

Grassroots Coaching Course - Notes

Intro

- General plan: 30 min talking, an hour of playing, and some time at the end for specific probs (ie. Q&A).
- Ask questions as we go along if you like, but remember the end bit where we can discuss specific probs you've encountered

- Kids' football coaching is completely different to paid, high-profile coaches of professional teams (eg. Arsene Wenger or Sir Alex Fergusson).
- Let the game be the teacher. We're here mostly to organise fun training sessions & kids everything running on track.
- Enjoyment should be our aim – that's why the kids are playing; emphasizing winning just breeds pressure, which is no fun.
- Let kids be kids, don't try to fast-track their progress. Let them master their own bodies before expecting them to master the game.
- A full 11v11 game is full of complex situations that you can't expect a child to understand. They need to start simple & work up to it over many years (this is one of the reasons for the SSG format in the younger ages).

Coach Attributes/Skills

Personal

- ❖ **No abuse, EVER; not physical nor verbal.**
- ❖ Enthusiastic
- ❖ Friendly
- ❖ Fun (sense of humour – be able to laugh at yourself or with the kids)
- ❖ Respect
- ❖ Praise
- ❖ Encouragement
- ❖ Patience
- ❖ Role model (polite, respectful, calm, communicative).
- ❖ Propose problems to solve (ie. ask them questions rather than just telling them what they should think).

Organisation

- ❖ Planning (in advance, on paper)
- ❖ Arrive early, set up & look the part
- ❖ Clear, concise instructions (too much talking and the kids get bored)
- ❖ Quick demos (pictures are better than words)
- ❖ Keep the session flowing (short attention spans)

- ❖ Variety (different activities)
- ❖ Fairness (everyone plays, no favouritism)

Training Session

Basic Components

The Beginning

Use football specific exercises to:

- ❖ Increase the core temperature (the body performs better at higher temps, and it prepares the joints for stress)
- ❖ Improve mobility (balance, agility, range of motion, control of their bodies)
- ❖ Improve ball mastery

We do this with:

- ❖ General movements
- ❖ Tagging games
- ❖ Ball mastery exercises

Older ages need this section to prepare their bodies for activity. Younger kids can do this with games that improve mobility & ball mastery.

The Middle

In this section we work on the technique of:

- ❖ Dribbling (can blend with “beginning” activities)
- ❖ Passing/receiving
- ❖ 1v1

This is the basic age progression.

- Passing, receiving & dribbling are the foundations of the game
- Don’t just get players to kick the ball away when they get it – encourage creativity; use the space they have
- Communication (between players) is important at this stage
- Get the kids to think about **space**. Where do I go when I don’t have the ball?
- Receiving the ball is an important step that’s often neglected. Encourage them to control it first and then to look for a pass or go for a dribble.
- Aims while dribbling:
 - Maintaining desired speed while staying in control
 - Keep your head up (don’t stare at your feet)
- 1v1 is all about how to lose or get around your opponent with the ball
Includes: changes of pace, fakes, feints, & other “tricks”.
This is one area creativity really helps.
- Coaching 1v1 is largely philosophical...
 - Never criticise for trying to beat your opponent
 - Accept that sometimes you’ll lose a 1v1

- Give lots of praise when successful
- Encourage creativity
- 1v1 skills can decide a game, particularly at the higher levels
- 1v1 also greatly helps agility and coordination (comes back to the “Beginning” stuff)
- Good 1v1 skill improves player confidence, which is an important factor in player development

Positional football & strategies are not so important at grassroots level. Help players to master the ball and express themselves creatively (eg. dribbling rather than always passing). These are the foundations upon which you build tactics and strategies.

The End

This bit is made up of:

- ❖ Small sided games
 - ❖ And, to a lesser degree, shooting games
- Scoring is the whole aim of the game and quite a thrill. It provides real motivation, and increases self-esteem & confidence. (When there’s a shooting opportunity, encourage them to have a go!)

SOG guidelines:

- ❖ Simple rules
- ❖ Even numbers
- ❖ Don’t coach them, just observe (but keep it flowing)
- ❖ LET THEM PLAY!

Cool Down

A short cool down at the end can be good, but it should be low intensity.

- Allocating jobs to kids works well, eg. pick 3 kids to collect red cones, 3 kids to collect orange cones and the rest to collect the balls. The kids think it’s fun and it helps you pack up & free up the space for the next team to train.
- Lunge walks are also quite good for a cool down and lets you do a casual recap with the kids if you do the lunge walks with them.

A cool down is mostly about habit forming at this age. It’s far more important at older (youth & adult) ages.

Finally, leave on a positive, encouraging note. “Great session guys! See you all on Saturday. I can’t wait.”

Timing

40 minutes is pretty short, but this is a rough split:

- ❖ 15 min: Beginning
- ❖ 10 min: Middle
- ❖ 15 min: End

If you have more time then take a few minutes at the beginning to greet each player and have a chat to them.

Emphasis

U6	U10
----- General movement -----	
----- Tagging games -----	
----- Ball Mastery -----	
=====	
----- Dribbling -----	
----- Passing/Receiving -----	
----- 1v1 -----	
=====	
----- Small sided games -----	
----- Shooting games -----	(lesser degree)
=====	

Discipline

- Kids mostly muck up because they're bored from being idle.
- If you're well organised & keep the kids involved with very little, or no, "wait around" time then they're much better behaved.
- Be enthusiastic, calm, patient, & don't forget to smile.
- Don't over-react, especially with the younger ones. Remember, they're kids.

When misbehaviour happens:

- Ask yourself "is the activity too hard?", "have we been doing it for too long?", "am I talking too much?"
- Stay calm
- Don't criticise the child but rather the behaviour
- Don't tell them off in front of the whole team. Take them aside & talk to them. "Are you doing what we're supposed to be doing? What are we supposed to be doing? Your behaviour is making it hard for everyone else to learn & have fun. That's not very fair on the rest of the team, don't you think? Is there anything else wrong? Are you injured? Is this too hard? Did something happen with one of your teammates? Do you think you can do the right thing now?"
- Never punish the whole group because of 1 child
- Never punish with physical activity (like push ups or running around the oval)
- Punish with a short "time out" if you have to
- Don't grab the kids or drag them!!
- Sometimes making them aware that you're watching them is enough. Stand close to them, give them a questioning look; perhaps say "I'm watching you". Especially if their parents are there and they support you.
- When the punishment is over, it's over. Move on, don't hold a grudge.

Misc

- You always run out of time – it just disappears. So keep your session plans simple. You can always add a progression to an exercise if you need to use up more time or get them to practice some ball skill (eg. juggling).
- Kids like competitiveness. Make little competitions out of exercises & games
- Coaching position on the outside of a semi-circle or the edge of the group
- Short, clear instructions. Don't waffle. Don't over-explain.
- Don't shout the whole session, but make sure your voice carries so they can all hear
- Avoid "coaching" them too much. Let it flow. Don't keep stopping.
- Enjoy yourself. Put your own worries on the shelf for an hour. Don't bring them to training.
- Ask them lots of questions rather than just telling them the answers – kids learn better if they figure it out themselves. For example, "What part of the boot do we use to pass? Why?" rather than "Use the instep to pass because this is the widest area and gives you the most control."
- Don't relax your own standards as the season progresses – your punctuality, organisation, attire, etc.