
FISHE Soccer Club

Youth Soccer Education and Development Philosophy

The club has developed the following guidelines to help us develop our players in a way that is consistent with our goals. These guidelines are goals to be pursued when possible. It will not always be possible to structure practices and games as desired. For instance, field availability and size may preclude following our guidelines precisely. In addition, we have not had enough players in the past to split into separate girls and boys teams for the older players. However, we will keep these guidelines as the goal and work towards them whenever possible. The following general guidelines apply to all age groups.

- We honor God by opening our practice and games with prayer, thanking Him for the ability to play, and asking his protection and guidance.
- We assess the players' skills and organize teams that play each other to be as even in ability as possible. We do not "stack" a team with good players so that they will be more likely to win, with another team or teams getting less skilled players.
- We enable the players to learn while playing. Therefore, especially in the younger years, players will spend a significant amount of time scrimmaging and using game-like drills.
- We will use the concept of "Team Ambassadors" to encourage fellowship between teams as well as on a team. The "Team Ambassador" will be a different player each game, who will introduce themselves and their teammates to the opposite team. This will hopefully encourage more fellowship between fields and reduce the "Us vs. Them" philosophy.

Skills

As the players move up in the club, we should see these skills improving consistently. The coaches should use this at the beginning of the season and measure the ability of the players then. At the end of the season we should have players improved on some or all the categories. In general, these categories should help the coaches to plan their practices and aim for the players to implement during the games.

1. Trapping: The ball should be under the control of the player after the first receiving touch.
2. Passing: The ball should go to the intended player with the necessary force to make it to the target. It should be, in almost all situations, with the inside of the foot.
3. Shooting (especially trying to score/cross): It should be strong and away from the goalie. The player must show they had an idea of shooting to score, and are not just kicking the ball. We will also evaluate one touch shooting and passing at this point.
4. Team Work: By this we mean that the player should have a sense of "building a play" by trapping, passing and moving towards a predetermined goal (coaches should create the play). In other words, can the player follow a predetermined plan/strategy? We will also judge the players ability to think on his/her own (taking initiative in starting a play when the opportunity arises).

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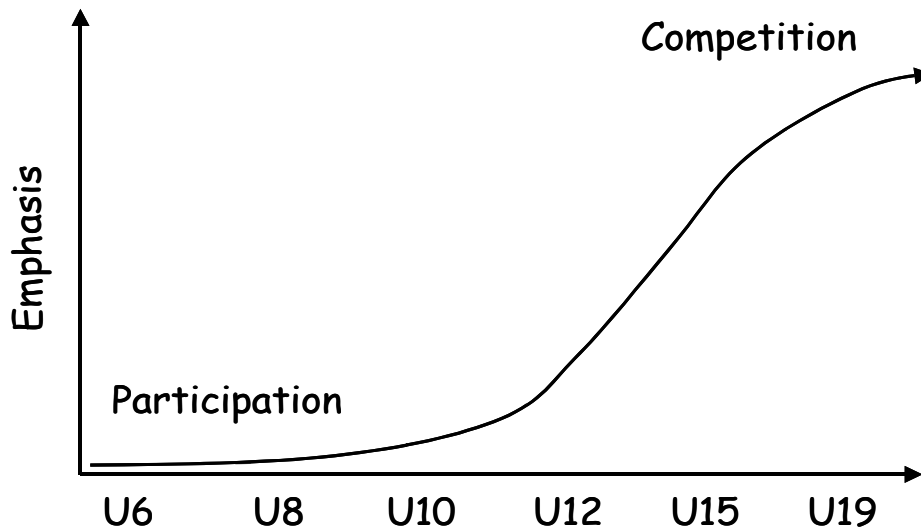
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Competition

Before presenting the guidelines for each stage of development, we must address the general issue of how competitive the club seeks to be, and what that exactly means. Several considerations impact our position on competition.

First, we remain consistent with our top goal of developing godly character throughout all age groups. This means that we do not encourage or tolerate unkindness toward opposing teams. We do not allow players to criticize other players because they are less skilled. We never allow a “win-at-all-costs” attitude.

