

FAQ's of Coaching

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My six year old is really good - shouldn't he be on a competitive team? Children develop at different rates. When we begin holding "tryouts" we are telling young players that they are not good enough. As a result we lose players to other activities. Competitive play can wait until age eleven or twelve. A factor often cited in "burnout" is the onset of competitive pressure too early in life.

Why do the Under 10s and younger not play 11-a-side like older kids and adults? Playing small sided games allows younger players more touches on the ball, a less crowded field and more actual playing time. They must play offense and defense, which develops a more complete player.

Why will my players not stay in their positions? Soccer is not like baseball or football where players have a "geographic" or "static" position. Soccer positions are dynamic - your position as it relates to the ball and other players. Yet many new coaches attempt (with little success) to "plant" defenders on a spot to "protect" the goal! Think more along the tactics of basketball - if you play 4v4 or 3v3 ALL players should attack or defend depending on who has the ball.

How do I teach strategy? We do not teach algebra to first graders and we don't teach strategy to them either! Youth coaches who attempt to teach strategy or team tactics are doing so in the mistaken belief that it will help their team. Youth players must develop ball skills and individual play before they can grasp team concepts. The best planned strategy fails if a player lacks the skill necessary to play the game.

What Should A Coach Avoid? Laps, Lines, & Lectures - First let's talk about "laps" - not the most original method of fitness training and one of the least effective for soccer players. Better yet, play high intensity games with a ball that encourage "fast play" of short duration. A heck of a lot more fun than running laps! Lines - Name one line in which you enjoy waiting your turn. Since kindergarten we've been trained to "line up." One of the reasons kids like to play soccer is the continuous action - let's not spoil the attraction of the sport by making them wait! Any longer than thirty seconds until their "turn" and you've lost them! Using game activities rather than "drills" creates a realistic approach to teaching soccer. Lectures? Brings up memories of school. Sitting. Listening. Passive. Non-participatory. Please! Our players come to play! Use the "Thirty Second Rule" - Quick, concise information and get them moving! You cannot improve your skills listening to someone talk about soccer! For help in practices that avoid the EviLLL's see "The Assistant Coach Series".

I would like to help coach but I've never played soccer! A playing background, while helpful, is not necessary to coach effectively. The "want" to coach is probably the most important element. Knowledge of soccer is less important than your skill dealing with children. The role of a youth coach is that of a facilitator: Let the Game Teach! Age appropriate game activities are available in the "Assistant Coach Series" from www.youthsoccer.org

I've played soccer all of my life - why would I need to attend a coaching clinic? "Doing" is not the same as "teaching!" Having a playing background is very helpful when demonstrating skills but the ability to teach is the priority in coaching. A basic understanding of the psychological, social, and cognitive characteristics of our players allows for far greater opportunities than "do what I do " coaching.

Where and when can I find a coaching clinic? Check the Missouri Youth Soccer website at www.mysa.org for a schedule of clinics.

Do you have a question? Contact the Missouri Youth Soccer Association.

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