



Introduction to Soccer for Parents of First-Time Youth Players

OR "What have I gotten myself into?"
(Children 4, 5, and 6 Years Old)

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Is Your Child Ready?

- Some instructional programs start as early as age 4-1/2; some children will be ready, some will not
- Some children are going to be athletic; some are going to be artistic; some will be both; some will be neither; no child should be forced into anything
- Some children will pick dandelions; some will charge for the ball like there's no tomorrow; attention spans vary
- Soccer is a running game; Some children like to run, others do not
- Some children are “early adopters,” others can be “late bloomers”
- Soccer is a contact sport; Some children like this, others may hate it
- Children should play soccer because THEY want to
- The ultimate question is, “Are THEY having fun?”



Are You Ready?

- Registration
- Fees
- Equipment
- Time commitment (affects the whole family)
- Learn about the sport
- Show your interest
- Be positive
- Play with your child
- Volunteer



Equipment

- Soccer Shoes (“Cleats”)
- Shinguards
- Ball (Different Sizes, “1” to “5”); Air Pump; Needle
- Shirt (Jersey)
- Shorts
- Socks
- Equipment Bag
- Warm Clothing
- Tennis Shoes or “slides”
- Other: Water Bottle (Sunscreen, inhaler, lawn chair...)



For Practice

- Check the “weather line,” web site, e-mail, etc., if inclement weather
- Make sure you have everything before leaving the house
- Remember the water or sports drink
- Ensure your child is properly dressed for the weather
- Arrive on time (start early); Stay at the field
- Watch your child; be available
- Don’t let your child wear anything hard or dangerous
- Know how to react if your child is “hurt”
- Let the coach... coach
- Volunteer to help if you can
- Change of shoes or clothing if muddy or wet
- A note about lightning
- After practice – change of clothes; get a treat?



Be Positive

- Do not fall into the “screaming parent” trap
- Encourage, don’t criticize
- Ensure that your child wants you to be there
- Demonstrate your interest
- Positive statements: Good job; I’m proud of you
- Reinforcement: What did you learn today?; What was your favorite part of practice?
- Don’t force your child to participate if they don’t want to
- “Did you have fun?”



Opportunities To Teach

- Logistics - Keep gear in the same place
- Planning – prepare “kit” the night before; checklist
- “What is the weather forecast for tomorrow?” “Do you need other clothes?”
- “Is your water bottle clean?” “Did you re-fill it and put it in the refrigerator?”
- How to tell time
- Get dressed before it’s time to leave
- Right from Left
- The coach is a teacher – follow the coach’s directions
- How to tie shoe laces
- No alcohol, no smoking, park in designated spaces, no dogs



The Game

- History
- Objective
- The “Laws of the Game”
- “Handling”
- Ball In and Out of Play



A General Framework of Coaching

- Skills
- Fitness
- Strategy
- Tactics
- Psychology



Skills Are Critical

- Reason
- Dribbling
- Instep Drive
- Use of Both Feet Equally (overcoming dominance)
- No heading at young age



Play Soccer with Your Child

- Backyard or Common Area
- Four Discs/Cones and a Ball
- Remember it's for them!
- Back up, occasionally “go for ball”
- Know when to quit
- Be careful – adults must not kick hard!



Other Soccer Activities

- Go to games (youth to pro)
- Watch it on television
- Rent a movie
- Books
- Check out the web



Where Can It Go From Here

- Instructional
- Recreation
- Select
- Travel
- Club
- High School
- College
- Tournaments
- ODP
- Camps
- Burnout



Questions/References

- Questions?
- References:
 - www.fifa.com
 - www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soccer
 - www.ussoccer.com
 - www.usyouthsoccer.org
 - www.unitedsoccercoaches.org
 - www.coachingamericansoccer.com