Second, we recognize that soccer is a competitive sport. The objective of the sport is to contribute to the team scoring and winning. However, we balance the goal of teaching the strategies of competitive soccer with goal of teaching the skills of soccer to each individual. We achieve this balance by transitioning from an emphasis on “participation” in the early years, to an emphasis on “competition” in the later years, as illustrated in the figure below. The following sections will describe precisely what this balance means in practical terms.



Age-Specific Guidelines

Since we are all educators, we are well aware of the fact that children learn and develop in stages, little by little. We know that younger players are not simply smaller adults. They are physically and relationally different, and need to be taught and coached according to their age and development level. We also know that every child learns and develops at a different rate and in different ways. The following description presents the general guidelines for how a soccer player will develop. Some will develop slower, and some faster.

The following guidelines will be presented in five “Phases”. They are grouped as follows:

1. Phase 1 (Pre-Soccer) – In general, this is the preschooler or ages 4-5 (often called “U6”, meaning “under the age of six”).

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2. Phase 2 (Beginner) – First and second graders, or ages 6-7 (U8)
3. Phase 3 (Learner) – Third and fourth grades, or ages 8-9 (U10)
4. Phase 4 (Developer) – Fifth and sixth graders, or ages 10-11 (U12)
5. Phase 5 (Competitor) – Junior High and High School, or ages 12-18 (U15 and U19)

A brief note on the age groups. Ideally, we would field teams in the age groups listed above and the U15 and U19 teams would not be co-ed. However, it has been difficult to have enough players in FISHE to accomplish this goal. To better address the needs of our families, we offer co-ed teams in all age groups and we may need to adjust age groups in some cases. Parents will be informed of any changes that need to be made. Please be aware that if we participate in an outside tournament, teams may need to be redistributed to comply with the rules of that tournament.

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Pre-Soccer (U6)

During the Pre-soccer phase, the emphasis is on fun. The children will be learning to listen to the coach. They will become familiar with the routine of a practice, including warm-ups, drills, scrimmages, and water breaks. They will emphasize two basic skills:

- Passing – controlled kick to a teammate made with the inside of the foot
- Dribbling – running with the ball at one’s feet, usually advancing the ball with small controlled kicks

They will learn the basic rules of the game, such as:

- Score by getting the ball in the opponents’ goal
- Try not to let the ball in your goal
- Don’t touch the ball with your hands or arms
- Play nicely – no pushing or tripping

U6 players will group into teams to form good relationships with each other and their coach, but the “team” can be more relaxed. U6 players will play relaxed, non-scored “games” on game days. Even though the “games” are unofficial, players will be encouraged to learn to help other players on their team, both by supporting them on the field and by cheering them on.

The characteristics of U6 play are:

- As much as possible, “drills” should be in form of games.
- Players should all get to play at all times, except when taking water breaks.
- Players should use size 3 balls.
- Players should play in groups of three or four per “team”.
- Ideally, the field should be about 20 yards wide by 30 yards long, with a goal about two or three yards wide.
- There will be no goalkeeper – no player will be allowed to touch the ball with the hands or the arms, and no player should stand in the goal mouth.
- Coaches should roll the ball back in bounds if it goes out (no throw-ins, goal-kicks or corner kicks).
- “Games” should be about 20 minutes in length with a short break at “half-time”.

In general, there should be about one supervising adult at practice and games for every four or five players. Players will be divided into teams as soon as possible to establish small group relationships early. Coed teams are appropriate at this phase.

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Beginner (U8)

In the beginner stage, all the basic skills and rules of soccer will be introduced. This is the phase when the children are really introduced to the game. The list below summarizes the basic skills taught at this point (with passing and dribbling repeated):

- Passing – controlled kick to a teammate made with the inside of the foot
- Shooting – powerful kicks on goal made with the top or instep of the foot
- Dribbling – running with the ball at one's feet, usually advancing the ball with small controlled kicks
- Control – receiving the ball, and gaining control by trapping or cushioning with any part of the body except the hands and arms
- Learning Basic Positions (Defense and Offense)
- Goal keeping – U8 players WILL NOT USE GOALKEEPERS DURING GAMES. A small area around the goal will be established, and the players will be told not to stand in that area. However, U8 players will receive some instruction on goalkeeping near the middle of the season, to prepare them for U10 play. They will be taught that the keeper should catch or pick up the ball, and throw it to a teammate.

