



Age Group Organization

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INTRODUCTION

Organization of player development by age and stage



Children do not learn in the same way as adults, especially when the learning process involves both intellectual *and* physical activity.

Age conditions the way a person perceives and interacts with the world and with others.

In any learning process, age is the key component in selecting appropriate content and methodology. Soccer is no different. For this reason we must not train 6 year old players the same way as 13 years old players. Training sessions must be adapted to the age of the players. Taking into consideration the characteristics of human and player development, we have structured the curriculum into four age groups. The first two age groups are:

1. INITIAL STAGE – 5 TO 8 YEARS OLD

At this age children do not have the same capacity as adults to analyze the environment. They explore and have an egocentric conception of the world. Children are still gathering the experience necessary to interact with their surroundings and with others. Also, empathy and the capacity to consider the thoughts and feelings of others is very low. In order to help children build their own experience, many exercises will be individual (e.g. each player will have a ball). The tactical component of the game will be reduced to small-sided games with basic explanations about space distribution. Training sessions will be treated more as physical education than specifically as soccer training.

2. BASIC STAGE – 9 TO 12 YEARS OLD

At this stage, the structure (but not the content) of the training sessions will be similar to that of older players. The main component of the training session will be technical. It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. Children’s capacity to solve problems increases significantly. Therefore players will begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios. At this stage, players are pre-pubescent and have important physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance.

3. INTERMEDIATE STAGE – 13 AND 14 YEARS OLD

Players at this age develop a good understanding of the game. However, these players are limited by their physical size and the significant changes, which arise with puberty. Safety should be the number one priority for the coach. The coach must be cautious to avoid overtraining should focus more on tactical and technical elements of the game and less on the physical aspects. Tactical training plays an important role at this age.

4. ADVANCED STAGE – 15 TO 18 YEARS OLD

Players at this age have completed most of their physical and mental development. All components of training can be combined and organized with the purpose of developing the highest potential of the player. The strength of the muscles helps to develop technique at high speed and this speed helps the player to react faster to tactical situations. This stage is crucial for combining all the components of soccer in order to increase the players’ soccer knowledge.

These are some of the facts in terms of human development adapted to soccer. In this document these facts are used to develop the most appropriate training methodology for each age group.



PLAYER STAGES

Age groups organized by stage

PLAYER STAGES

1. INITIAL STAGE

- U6
 - U7
 - U8
-

2. BASIC STAGE

- U9
 - U10
 - U11
 - U12
-

3. INTERMEDIATE STAGE

- U13
 - U14
-

4. ADVANCED STAGE

- U15
 - U16
 - U17
 - U18
-

5. SPECIFIC STAGE

- U19
 - U20
-

6. PERFORMANCE

- Senior



PRINCIPLES OF AGE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Training characteristics based on human development

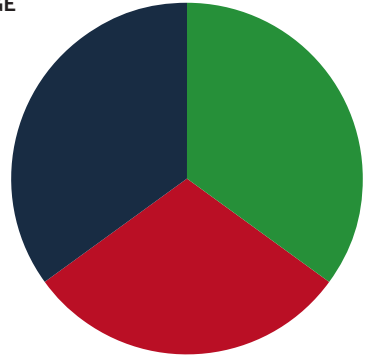
STAGES	AGE GROUPS	CHARACTERISTICS
INITIAL	U6	Very young players from 5 to 8 years of age love to play. Therefore, all practices should be based on fun games.
	U7	Players must spend the maximum time possible in contact with the ball and experiment by themselves. For the first time the player has to build a relationship with other players. Give different responsibilities to the players in order to develop a sense of team.
	U8	Basic motor skills like walking, running or jumping have to be combined with ball handling and ball control.
BASIC	U9	Pre-pubescent players from age 9 to 12 years have a special ability to learn. Therefore, this is the right age to work on specific soccer techniques and skills. Developing good technique is essential at this age.
	U10	1v1 and 2v1 attacking and defending situations are important to develop individual skills as well as the passing techniques to develop the necessary team game.
	U11	Use small-sided games to develop basic attacking and defensive principles. Other important aspects of tactical training are possession, combination play, transition and finishing in the final third, as well as zonal defending. Players will rotate in two or three different positions to avoid early specialization.
	U12	Speed, coordination, balance and agility are the main physical aspects to improve at this stage.
INTERMEDIATE	U13	At this stage, training sessions are orientated more toward tactics and the player will practice in bigger spaces. Players must practice all different types of techniques at this stage. Strength and endurance should be part of the fitness training. Coaching methods have to consider and preserve players' health since they will be experiencing many changes due to puberty at this stage. Warm-ups and cool downs are essential as is dynamic flexibility.
	U14	Players must develop discipline at this stage by following the instructions of the coach both during and outside training sessions.



