

FYSA Soccer Skill Priorities and Benchmarks

(Developed with guidance from Mass Youth Soccer Statewide U6-U12 Curriculum and USSF Licensing Courses)

The following information in this document is presented as guidelines to consider and apply when coaching players with an *emphasis on the development* of those players.

We must keep in mind that although we play to win, winning is generally a direct result of how well we train and help players develop to their fullest potential.

Remember that 1 v 1 attack and dribbling are the foundation of player development.

When we are considering spending time developing skills / aspects of the game, stop and ask yourself:

*“How well can they dribble? ie. Control the ball.
How comfortable are they with the ball under pressure in tight space?”
“What type of decisions do they make and how quickly do they make them?”*

Encourage players to be deceptive, creative and to take risks

– we never want them to stop doing these things.

From the ages of 5-14,
our purpose needs to be about the development of the individual player,
not the success of the team.

Team is important,
though not at the expense of the individual development of our players.

Juggling
should be encouraged as an at home skill development activity. It should be emphasized at each practice as a transition time activity or have cool-down competitions. Encourage players to challenge each other!

Please do not use practice time for juggling other than a transition activity, a cool down or a 5 minute competition

U-6 SKILL PRIORITIES

Skill Priorities:

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Soft 1st touch

U-6 Juggling Benchmarks By the end of the 1st year

All players should be able to:

1. Drop a ball from their hands to their right thigh and catch ball with hands.
2. Drop a ball from their hands to their left thigh and catch ball with hands.
3. This should be accomplished both standing and moving forward.
4. Throw a ball lightly against their chest down to either thigh and catch ball with hands.

Some players should be able to:

1. Drop ball from their hands off touching ball with their right thigh twice before catching it and repeat with left thigh.
2. Drop ball from their hands touching ball with both thigh's before catching it.
3. Drop ball from their hands to either foot and catch the ball with their hands.

By the end of their 1st year,

players should be able to comfortably perform the following:

Mexican Hat dance: Players with the sole of one foot GENTLY on their ball and the other foot on the ground; while singing and clapping to the Mexican Hat Dance tune (optional), change from one foot to other simultaneously. Get into a rhythm and increase speed. **Variation:** As player changes from one foot to the other, player rotates around the stationary ball. In pairs, players can hold hands and rotate together while individually alternating foot touches on the ball. (Both with the right, both with the left, while rotating counter / clockwise.)

Touch Step/Touch Step: All players stand next to ball with ball on their right with their feet together. Lift closest foot to ball above ball, tap ball, step over to the right of the ball; as right foot touches the ground, simultaneously lift left foot above ball, tap ball, and step over. Now both feet are on opposite side of the ball. Players need to leave room for second foot when placing first foot on other side. Repeat same to the left. Get into rhythm/dance. **Variations:** Move from front to back or back to front; beginnings of 'step over' dribbling technique.

'Tick-Tock' or fundamental / speed touches: Players touch the ball alternating with the inside of one foot then the other. **KNEES MUST BE BENT!** Each time the player's foot steps down, it should touch the ball. Players should be able to do this moving forward and backward. (Coaches, hold up a number of fingers and ask the players to call out the number as you change the number. This will result in them looking up and away from the ball.)

Pull Back & Turn: Players with their ball in front of them reach forward and with the sole of one foot GENTLY on their ball pull it back and turn to the side with which they pulled back. (Pull back with right foot, turn to the right. If players struggle turning, have them hold out their right hand as they pull back with the right foot.)

When you introduce these next two, consider having players do them in super slow motion at first, so you may more easily make technical corrections.

Spin-in: Players with their ball in front of them reach forward and with the inside of their right foot, they should overstep the ball, **(heal down, toe pointed up and knees bent)**, and touch the ball as they spin to the left. Every time their right foot steps down, it should contact the ball. Repeat the same in the opposite direction with the left foot. (Not too long of time, they get dizzy.)

Spin-out: Players with their ball in front of them reach forward and **with their PINKIE TOE**, of their right foot, they should overstep the ball, **(heal down, toe pointed up and knees bent)**, and touch the ball as they spin to their right. Every time their right foot steps down, it should contact the ball. Repeat the same in the opposite direction with the left foot. (Not too long of time, they get dizzy.)

U-8 SKILL PRIORITIES

(includes U7)

Skill Priorities:

- **Dribble IN ALL DIRECTIONS with all sides of both feet**
- **Dribble out of trouble**
- **Dribble past someone**
- **Soft 1st touch**
- **Introduce proper striking technique (with laces) {not a focus}**
- **Introduce passing with inside of foot {not a focus}**

U-8

Juggling Benchmarks

By the end of an Instructional Player's 3rd year

All players should be able to:

Accomplish U6 juggling benchmarks above.

Some players should be able to:

Drop ball from their hands to and juggle the ball with 4+ touches using at least 2 surfaces before the ball hits the ground.