The next list summarizes the basic rules and procedures that will be introduced at this phase:

- Kick-offs to begin the game
- Goal kicks when the offense puts a ball over the end-line
- Corner kicks when the defense puts a ball over the end-line
- Throw-ins when the ball crosses the touchline
- Again, we will not use goalkeepers during U8 games. However, the players will learn the goalkeeper rules during their U8 season so that they are ready for U10 play.

The characteristics of U8 play are:

- Players will be grouped in teams and begin playing games at this phase. If possible, several games will be played per season.
- Players will learn to have a good attitude whether they win or lose.
- Players should get equal play and play approximately equal time at all positions.
- Players should use size 3 balls.
- Teams should be approximately 6-8 players, playing 5 on the field at a time per team. However, drills and mini-games using two or three players in a group should be emphasized during practices. Practicing in these arrangements helps the weaker players develop, and help all players learn the basic soccer formations, such as the triangle and the “third man running”.

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- As much as possible, “drills” should be in form of games.
- Ideally, the field should be about 30 yards wide by 50 yards long, with a goal about two to three yards wide.
- There will be no goalkeeper – no player will be allowed to touch the ball with the hands or the arms and no player will be allowed to stand in the mouth of the goal.
- Players will get second tries on throw-ins, goal kicks and corner kicks if they make mistakes. If the player makes a mistake the second time, play should just go on (do not give the ball to the other team or call a foul).
- Games should be about 30 minutes in length with a short break midway.

In general, there should be about one supervising adult at practice and games for every six or seven players. Coed teams are appropriate at this phase.

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Learner (U10)

The players will work on developing the skills already taught, and be introduced to the skills below:

- Crossing or long passing – advancing the ball to a teammate from a distance using the instep of the foot
- Control – players will refine their trapping skills and be introduced to the chest trap
- Tackling – challenging and winning the ball from an opponent's possession
- Learning positions (Fullback, Halfback, Strikers, etc.)
- Goal-keeping – introductory skills include catching, kicking and throwing
- Throw-in technique

The players will be reminded of the rules already taught, and be introduced the rules below:

- The special rules for the goalkeeper – may touch the ball when inside the penalty area
- Free Kicks - Direct, Indirect, and Penalty Kicks
- The Offside rule – in general, a player may not gain an advantage by positioning himself beyond the second last opponent. This usually means that at least one defender must be between an offensive player and the opponents' goal keeper when a ball is played to that player.
- NO SLIDE TACKLES

The characteristics of U10 play are:

- Players continue to play in teams, with equal time per game and approximately equal time at all positions.
- Players should use size 4 balls.
- Teams should be approximately 11 players, playing 7 on the field at a time per team.
- Small-sided drills and practice games should continue to be emphasized during practices.
- Ideally, the field should be about 40 yards wide by 60 yards long, with a goal about six yards wide.
- There will be a goalkeeper.
- Games should be about 40 minutes in length with a half-time break.

In general, there should be about one supervising adult at practice and games for every eight or nine players. Coed teams are appropriate at this phase, but teams could split into separate boys' and girls' teams if possible.

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Developer (U12)

The players will work on developing and mastering the skills already taught, and be introduced the skills below:

- Heading – the skill will be introduced but practiced with care – studies have shown that serious injury may occur when pre-adolescents using their heads on balls that are coming at them high or fast. Players will practice with soft serves from the coach, using quality balls.
- Control – players will work on mastery of trapping skills including the chest and leg trap; plus juggling
- Goalkeeper – diving is introduced.
- Set plays such as Goal kick, Corner kick, and Free Kick strategies; plus Off-sides Trap

The players will be reminded of the rules already taught, and be introduced the rules below:

- Yellow and Red Cards
- NO SLIDE TACKLES

The characteristics of U12 play are:

- Players continue to play in teams, with equal time per game.
- During this phase, players will begin to discover their best positions, with the help of their coach. Through this transition, players will be learning that they may not get to play at their favorite positions, if that is not the most effective way to participate in the team. However, during practice time, players will still be encouraged to play all positions to provide a setting for discovering the players' strengths.
- Players should continue to use size 4 balls.
- Teams should be approximately 13 players, playing 9 on the field at a time per team.
- Small-sided drills and practice games should continue to be emphasized during practices.
- Ideally, the field should be about 50 yards wide by 80 yards long, with a goal about eight yards wide.
- Games should be about 60 minutes in length with a half-time break.

