



COACHING FORMULA AND DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS: STAGE 2: 6-8 YEAR OLD PLAYERS

EXCERPTS FROM THE UNITED
SOCCER COACHES PLAYER
DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM





United Soccer Coaches offers the following formula to guide coaches planning for the development of players in the second Stage of Development. Children approximately 6-8 years old. The coaching formula is designed to provide coaches with the recipe for producing the optimum learning environment for players, but these are only recommendations. The coach must also plan for local considerations that may affect the formula, such as climate, field availability, other sports and after school activities and social or religious restrictions.

COACHING FORMULA		
COACHING THEME Priority themes for this stage of development. For a comprehensive list see United Soccer Coaches Competency Matrix.	Consolidate from Stage 1: 1. Dribbling. 2. Ball Manipulation. 3. 1v1 Attacking. 4. 1v1 Defending. 5. Shooting unopposed.	Introduce at Stage 2: 1. Passing over a short distance. 2. Receiving the ball with feet. 3. Basic goalkeeping - handling.
SESSION FREQUENCY & DURATION How often & long a training sessions should occur.	2 to 3 seasons per year = 20-30 weeks per annum. 2 training sessions a week = 40-60 training sessions per annum. 45-60 minutes per session for 6 year old players. 60 minutes per session for 7-8 year old players.	
COACHING TIME ANNUALLY How many hours we should dedicate to training in a 12 month period.	80-120 hours per annum in an organized coaching session with a suitably qualified and experienced coach.	
NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES DURING THE SESSION The total number of activities including warm-up, main theme and games.	3-4 activities per session related to 1 or 2 themes (see coaching themes). Each activity to last 10-15 minutes and repeat at least a couple of times.	
NUMBER OF NEW ACTIVITIES The number of activities introduced into a training session that are new to the players.	United Soccer Coaches recommends recommends coaches introduce no more than two new activities per session. One new activity per session is ideal.	
BALANCE BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL AND TEAM FOCUS Ideal percentage of training dedicated to individual and team/group training.	85% of time should be dedicated to individual development with every player having a ball for the vast majority of the session.	
NUMBER OF COACHING POINTS Average number of coaching points/teaching moments a coach will wish to share in a session.	Plan to introduce and reinforce 1-2 key coaching points a session. Focus on skill, working in pairs and basic rules of the game.	
GAME FORMAT Recommended practice and game format.	Practice - 1v1-2v1 format is ideal. Small-sided games - 4v4 with no goalies or 5v5 with goalkeepers.	



DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS

STAGE 2 - MIDDLE CHILDHOOD (6-8 YEARS OLD)

A 6 year old is eager, active and likes to be on the go. Although keen to act independently, a 6 year old needs parental approval, understanding, praise and encouragement. Pushing too hard or expecting too much can result in the child becoming tense and nervous. An 8 year old is able to accept moderate responsibilities. Peer groups become important and the child will identify with other youngsters of the same sex and with similar interests and activities.

DEVELOPMENT FOCUS:

- Movement skills and technical development remain top of the agenda in Stage 2.
- Small sided games and teamwork activities are introduced.
- Speed training commences for Girls (6-8 years) & Boys (7-9 years)
- Optimal time for training suppleness occurs for both Girls and Boys in stages 2 and 3 (6-10 years)

KEY DEVELOPMENT POINTS FOR CHILDREN IN STAGE 2

<p>PHYSICALLY</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coordination and body control improve rapidly as there is slower growth. 2. Boys and girls have equal ability. 3. Reaction time is slow, but improves as the child grows. 4. Lots of energy as endurance levels but there are fluctuations in energy. 5. High need for skill development. 6. Fine motor skills developing. 7. Visual and hand/eye coordination improving. 8. Height and weight increasing at a steady rate. 9. Balance improves with ear developments. 10. Learns best by being physically active. 11. Needs to repeat activities that are well known and mastered. 12. Eye development and ability to track objects in motion improving. 13. High center of gravity, so balance can be difficult.
<p>PSYCHOLOGICAL/ SOCIAL</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interests often change rapidly. 2. Enjoys initiating activities. 3. Enjoys being praised for endeavors from adults. 4. Starts to become more independent and attempts to exercise more control over own environment. 5. Appreciates consistency in own environment. 6. Learns by repetition. 7. Experimental, exploratory behavior is part of development. 8. Still egocentric – each player wants a ball. 9. Peer group becomes increasingly important. 10. Players are concrete thinkers and find abstract concepts difficult. 11. Players start to develop powers of reasoning – if you do ‘X’ the result will be ‘Y’. 12. Easily motivated and eager to try new things. Willingness to seek risk and adventure. 13. Needs guidance and praise from adults to stay on task and to achieve the best performance. 14. Increasingly self-assured but can be childish and silly at times. 15. Stronger sense of right and wrong. 16. Growing desire to be liked and accepted by friends. 17. Enthusiastic and impatient.



KEY DEVELOPMENT POINTS FOR CHILDREN IN STAGE 2 *(Continued)*

COGNITIVE/ MENTAL

1. Imaginative, spontaneous and creative.
2. Able to stay on task longer due to increased attention span.
3. Likes to be tested but often dislikes public failure.
4. Likes to try new activities.
5. Better able to understand and learn because of growing memory capacity.
6. Starting to visualize instructions—although demonstrations are much more concrete.
7. Inconsistent attention span.
8. Interests can be short and fast changing.
9. Highly verbal.
10. Asks fact-orientated questions (e.g., wants to know how, why and when).
11. Rapid development of mental skills.
12. Greater ability to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings.
13. Less focus on one's self – seeks social comparison.

DEVELOPMENT CHARACTERISTICS TRANSLATED TO COACHING PLAYERS IN STAGE 2

Translated to player development this means:

1. Continued involvement of fundamental movement skills – running, jumping, skipping, throwing etc.
2. Focusing on ball familiarization and dribbling skills – one ball per child.
3. Introduction of paired and cooperation activities.
4. Help players understand a task by demonstration and asking questions
5. Sessions requiring players to be extremely active.
6. Selecting activities that do not place undue stress on the muscles, bones and energy systems of the body.
7. Repeating activities regularly – constant change and insufficient reinforcement negatively affects learning.
8. Camouflaging and concealing technical information by using names, characters and stories.
9. Encouraging trial and error, keeping instruction to a minimum.
10. Using equipment and props to increase complexity but continue to make the sessions fun – hurdles, hoops, ladders, bean bags etc.
11. Including competitive games, but emphasize success other than just winning (i.e. effort)
12. Providing considerable encouragement.
13. Including 'games and matches' in every session
14. Introduction to small sided games – 2v2 to 4v4 – play at the end of a practice session – don't sacrifice practice sessions for games at this stage.
15. All players to receive fundamental goal keeping skills – catching, throwing and diving (players love to dive!).
16. Introduce basic rules of the game – including restarts when ball leaves the field.
17. Passing skills can be introduced.
18. Avoiding temptations to place players in specialist positions (i.e. full back, forward or goal keeper)