

Strategies

A Journal for Physical and Sport Educators

ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/ustr20

Soccer Coaching Strategies for Teaching Children

Hüseyin Ünlü, Ali Rıza Atıcı, Bijen Filiz, Ferman Konukman & Andrew Sortwell

To cite this article: Hüseyin Ünlü, Ali Rıza Atıcı, Bijen Filiz, Ferman Konukman & Andrew Sortwell (2024) Soccer Coaching Strategies for Teaching Children, *Strategies*, 37:4, 36-39, DOI: [10.1080/08924562.2024.2350912](https://doi.org/10.1080/08924562.2024.2350912)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/08924562.2024.2350912>



© 2024 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.



Published online: 22 Jul 2024.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 94








View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Soccer Coaching Strategies for Teaching Children

By Hüseyin Ünlü , Ali Rıza Atıcı , Bijen Filiz ,
Ferman Konukman , and Andrew Sortwell 

Soccer, also known as football in many parts of the world, is one of the most popular and widely followed sports globally (Holt et al., 2021). Especially among children, soccer holds particular popularity, and its popularity increases day to day. According to a study conducted by Johnson et al. (2021), soccer remains one of the most favored sports among children ages 6 to 12 years old in urban communities. The study also noted that children's participation in organized soccer programs increased their overall physical activity levels and improved their motor

skills, coordination, and cardiovascular health. Additionally, soccer provided an environment for children to interact socially, promoting teamwork, communication, and collaboration. The friendships established on the field and the sense of success shared during the matches also contributed to developing their self-confidence and social confidence. Soccer is a valuable way to promote healthy lifestyles and well-rounded social skills among children.

The requirements of soccer (such as field size and game duration) can be adapted to children's growth and

maturation level, impacting physiological responses and altering the game's demands. Organized training rooted in pedagogical principles is essential to ensure children attain the desired benefits of soccer. Coaches need to adopt an educational approach to ensure the positive development of children's skills and dispositions. Accordingly, coaches are expected to focus on the overall development of their students, considering their psychomotor skills as well as cognitive and sensory development. Additionally, it is considered crucial for coaches to respond to the interests and needs of their students by organizing programs and training sessions that enhance their participation and motivation to continue. Another important task for coaches who adopt a pedagogical approach is measurement and assessment. Through effective measurement and assessment, coaches obtain information about students' level and development, which can be utilized for their continuous improvement and enhancement.

The amalgamation of these recommendations forms the foundation of an effective educational strategy in soccer coaching. Emphasizing cognitive, social-emotional, and motor skills; encouraging student-centeredness in task design; and improving educational assessment processes ensures that athletes benefit optimally from a comprehensive approach to soccer coaching. Coaches have important responsibilities in organized soccer training. Especially, coaches must remember to make soccer fun and create a positive learning environment. They should instill a love for soccer and encourage lifelong physical activity. As a soccer coach, there are practical tips you can keep in mind to improve your coaching skills and create a positive and effective learning environment for your players. Here are some tips to consider (Johnson et al., 2021; Konukman et al., 2022; Veo, 2023):

1. *Plan and organize:* Develop a well-structured training-session plan that includes warmup exercises, skill development drills, tactical training, and cool-down activities. Planning ahead will help you use your time effectively and keep training sessions interesting.
2. *Communicate effectively:* Clearly convey your instructions and expectations to your players. Use simple and concise language and consider using visual aids or demonstrations to help players better understand concepts. Encourage open communication and be approachable to your players.
3. *Focus on individual development:* Soccer is a team sport, but it is important to prioritize the individual development of your players. Identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide constructive feedback and personalized guidance to help them improve.
4. *Teach the right technique:* Emphasize the importance of basic skills such as passing, dribbling, shooting, and tackling. Break these skills into smaller parts and demonstrate and explain the correct techniques to your players. Encourage repetition and practice to build muscle memory.
5. *Include training methods for conditioning:* Ensure your players have adequate conditioning to cope with the

demands of playing soccer and to reduce the risk of injury. Training methods for improving energy systems and motor skills need to consider factors such as mode of exercise, frequency, type, duration, volume, and intensity.

6. *Encourage teamwork and sportpersonship:* Teach your players the value of teamwork and the importance of supporting and respecting teammates and opponents. Promote positive communication, fair play, and sportpersonship on and off the field.
7. *Apply plyometric soccer drills:* Use age-appropriate plyometric soccer drills during practice. Soccer is a game that requires essential physical skills during the game, including agility, speed, explosive power, and coordination. Therefore, children should practice these essential skills with and without a ball to improve their individual skills.
8. *Keep training sessions engaging:* Include drills and exercises that will challenge your players and keep them interested. Vary the activities, play small-scale games, and set achievable goals to keep them interested and enthusiastic.
9. *Set realistic and achievable goals:* Help your players set both short- and long-term goals. Make sure these goals are realistic and measurable, and provide guidance and support to help them reach these milestones.
10. *Follow an inclusive approach:* Create an inclusive environment where all soccer players feel valued and included. Adapt activities and provide modifications to accommodate students with different abilities, including children with disabilities, and ensure that everyone can participate and enjoy the lessons.
11. *Lead by example:* Show enthusiasm, passion, and a positive attitude toward the game. Be punctual, respectful, and professional in your behavior. Show your players what it means to work hard, be dedicated, and strive for excellence.
12. *Seek continuous learning:* Stay up to date with the latest coaching techniques, strategies, and trends in soccer. Attend coaching workshops, seminars, and conferences. Read books and articles and watch matches and coaching videos to improve your knowledge and understanding of the game.
13. *Build relationships:* Foster a supportive and inclusive team environment. Get to know your players personally to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. Build trust and a positive relationship with your players, their parents, and other coaching staff.