In general, there should be about one supervising adult at practice and games for every ten players. Coed teams are appropriate at this phase, but teams could split into separate boys' and girls' teams if possible.

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Competitor (U15 and U19)

Skills and Techniques:

- This is the stage for mastering skills already learned.
- Shooting and passing mastery will include work on arcing kicks, outside of the foot kicks, lofted passes and chips, heading and volleys
- Mastery of control will include heading and juggling
- Dribbling mastery work will include shielding, body and foot fakes, change of pace and direction
- Goalkeepers will learn about directing their defense

Rules:

- Official substitution rules (rarely enforced in our games)
- NO SLIDE TACKLES

The characteristics of U15 and U19 play are:

- Players will learn the importance of the roles of “starters” and “substitutes”. However, all players will get to play some in every “game-day” (the total of all games played in a day or tournament). If at all possible, every U15 player will play at least one-half of each game-day, and each U19 player will play at least one-third of each game-day. Some players may play all the time if their participation is key to the team strategy. The players will be learning that every team-member contributes to good soccer team strategy, even if the player serves as a substitute.
- In practices, players will work to develop the special techniques of their particular positions.
- Games will be essentially identical to the official international soccer rules at this phase.
- Players should use size 5 balls.
- Teams should be approximately 15 players, playing 11 on the field at a time per team.
- Small-sided drills and practice games should continue to be emphasized during practices.
- Ideally, the field should be about 70 yards wide by 100 yards long, with a goal about eight yards wide.
- Games should be about 60-90 minutes in length with a half-time break.
- Ideally, boys and girls would play on separate teams at this phase. However, we have not had enough players to split into separate boys’ and girls’ teams. Until we have enough players to split in this way, care should be taken to ensure girls are included and not endangered by aggressive play by the boys. In coed games, we do not allow slide tackling or players going “air-borne” to play the ball.

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In general, there should be about one supervising adult at practice and games for every ten players.

Executive Summary - Youth Soccer Educational and Developmental Philosophy

Goals: The goals of our soccer club are to develop:

Godly character through growth in:

- Following a coach respectfully,
- Developing good teamwork and treating teammates with respect, and
- Participating with a good attitude.

Physically in the areas of:

- Fitness, and
- Soccer skills and strategies.

A youth sports environment that:

- Honors God, and
- Respects the family.

Skills

Skills:	U6	U8	U10	U12	U15/19
Passing	Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered	Mastered
Dribbling	Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered	Mastered
Shooting		Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered
Control		Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered
Goalkeeping		Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered
Throw-in		Introduced	Developed	Mastered	Mastered
Tackling			Introduced	Developed	Mastered
Crossing			Introduced	Developed	Mastered
Heading				Introduced	Developed
Set Plays				Introduced	Developed

Rules

Rules:	U6	U8	U10	U12	U15/19

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Scoring	Introduced	Implemented			
Fouls	Implemented				
Starts		Introduced	Implemented		
Re-starts		Introduced	Implemented		
Goalkeeping		Introduced	Implemented		
Free Kicks		Introduced	Implemented		
Offside			Introduction	Implemented	
Cards				Introduction	Implemented
Substitution					Introduction

Guidelines

Guidelines:	U6	U8	U10	U12	U15/19
Team Size	Max 6	Max 7	Max 11	Max 13	Max 15
On Field *	3	4	7	9	11
Field Size **	15x25 yds	25x40 yds	40x60 yds	50x80 yds	70x100 yds
Ball	3	3	4	4	5
Game Time	20 min	30 min	40 min	60 min	60 min
Ratio	1 to 4-5	1 to 6-8	1 to 8-9	1 to 10	1 to 10
Equal Play	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Specialize	No	No	No	Begin	Yes
Coed	Encouraged	Encouraged	Okay	Okay	Discouraged
Goal size	2 yds wide	3 yds wide	6 yds wide	8 yds wide	8 yds wide

* The coaches may agree to adjustments in number of players on the field prior to the game.

** Field size may not be possible at all field locations. Be flexible for adjustments.