

U/6 Lesson Plans & Practice Ideas

7 week plan
Week by Week

COACHING THE U/6 PLAYER

At this age, our goal is not to create perfect soccer players. Our goal is to help children become comfortable with the ball, confident on the field, willing to try things, and excited to come back next week.

The golden rule for this age group:

Let them play. Let them touch the ball. Teach one simple idea at a time.

U/6 players are still developing coordination, balance, awareness, and confidence. They learn best by doing, not by listening to long explanations.

The U/6 Coaching Rule: Try to keep explanations to 30 seconds or less.

Instead:

Show it → Let them try → Stop briefly → Give one coaching point → Let them try again.

If an activity isn't working, don't spend five minutes trying to explain it differently. Change the activity.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Every practice is designed for 60 minutes.

If your team practices once per week: Use Practice A.

If your team practices twice per week:

Use Practice A for the first session and Practice B for the second session.

Practice B is designed to reinforce the same weekly theme while giving players a new challenge.

Important: You do not need to complete every activity perfectly. If the kids are having fun and getting lots of touches, you're doing it right. If an activity is going really well, let it run a little longer. If the players are losing interest, move on.

PRACTICE STRUCTURE

A typical 60-minute practice:

0:00-0:10 — Ball Activity

Every player should have a ball whenever possible.

0:10-0:20 — Skill/Game

Introduce the day's main idea.

0:20-0:30 — Challenge

Add a defender, target, direction, or decision.

0:30-0:40 — Small-Sided Game

Let players use the skill in a game.

0:40-1:00 — Soccer Game

Finish with small-sided soccer

The final game is extremely important. This is where players begin to understand that the things they practiced actually happen in soccer.

WEEK 1 — "ME & MY BALL"

Theme

Ball familiarity + dribbling

The Big Idea

Before we ask players to pass, defend, or understand positions, they need to become comfortable with the ball. Our message this week: "Can you make the ball go where you want?"

We are introducing:

- Dribbling
- Stopping the ball
- Starting again
- Changing direction
- Speed changes
- Using both feet
- Keeping the ball close
- Looking up

Don't worry about perfect technique. Attempts are victories.

PRACTICE 1A — "MY BALL, MY FRIEND"

Equipment

For approximately 8-12 players:

8-12 soccer balls

15-20 cones

2-4 small goals

Pinnies if available

Extra balls

Field

Create a playing area large enough for players to move without constantly running into each other.

0:00-0:10 — FREE DRIBBLE

Give every player a ball.

Say: "Take your ball and show me what you can do!"

Let them move freely. After a few minutes, begin giving challenges: Can you go fast? Can you go slow? Can you stop? Can you turn? Can you use your other foot? Can you keep the ball close?

Coaching Points: "Little touches!" "Keep it close!" "Look up!"

Don't stop everyone every time you see something that could be corrected. Walk around and encourage.

0:10-0:20 — RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Every player has a ball.

-Green: Dribble.

-Yellow: Slow down.

-Red: Stop the ball.

Add:

-U-Turn: Turn and go the other way.

-Race Car: Go fast.

-Turtle: Go slowly.

Players are learning:

Start → Stop → Turn → Go again.

Those simple movements are the foundation for everything that comes later.

0:20-0:30 — GATES

Create small gates using two cones. Players dribble through the gates.

Challenge:

"How many gates can you get through?"

Progressions: Don't use the same gate twice. Find a gate, stop, then go. Dribble through a gate and change direction. Find a gate, look up, then choose another.

Coaching Point: "Where is the next space?"

0:30-0:40 — SHARKS

Every player has a ball. One coach becomes the shark. Players dribble around the area while the shark attempts to kick balls away. If a player loses their ball: "Go get it!" They immediately return to the game.

Important - Nobody is eliminated.

We want players getting repeated opportunities.

Coaching Point: "Can you get away from the shark?"

This naturally teaches players to:

- Change direction
- Protect the ball
- Find space
- Dribble away from pressure

0:40-1:00 — 3v3/SMALL-SIDED GAME

Create small fields. Use small goals. Let them play. Avoid assigning positions. Avoid constantly stopping the game.

Celebrate: "Great dribble!" "Great try!" "You found space!" "Great job getting toward the goal!"

PRACTICE 1B — "CONTROL & MOVE"

Use this practice for teams with a second weekly session.

0:00-0:10 — BALL MASTERY

Everyone has a ball.

Challenge:

- Right foot
- Left foot
- Inside of foot
- Outside of foot
- Stop
- Go
- Turn

0:10-0:20 — FOLLOW THE COACH

Coach leads. Players copy.

Try:

- Fast
- Slow
- Stop
- Turn
- Circle
- Change direction
- Go toward a cone
- Go away from a cone

Then let a player become the leader. This builds confidence and encourages creativity.

0:20-0:30 — TREASURE HUNT

Scatter cones around the field. Players must dribble to different "treasures."