By the end of their 3rd year

IN ADDITION TO PREVIOUS SKILLS & BENCHMARKS

ALL players should be able to comfortably perform the following:

1. Control the ball from dribbling out of play
2. Properly shield the ball
3. Execute a Pull Back & Turn
3. Execute a Spin in and Spin Out
4. Execute a Cruijff (Cruyff) move: (pull ball laterally behind your back or other foot)
5. Understand how to push pass with inside of foot (heel down, toe up, knees bent)
6. Execute a fake 1/2 step sideways with one foot and push the ball forward with the other
7. Occasionally dribble with proper technique with outside of foot (pushing with pinkie toe). It's the technique used for dribbling in a natural stride.
8. Occasionally strike ball properly with laces*
{Not presently taught through FYSA's Instructional Curriculum}

Also players should be able to understand the following:

- The U-7 & U-8 dribble or pass modification with a 3+ step yielding distance
- How to restart play after a goal (Ball is restarted at mid-field with all players on their own half of the field. Play starts with the U-7 & U-8 dribble or pass modification.)
- That the last player that the ball touches prior to leaving play determines which team restarts
- The ball is NOT out of play UNTIL the ball COMPLETELY crosses the line. That is, if ANY part of the ball is ABOVE the line, the ball is in play even if the ball is touching outside the line
- The conditions that determine a corner restart (Ball last touches a player who is defending the goal on the endline the ball went over) (Restart with the U-7 & U-8 dribble or pass modification from the corner)
- The conditions that determine the modified goal kick restart (the defending team must yield a 10+ step distance rather than the usual 3+ when the attacking team restarts with a dribble or pass from the endline with the goal they are defending)

U-10 SKILL PRIORITIES

(includes U9)

Skill Priorities:

- Dribble IN ALL DIRECTIONS with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Shielding
- Passing with inside and outside of both feet
- Shooting with both feet---using laces
- Receiving the ball with all parts of body
- Utilize proper heading technique

Tactical Priorities:

- Basic Attacking Ideas {Penetration, support, width, depth}
- Basic Defending Ideas {Pressure, cover, balance}
- Comprehend 1 vs. 1 concepts
- Comprehend 2 vs. 1 concepts
- Introduction to 2 vs. 2 concepts
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd defenders
- Comprehend roles of 1st and 2nd attackers

U-10 Juggling Benchmarks

This will take commitment to practice outside of training...

All U10 players should be able to juggle 8 touches with no more than 2 simultaneous touches with the same body part

MOST should be able to juggle 10 +

Some 20 + touches

By the end of their 5th year and U-10 experience

IN ADDITION TO PREVIOUS SKILLS & BENCHMARKS

All players should understand and be able to implement the principles of 1 v 1 attack and defense.

Attacking 1 v 1 concepts include:

- Visual cues of when to attack by dribbling and when they should consider passing
- The technique of deceptive moves to unbalance defenders
- Reading the unbalance defender
- Controlling a penetrating touch

Defending 1 v 1 concepts include:

- Understanding the concepts of;
 - Pressure-Patience-Posture: PATIENCE is very important
 - Approach fast-arrive slow, side-on, bending angle of approach,
 - Position in relation to the line of the ball
 - Recognizing opportunities to counter attack
- Implement techniques of stealing the ball; Use shoulder to get into position to pry the ball from their opponent or to toe-poke, or use laces to drive through the ball

AND

Recognize defensive situations where they should pressure the ball, or drop and delay.

U-12 SKILL PRIORITIES

(includes U11)

Skill Priorities:

- Continue mastering U10 and under skills.
- Speed Dribbling in Traffic
- Ability to chip the ball
- Accurately play long passes with laces
- Apply proper techniques for offensive & defensive heading
- Power/Accuracy Shooting
- Utilize proper Offensive and Defensive heading technique

Tactical Priorities:

- Continue mastering U10 and under skills
- Communication
- Basic Support Positions
- Receiving the Ball Away from Pressure
- How and when to switch the point of attack
- Pressure vs. Containing
- Proper 2 vs. 2 roles
- Introduction to all roles in 3 vs. 3
- Keep asking the players to be creative and to take risks - we never want them to stop doing these things
- Ask for feedback from them - they will tell you how things are going
- Try to hand over leadership and ownership of the team to them
Keep it fun!!!

U-12 Juggling Benchmarks

This will take commitment to practice outside of training...

All U12 players should be able to juggle 10 touches with no more than 2 simultaneous touches with the same body part

MOST should be able to juggle 20 +

Some 30 + touches

U-14 SKILLPRIORITIES

(includes U13)

Skill Priorities:

- Continue mastering U12 and under skills.
- Master heading techniques (Defensive and Offensive) and use with confidence.

Tactical Priorities:

- Continue mastering U12 and under skills.
- Demonstrate constant positive and constructive Communication on the field.
- Begin to learn offensive tactics and position responsibilities
- Begin to learn defensive tactics and position responsibilities

U-14 Juggling Benchmarks

This will take commitment to practice outside of training...

All U14 players should be able to juggle 20 touches with no more than 2 simultaneous touches with the same body part

MOST should be able to juggle 25 +

Some 40 + touches