



National Soccer Coaches Association of Canada

The U12 Training Guidelines

It is sensible at this age to develop technique and basic tactical understanding. The capacity to solve problems and being creative increases significantly.

Players can begin working on basic and dynamic tactical scenarios.

Use small-sided games to develop basic attacking and defensive principles. Other important aspects of tactical training are possession, combination play, transition and finishing in the final third, as well as zonal defending. Players will rotate in two or three different positions to avoid early specialization.

Players have important physical limitations in terms of strength and endurance. Speed, coordination, balance and agility are the main physical aspects to improve at this stage.



This is a critical Transition Period for the U12 players. They continue to play 9v9. The golden age of learning begins with the U-10's and continuing with the U-12's is the one of the most important age for skill development.

Coaches should continue to use a guided repetition and discovery style of coaching. Use activities that allow players maximum contact with the ball and the emphasis is placed on individual progress rather than game results. Breeding a competitive attitude is deemed important but not to the detriment of long term development.

Coaches will continue to establish a solid base of technique and develop individual skills under the pressure of time, space and opponent (s) and increase technical speed. The teaching of ball skills will be accomplished through game-like activities. The repetition of technique is undertaken through fun games and dynamic activities.

Training Decision Making

In addition to developing specific technical skills with the ball, every soccer player must develop a thorough cognitive understanding of the larger tactical and strategic aspects of the game.

This includes movements where the player is defending or attacking as an individual, as well as larger movements where the player is part of a collective team effort to defend or attack. Vision, game awareness, and good decision-making are all fundamental qualities of effective players, combined with their technical mastery of the ball.

Small-sided games form a critical component of the technical and tactical development of soccer players. During game-like training situations, players learn to combine their technical skills with tactical decision making under realistic playing conditions. Moment-to-moment decision making is critical to their long-term success in the game. (Note: *Players must first have technical mastery of the ball in order to practice their decision making in games and game-like training!*)





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Technical - Tactical

Continue to develop ball mastery in a larger environment with more teammates and opponents.

Develop dribbling 1v1 using different fakes, shielding, and changes of direction.

Develop increased speed and improved decision making before receiving the ball.

Refine passing skills and increase passing range at varied heights. Passing is built from positional perspectives



Develop combination plays. Develop use of back passes. Develop use of wing play. Focus is on decision making of ball carrier.

Develop combination plays in all areas of the field (flanks and central channel).

Refine all shooting skills (finesse, power, accuracy) and introduce functional tasks from specific positions.

Develop Awareness and Vision through small sided games and Futsal program.

Small-Sided Games are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. 1v1 - 2v1 – 3v2 – 4v4 are all fun games that involve the players more because one ball is being shared by fewer players.

- Play 5v5 - 6v6 to teach the Principles of team play.
- Refine decision making while dribbling, running with the ball, and the player's next action (Sequencing). All work is based on the goal and the direction of the play. Refine decision making and the change of pace.
- Players practice in a position-specific environment .

Attacking:
 Refine shooting skills and increase distances. Shoot with variety of surfaces. Develop heading at goal. Produce shots from different positions on the field. Decision making involves applying right technique with understanding the location/area in front of goal. Refine decision making in front of the goal under greater pressure (less space and time).
 Mobility of players with and without the ball . Ball Movement.
 Change Rhythm
 Overlapping. Switch play. Crosses
 All players are mobile on and off the ball while maintaining good balance in the overall team shape. Speed of play is developing. Combination plays are integrated and players refine the coordination of their movements while maintaining a shape. Players are introduced to positional (functional) play
 Develop wing and central plays. Introduce players to overlapping and penetrating runs to increase the number of players in forward positions.

DEFENDING

CHALLENGE AND DUELS
 Develop and refine defending skills: 1 v 1 jockeying and understanding when to delay and when to challenge.
 Develop and refine challenging the ball carrier from different angles to regain possession.
 Introduce and develop ball recovery with body position between ball and opponent.
 Introduce and develop defensive headers and when and how to clear the ball.

POSITIONING – MOVEMENT
 Increased speed + improved decision making on closing down ball carrier
 Develop players in individual tasks in zone defence.
 Position according to ball, teammate and opponent.

MARKING SPACE AND OPPONENET
 Refine understanding of tasks - split vision between ball and opponent.
 Develop good understanding of the team block (compactness) and spaces to cover.
 Develop and refine decision making process for when and how to intercept the ball.

Physical Literacy

Appropriate and correct running, and jumping techniques are taught using the ABC's of athletics (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination, Speed).

- All fitness work with the ball
- Flexibility
- Agility- Coordination with and without the ball.
- Speed
- Endurance
- Balance

Psychological:

- The game should remain fun and enjoyable.
- Players should have a passion for the game.
- Imagination/creativity
- Increase demands
- Maintain discipline
- Encourage players/teams to watch professional and national teams.