Call:

"Find a treasure!"

Then:

"Find a treasure and turn!"

Then:

"Find a treasure, stop your ball, and go somewhere else!"

0:30-0:40 — BEAT THE COACH

Players dribble toward the coach. Coach provides light pressure. Players attempt to change direction and get around the coach. Don't make the defender too difficult. The goal is confidence.

0:40-0:50 — 1v1 TO GOAL

Create several small fields. One attacker. One defender. One ball. Attacker tries to score. Defender tries to win the ball. Keep rounds short. Rotate frequently.

0:50-1:00 — 3v3

Let them play.

WEEK 1 COACHING CHECKLIST

By the end of Week 1, look for players who:

- Are comfortable with a ball
- Can stop the ball
- Can start again
- Attempt to change direction
- Begin looking up
- Chase the ball
- Understand which direction to attack
- Enjoy practice

If they're smiling, moving, touching the ball, and trying things — Week 1 was successful.

WEEK 2 — "FIND THE SPACE"

Theme

Dribbling + awareness + changing direction

The Big Idea:

Players don't always need to dribble straight ahead. We want them to begin recognizing: "If there's space, go there." And: "If someone is in front of me, find somewhere else to go."

PRACTICE 2A — "WHERE CAN I GO?"

0:00-0:10 — FREE DRIBBLE

Everyone has a ball.

Coach calls:

- Go
- Stop
- Turn
- Fast
- Slow
- Change direction

Add:

"Can you find an empty space?"

0:10-0:20 — COLOR CORNERS

Create four cone areas. Call a color. Players dribble toward that area. Change colors quickly. Then add:

"Don't follow your friend. Find your own space!"

0:20-0:30 — GATES WITH TRAFFIC

Players dribble through gates. Gradually add more players moving around. Challenge them to avoid collisions.

Coaching Point: "Eyes up!"

0:30-0:40 — ESCAPE THE COACH

Coach walks toward players. Players must change direction and escape. Make it fun and theatrical. "I'm coming!" Players learn to recognize pressure without needing a complicated explanation.

0:40-0:50 — 1v1 TO GATES

Attacker attempts to dribble through a gate. Defender attempts to stop them. Rotate frequently.

0:50-1:00 — 3v3

Theme:

"Can you find space?"

PRACTICE 2B — "FIND A NEW WAY"

0:00-0:10

Ball mastery.

0:10-0:20

Gates challenge.

0:20-0:30

Coach blocks gates. Players must find another gate.

0:30-0:40

1v1 channels.

0:40-0:50

2v1 to goal.

0:50-1:00

3v3.

WEEK 3 — "CAN YOU BEAT ME?"

Theme

1v1 attacking

The Big Idea: We want players to become comfortable taking a defender on.

Teach: Space available? GO! Defender in front? TURN or GO AROUND! Goal available?

SHOOT! Most importantly: Mistakes are part of learning.

Do not discourage a player because they lost the ball while trying to dribble past someone.

Trying is the development.

PRACTICE 3A**0:00-0:10 — Ball Mastery****0:10-0:20 — Beat the Coach****0:20-0:30 — 1v1 Through Gates****0:30-0:40 — 1v1 to Goal****0:40-0:50 — 2v1****0:50-1:00 — 3v3**

Main Coaching Phrase: "Can you go forward?"

PRACTICE 3B

Introduce simple attacking choices: Defender close? Change direction. Space available? Go! Goal available? Shoot!

Activities:

Dribbling challenges

1v1 gates

1v1 to goal

2v1

2v2

3v3

WEEK 4 — "SHARE THE BALL"

Theme

Passing + receiving

The Big Idea: We don't want to take away a player's desire to dribble.

Instead: "Dribble when you can. Pass when it helps."

Players begin learning: "Sometimes my teammate can help me."

PRACTICE 4A

0:00-0:10 — BALL MASTERY

Start with the familiar routine.

0:10-0:20 — PARTNER PASSING

Partners approximately 4-6 yards apart. Player A passes. Player B stops the ball then passes back.

Simple Coaching Points: "Look at your friend." "Kick the middle of the ball." "Gentle pass." "Stop it first."

0:20-0:30 — PASS THROUGH THE GATE

Partners pass through a cone gate.

Challenge: "How many can you get?"

0:30-0:40 — PASS & MOVE

Player A passes to Player B. Player A moves. Player B passes back. Keep everyone moving.

0:40-0:50 — 2v1 TO GOAL

Two attackers. One defender. Let the players discover passing opportunities.

Instead of yelling: "PASS! PASS! PASS!"

Ask: "Did you see your teammate?"

0:50-1:00 — 3v3

Celebrate both:

Great dribbles + Great passes.

PRACTICE 4B — "PASS & MOVE"

Ball mastery, Partner passing, Follow your pass, Passing gates, 2v2, 3v3

Main question:

"Where can you go after you pass?"