Season Plan by Age

INITIAL STAGE (U6-U8)

CURRICULUM – U6 – SEASON PLAN

OBJECTIVES	ORGANIZATION				CONTENT DISTRIBUTION			
<p>SCRIMMAGE: Take up good positions during the game</p> <p>TECHNICAL: Improve basic individual technique</p> <p>PHYSICAL: Develop coordination and basic motor skills with and without the ball</p> <p>PSYCHOSOCIAL: Feel comfortable and confident with the ball</p>	Sessions per week	2	Session time	60'	<p>INITIAL STAGE</p> 			
	Players per team	12	Game time	30'				
	SESSION STRUCTURE		ASPECTS TO CONSIDER					
	Warm-up	10'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Size of the practice - Time of the practice - Intensity of the practice - Rules - Number of players - Time of contact with the ball 					
	Physical	15'						
	Technique	20'						
	Scrimmage	20'						
Cool Down & Debrief	5'							
<p>By the end of the season the player must be capable of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Handling the ball with at least one foot and both hands 2. Occupying the original position during the game once an action is finished 3. Running, jumping and stopping with and without the ball 	<p>Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Individual games are essential for the player at this age to experiment with the ball. ▶ Match: We strongly recommend 3v3 or 4v4 games. 							
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; background-color: #444; color: white;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #1a3d4d; color: white; text-align: center;">SCRIMMAGE 35%</td> <td style="background-color: #00a0c9; color: white; text-align: center;">TACTICS 0%</td> <td style="background-color: #008040; color: white; text-align: center;">TECHNIQUE 35%</td> <td style="background-color: #c00000; color: white; text-align: center;">PHYSICAL 30%</td> </tr> </table>				SCRIMMAGE 35%	TACTICS 0%	TECHNIQUE 35%	PHYSICAL 30%	
SCRIMMAGE 35%	TACTICS 0%	TECHNIQUE 35%	PHYSICAL 30%					

CONTENT

TACTICAL			TECHNICAL			PHYSICAL			PSYCHOSOCIAL		
ATTACKING	1. Attacking Principles		1. Passing and Receiving	5	STRENGTH	Strength Endurance		BASIC	1. Motivation	5	
	2. Possession		2. Running With the Ball	2		Explosive Strength			2. Self confidence	5	
	3. Transition		3. Dribbling	5		Maximal Strength			3. Cooperation	1	
	4. Combination Play		4. Turning	1	ENDURANCE	Aerobic Capacity			4. Decision/Determination	1	
	5. Switching Play		5. Shooting	5		Aerobic Power		ADVANCED	5. Competitiveness		
	6. Counter Attacking		6. Ball Control	2		Anaerobic Lactic			6. Concentration		
	7. Playing Out From the Back		7. Heading			Anaerobic Alactic			7. Commitment		
	8. Finishing in the Final Third		8. 1V1 Attacking	2	SPEED	Reaction	1	SOCIAL	8. Self Control		
1. Defending Principles		9. Shielding the Ball	1	Acceleration		1	9. Communication				
2. Zonal Defending		10. Receiving to Turn	1	Maximal Speed			10. Respect & Discipline		5		
3. Pressing		11. Crossing and Finishing		Speed Endurance							
4. Retreat & Recovery		12. 1V1 Defending		Acyclic Speed		1					
5. Compactness				4. Flexibility & Mobility	1						
				5. Coordination & Balance	2						
				6. Agility	3						
				7. Basic Motor Skills	5						
				8. Perception & Awareness	5						

