



U10 Player Development

Section 1: General Characteristics of the U-10 Age Group

- Lengthened attention span - they are still in motion, but not as busy, only holding still long enough for a short explanation
- More inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play
- Psychologically becoming slightly more firm and confident
- Some are becoming serious about their play
- Team oriented – prefer team type balls and equipment. Enjoy the uniforms and team association.
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Developing the pace factor – thinking ahead
- Gross and small motor skills becoming much more refined

While using game-like activities, which allow for trial and error, expose the children to the components of the game. The key training activities are body awareness, maze games and target games.

Section 2: Components of the Game for the U-10 Age Group*

Technique: Experiment with the qualities of a bouncing ball and running with the ball, passing with the inside and outside of the foot (emphasis on quality push pass), instep drive, receiving ground balls with the instep and outside of foot (body behind the ball), receiving bouncing balls with the instep (cushion) and the sole, inside and outside of foot (wedge), fakes in dribbling and turning with the ball. Introduce crossing. Practice throw-ins. For goalkeepers: ready stance, getting the feet set, how to hold a ball after a save, diamond grip, catching shots at the keeper, punting, recovery from down to the ground and up to set position and footwork exercises. Also introduce goal kicks and throwing.

Psychology: Keep soccer enjoyable to foster a desire to play using self-motivation. Working in groups of three, four or five, stay focused for one entire half. There is an increase in responsibility, sensitivity, awareness of how to win or lose gracefully, fair play, parental involvement, how to play, communication and emotional management.

Fitness: Factors are endurance, range of motion flexibility, rhythm exercises and running mechanics. Any fitness activities must be done with the ball. Introduce body resistance exercises and the idea of cool down.

Tactics: 1v1 defending, roles of 1st attacker and defender, 2v1 attacking, what it means to get goal-side, small group shape in pairs and threes (emphasize support on both attack and defense), playing on and around the ball as a group with purpose, playing a variety of positions to develop the complete player, introduce the principles of attack and set plays.

*Please note that the components of the game are in a priority order for this age group. These players will demonstrate increased self-responsibility, so they should be given, to a reasonable extent, partial responsibility for their preparation at training sessions and matches. They are very capable of assuming this responsibility when adults step aside and let it happen. Now they can initiate play on their own, which leads to learning through self-discovery and self-expression. They do enjoy and benefit from competition, so all training activities should have objectives and/or a method of scoring. They will intentionally play in groups, although individualism is still the core of their game. Use cooperative games and activities in training sessions to further instill a team mentality.

Section 3: Typical U-10 Training Session

- Should not exceed one hour and 15 minutes.
 1. Free play or a warm-up (ball juggling), partner and small group activities, dynamic stretching.
-approximately 15 minutes-

Introduce small group activities (four to six players).
 2. Add more directional games. Play to targets and/or zones.
-approximately 25 minutes-
 3. Conclude with a Small-Sided Game, 6v6, with goalkeepers.
-approximately 25 minutes-
 4. Finish with cool down activities.
-approximately 10 minutes-

Devote the end of each training session to playing 4v4, 5v5 and 6v6 practice games. Fun games involving smaller numbers can be played, especially 1v1, 2v1 and 3v2 or 5v3 leading up to a final training activity. Always coach for success. It is still important to ensure that each child has a ball and to focus on fun games, but as the players develop psychosocially, they will be ready to participate and cooperate in small groups. U-10 players must play at least 50 percent of each match they attend. Better yet would be to have a roster size that allows each youngster to play more than half of each match. They should not play a season longer than four months, and must have at least one full month off between seasons of play.

Resources for Coaches

Coaching information: www.usyouthsoccer.org

F License: www.ussoccer.com/coaching-education/licenses

Virginia Youth Soccer: www.vysa.com

Virginia Youth Soccer Coaching:

[www.vysa.com/docs/coaches/US Youth Soccer Player Development Model.pdf](http://www.vysa.com/docs/coaches/US_Youth_Soccer_Player_Development_Model.pdf)

Concussion: www.cdc.gov/headsup/

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