short dribbles, long dribbles, pass the ball back, etc. “Red light, Green light” is a good variation on this activity.

**Body Part Dribble** - Each player has a ball and dribbles within the designated space. While they dribble, the coach calls out a body part; ie. forehead, elbow, knee, etc. The players stop the ball with the identified body part as quickly as possible. This reinforces listening and knowledge of body parts. “Simon Says...” is a good variation on this activity. They only use that body part to stop the ball if “Simon says to.”

**Everybody’s It** - All players have a ball at their feet. As they dribble they try to “tag” as many people as possible, while at the same time, avoiding being tagged. Ask them to count how many they can tag in a set amount of time, ie. 1 min. After one round, challenge them to beat their previous number. Variations: Bell-Button Tag - players w/ or w/o ball try to tag those w/ ball in the belly-button (softly). This is a great way to work on “shielding.”

**Other Tag Games** - Almost any good Tag game can be used as a good dribbling game; be creative! Variations: Freeze Tag - all players w/ ball. Those marked as taggers w/ vest try to “tag” players. When a player is tagged they must hold the ball above their head. They can be “unfrozen” if someone dribbles between their legs. Monster Tag - the coach is the monster and tries to “tag” players as they move across the grid. Those who make it across w/o being tagged get a point. Sharks & Minnows - players w/ball (minnows) try to cross the grid, while players w/o ball (sharks) try to take their ball.

**Gates Dribbling** - Lay down several gates (cones approx. 3 yds. apart) throughout the area. When the coach says “go” players try to dribble through as many gates as possible in a specified amount of time. After each round, ask them how many gates they got through and challenge them to get through more each time. Progress by varying the restrictions, ie. only left foot, only the bottoms of your feet, do a certain move through the cones, etc.

**Knockout** - Each player has a ball and tries to “knock out” other player’s balls, while at the same time keeping control of theirs. Note: they can only be two steps from their own ball so as to avoid players leaving their ball and chasing. If their ball is “knocked out” they perform some task on the outside, ie. two juggles, three step-ups, and return to the game. Challenge them to see how many balls they can “knock out” each round.

### Passing:

**Marbles** - All players have a ball at their feet. They try to hit the other player’s balls with their ball, if they do, they get a point. Play for a specified amount of time. After each round, challenge them to get more points the next round.

**Pac-Man** - Some players w/ball and some players w/o a ball. Players w/ball try to hit the players w/o a ball below the knees, if they do, they get a point. Challenge them to get more points each round. Make sure to change who has a ball as you progress so that each player gets to try the game w/ and w/o a ball. Variation: players that get hit take the ball that hit them and now try to hit other players.

**Cliffhanger** - Players line up, shoulder-to-shoulder, at one end of grid. Upon the command of the coach, the players pass their ball towards a line (actual marked line or line of cones) trying to get as close to the line as possible w/o the ball going past the line. The player with the ball closest to the line w/o going over wins. You can also make create a second and third place in order to reward more players.

**King of the Castle** - Players line up (shoulder-to-shoulder) about 15 yds. away from each other, half the players on one end and the other half on the other end. Each side should have cones (which can be knocked over) on their line. As a team they try to knock over the other teams cones by passing their ball across to the other side. The team that knocks over the most cones in a specified amount of time wins. Note: only the coach should go in the middle so as to avoid players retrieving balls and “blocking” the player’s passes.

**Gates Passing** - Performed just like Gates Dribbling, but with a partner. Again, vary the restrictions, ie. only left foot, only the inside of the foot, only the outside of the foot, two passes through each gate, etc.

**Bombs** - Players dribble their ball. When the coach yells “bombs” every player throws their ball in the air, settles their ball to the ground, and tries to hit balls the coach has rolled through the grid. Progress by varying which part of their body they try to control the ball with.

**Junk Yard** - Divide the teams into two groups, each on one half of the space (which is divided by cones). Each player starts with a ball at his/her feet. On command, the player start to kick the balls from their “yard” to the other team’s yard. After a few minutes, call the game and count how many balls each team has in their yard, the team with the least amount of balls in their yard wins.

### Match-related Games:

**Steal the Bacon** - players line up on either side of the goal. When the coach rolls the ball out from the goal, the first two players from each line race to the ball. The first to retrieve it is the attacker and other player is the defender. they play until one scores or it goes out of bounds. Variation: play with two small goals to either side so that they have two options to attack.

**Boss of the balls** - The players play 3v3 or 4v4, but when the ball goes out or a goal is scored, the coach rolls another ball out to restart the game.

**Moving Goal** - Two coaches hold a stick, rope, etc. between each other. The players play 3v3 or 4v4 and try to score by passing/shooting between the coaches. The coaches should move gradually to create new situations and angles for the players to have to problem solve.

**4 Goal Game** - Goals are placed in each corner of the grid. Each team has two goals to attack and two goals to defend. This will create the opportunity to change the point of attack.

**Outside-In** - Goal (flags, bags, or cones) is placed in the middle of the field and players can score on either side of the goal. Again, this creates the opportunity to develop vision by changing the point of attack.