WEEK 5 — "LET'S SCORE!"

Theme

Shooting + finishing

The Big Idea: This should be one of the most fun weeks of the season.

Our message: "When you get a chance, go score!"

PRACTICE 5A

0:00-0:10

Dribble freely.

Then: "Can you dribble toward the goal?"

0:10-0:20 — SHOOTING

Players shoot from a short distance. Keep instruction simple: "Toe down. Kick the ball!"

Demonstrate. Then let them shoot.

0:20-0:30 — DRIBBLE & SHOOT

Dribble toward goal. Shoot. Retrieve. Repeat.

0:30-0:40 — BEAT THE COACH & SHOOT

Coach provides light pressure. Player attempts to get around the coach and shoot.

0:40-0:50 — SHOOTING CHALLENGE

Two teams. Dribble. Shoot. Retrieve. Next player. Keep it moving.

0:50-1:00 — GAME

Encourage: "Can we get the ball toward the goal?"

PRACTICE 5B

Build combinations:

Receive → Dribble → Shoot

Then:

Pass → Receive → Shoot

Then:

1v1 → Shoot

Finish with 3v3.

WEEK 6 — "WIN IT BACK!"

Theme

Defending

The Big Idea: Now we flip the perspective.

When we don't have the ball: "We can try to get it back!"

PRACTICE 6A

0:00-0:10

Ball mastery.

0:10-0:20

Sharks.

0:20-0:30

1v1 defending.

Introduce: "Get close."

Then: "Slow down."

Then: "Try to win it!"

Don't overwhelm players with defensive terminology.

0:30-0:40 — DEFENDER'S TREASURE

Attacker tries to dribble through a gate. Defender tries to win the ball. Rotate.

0:40-0:50 — 2v2

Players defend together naturally. Don't worry about formal positions.

Ask: "Can you help your friend?"

0:50-1:00

3v3.

PRACTICE 6B

Use:

1v1

2v1

2v2

3v3

Now players begin connecting:

Attack → Lose the ball → Defend → Win the ball → Attack again.

That's soccer.

WEEK 7 — "PUT IT ALL TOGETHER"

Theme

Play!

This is your celebration week. We aren't introducing a bunch of new skills. We're giving players opportunities to use everything they've learned.

PRACTICE 7A — THE SOCCER ADVENTURE

Set up stations.

-Station 1 — Dribbling

Dribble through gates.

-Station 2 — Turning

Dribble → Turn → Accelerate.

-Station 3 — Shooting

Dribble → Shoot.

-Station 4 — Passing

Pass through gates.

-Station 5 — 1v1

Beat the defender.

-Station 6 — Game

3v3.

Spend approximately 7-8 minutes at each station.

Keep players moving.

PRACTICE 7B — CHAMPIONSHIP DAY

This is about celebration, not standings.

0:00-0:10

Favorite ball games from the season.

0:10-0:20

Dribbling challenge.

0:20-0:30

Shooting challenge.

0:30-0:40

1v1 challenge.

0:40-1:00

Lots of small-sided games. Finish with something memorable:

Team cheer, High fives, Coach awards, Stickers, Certificates, Parents watching

The message should be:

"You learned a lot, you worked hard, and soccer is fun!"

U/6 COACHING CHEAT SHEET

Keep your coaching language SIMPLE.

Instead of long explanations, use short phrases.

Dribbling

"Little touches!"

"Keep it close!"

"Eyes up!"

"Find space!"

Attacking

"Go forward!"

"Can you beat them?"

"Get to the goal!"

Passing

"Find your friend."

"Gentle pass."

"Where can you go next?"

Defending

"Get close."

"Slow down."

"Try to win it!"

"Help your friend."

Confidence

"Great try!"

"I love that idea!"

"Try it again!"

"Mistakes are okay!"

"You were brave enough to try!"

THINGS TO AVOID AT U/6

X Long lines: If six kids are standing in line waiting for one shot, change the activity.

✗ Long lectures: Show them instead.

✗ Constantly stopping the game: Let them experience soccer.

✗ Assigning complicated positions: At this age, players need to experience attacking and defending.

✗ Punishing mistakes: A player losing the ball while trying something is learning.

✗ Winning at the expense of development: Competition is okay. But the goal is to develop confident players who love playing.

THE U/6 COACH'S GOAL

At the end of the season, don't ask: "Can my players run a perfect formation?"

Ask: Are they comfortable with the ball? Are they willing to dribble? Can they change direction? Do they recognize space? Are they beginning to pass? Are they willing to shoot? Will they try to win the ball? Do they understand attacking and defending? Are they becoming more confident? Do they want to play soccer?

If the answer to those questions is yes, you've had a successful season.

Most importantly:

Let them play.

Let them touch the ball.

Let them make mistakes.

Let them be creative.

Let them have fun.