

**Cincinnati United
Recreational Outreach Program
Suggested Curriculum – Passers (U8)**



“Designing cooperative and competitive activities allows young players to learn better and to understand how to begin to be part of a team.” -- Maria Montessori

General Characteristics of the U8 Player:

- constantly in motion
- short attention span
- individually oriented, but more inclined toward group activities
- easily bruised psychologically; dislike failure in front of peers or ridicule from coach)
- primitive coordination, but gaining some physical confidence
- no sense of pace; will run hard most of the time and chase until they drop

Implications for the U8 player:

- give brief directions
- many activities of short duration
- lots of water breaks
- limit training sessions to 1 hr.
- emphasize familiarity/confidence with ball
(every player should have access to a ball, but players are ready to work in pairs)

U8 Tactical Sign ↔

Soccer Knowledge:

- Enhancement of Instructional soccer knowledge
- Basic sportsmanship and fair play
- Fouls w/ emphasis on pushing, holding and tripping

Soccer Tactics:

- moving in the correct direction to score or defend
- Functions; kick-offs, throw-ins, goal kicks, corner kicks
- Relationship between me and other players; ie triangles

Soccer Skills:

- Continue to enhance motor skills; skipping, back-pedaling, jumping, etc.
- Fundamental soccer skills; dribbling, passing, receiving and shooting

<p align="center">Principles/Practice Activities Passers (6-8 yrs.)</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 (individual/pairs) - 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. Play this game in pair to develop cooperation and teamwork. “Math Dribble” is a good variation on this activity; have the players solve a math problem, ie. $1+1$, and get into groups.

Pac Man - The group is divided into two groups; one group of players w/ a ball and one group of players w/o a ball. The players with a ball at their feet try to hit the legs of the players w/o a ball (note: their target must be knees and below). Once the player is hit with a ball, he/she retrieves the ball and tries to hit another player w/o a ball and the game continues.

Multi-Goal Game - The field is set-up to have as many as 4 or 6 goals; ie. two/three goals on each end of the field. The coach divides the players into two teams. The players score/defend just as they would in a “traditional” game, but now they have multiple options/decisions to make. Can they find the open goal? How do they defend multiple goals?

Passers Practice Activities (6-8 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:

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.

Islands - Lay out 4-5 islands (cones laid out a few yards apart). Players divided into two teams; one with ball (Minnowss) and one w/o ball (Sharks). The Sharks try to steal the Minnows ball, when they succeed they take possession of the ball and become a Minnow. The Minnows can take a rest on any Island for a few seconds then they must re-enter the game. The players simply try to keep possession and long as they can, if they lose the ball they seek out an opponent to dispossess.

Gauntlet - Using cones, lay down two 7x7 yd. boxes that share one side. Each box has a defender in it. The players attempt to dribble thru both boxes, keeping the ball under control. If they are successful they get a point. The defenders are trying to dispossess the attacker and knock the ball out of the grid. The next player goes as soon as the dribbler is successful or knocked out. Alternate defenders as you progress. Make as many grids as necessary for the amount of players, so that they each get a lot of reps.

Passing:

Marbles - All players have a ball at their feet. Divide the team into two teams. One team tries to hit the other team’s balls with their ball, if they do, they get a point. Play for a specified amount of time, then switch roles. 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.

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.

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.

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.

End Zone Game - The players play 4v4 and attack end zones, where they must stop the ball in the end zone to gain a point.

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.

Triangle Goal - Two teams play around a triangular-shaped goal. Play like a normal game. Each side of the triangle has a goalkeeper between the cones. The two teams play against each other and try to shoot the ball past one of the GKs in the triangle. Play for time and rotate the goalkeepers.