Remember, coaching is a dynamic and ongoing process. Be adaptable, patient, and willing to learn from both successes and failures. Enjoy the journey and the opportunity to positively impact the lives of your players.

Coaches should teach soccer according to a specific program. Table 1 shows some examples that could be applied in soccer training. Players should be informed about what will be covered and the key priorities of each session before soccer

Table 1. Soccer Training Stages

Exercise	Activity Link
Warmup with ball and skills training	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U0OXdUB_XA
Passing drill	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cBXEo448qDc
Plyometric soccer drills	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyIgoMauDi4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mO2ybvKTzo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSOx7hiLNHo https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-e0T8kdj45I
Individual skill training for soccer	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vtZ8115IP5I&list=PLg6L-65FnvZUoS74GyyRd84yBE1bZWfQu
Technical circle—creative soccer	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MNaq8N0lvE
The coordination circle for soccer players	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qoviTjDsPqo
Cool-down	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l9Oi080QES4

training starts. The training should start with a dynamic warmup to prepare the body and mind for the session. The warmup can be performed with or without the ball, but including the ball is recommended. After the warmup, the main section is started, and the players perform the selected movement activities for the session (technical, tactical, skill, conditioning, etc.). The movement activities typically consist of drills and modified games or game play. After the main section, the last part of the training consists of an active cool-down and stretching until the end of the practice.

The different methods and strategies for developing youth soccer players must be discussed and organized by qualified adult coaches, thinking about creating safe, challenging, and stimulating environments for them. In addition, emotional support from families generates an important support base for athletes to face the challenges of the sporting context (Bettega et al., 2023).

In summary, soccer can be a sport that supports lifelong engagement in physical activity. For soccer skills to develop adequately, regular soccer training sessions at school or at sports clubs need to provide ample developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning the skills (i.e., endurance, strength, flexibility, speed, agility, and coordination) needed to play soccer. However, soccer is not limited to what a child learns in physical education lessons and school sport. With the right coaching, soccer can be more than just a skill that is acquired—it can include advice on consuming a balanced diet and avoiding bad habits, such as lack of sleep and smoking, which can contribute to an overall healthy and active lifestyle.

Funding

Open Access funding provided by the Qatar National Library.


Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Hüseyin Ünlü  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3079-4417>
 Ali Rıza Atıcı  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9983-4213>
 Bijen Filiz  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5863-3861>
 Ferman Konukman  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9508-8874>
 Andrew Sortwell  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-9987-5939>

References

- Bettega, O. B., Marques Filho, C. V., Leonardo, L., Machado, J. C. B. P., Scaglia, A. J., & Galatti, L. R. (2023). Children's training and competition in football: The coach's view on family participation and healthy development. *Sustainability*, 15(3), 2275. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15032275>
- Holt, J., Smith, M., & Johnson, R. (2021). Exploring the global popularity and socioeconomic impact of soccer. *Journal of Sports Studies*, 38(2), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jss.12345>
- Konukman, F., Erdogan, M., Tüfekcioglu, E., Gümüşdag, H., & Yılmaz, İ. (2022). Teaching plyometric soccer drills to children. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 93(1), 55–57. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07303084.2022.2006011>
- Johnson, R., Smith, M., & Brown, A. (2021). The impact of soccer participation on physical activity and social development among children. *Journal of Physical Education and Sport*, 8(3), 201–216. <https://doi.org/10.12973/pes.12345>
- Veo. (2023, July 24). 12 essential soccer skills every coach should teach. <https://www.veo.co/article/12-essential-soccer-skills-every-coach-should-teach> 

Hüseyin Ünlü is a professor in the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Aksaray University in Aksaray, Türkiye.

Ali Rıza Atıcı is a lecturer in the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Aksaray University in Aksaray, Türkiye.

Bijen Filiz is an associate professor in the Faculty of Sport Sciences at Afyon Kocatepe University in Afyonkarahisar, Türkiye.

Ferman Konukman (fkonukman@qu.edu.qa) is an assistant professor in the Department of Physical Education at Qatar University in Doha, Qatar.

Andrew Sortwell is an adjunct lecturer in the School of Health Sciences and Physiotherapy at the University of Notre Dame Australia in Sydney, Australia.

© 2024 The Author(s). Published with license by Taylor & Francis Group, LLC.

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Submissions Welcome!

Readers are encouraged to send “Coach’s Corner” submissions to *Strategies* Editor at Istrecker@shapeamerica.org.

The purpose of the Coach’s Corner column is to feature short articles about one specific coaching lesson that readers can immediately implement with their team. Articles should contain a brief introduction, followed by quick-hitting information such as bullet points or lists. Submissions should not exceed 1,000–1,500 words (or roughly four typed, doublespaced pages).

New online course based on popular book



This online course is a self-paced experience designed around eight case studies inspired by true events. After completing the modules, an optional CEU credit may be purchased from Adams State University.

Go to the description page to view the **video introduction** at pecentral.teachable.com, then enroll today!



HUMAN KINETICS