

Northern Lights Recreational Soccer Coaching Manual

Recreational Soccer
4 v 4 Coaching Manual
(U7)



Northern Lights Soccer Club

Northern Lights Recreational Soccer Coaching Manual



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Revised April 1, 2011

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Policies and Guidelines

- **GAME START:** Games need to start on time. This is important especially in the early part of the year when it gets dark early. If a team is short players, consider loaning them a player or reducing the number of field players in order to make the game happen.
- **REFEREE’S:** If you don’t have a referee (unlikely but it has happened) coaches should go ahead and start the game with one coach from each team covering ½ of the field until a referee arrives.
- **PACT:** There is zero tolerance for yelling at the officials by players, fans and coaches. These referees are young kids who are just starting out in their referee careers. Act as if the referee was your child.
- **INCLEMENT WEATHER:** Check the website for up to date cancellations for games. If teams are unsure, they must show up. Remember, soccer games are often played in the rain.
- **RESCHEDULING GAMES:** There are no re-scheduling games. Please contact opposing team’s coach and share players to complete rosters and play games. You can also borrow players from other teams in your same age group.
- **GARBAGE:** Be sure to clean up after your team. Leave the fields cleaner than when you arrived.
- **GOAL SAFETY:** DO NOT ALLOW PLAYERS TO HANG ON THE GOALS OR NETS.

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3v3

• **TEAM SET UP:**

- 3v3 -- Players should be introduced to the triangle shape.



4v4

• **TEAM SET UP:**

- 4v4 – Players should begin to recognize and understand how to play in a diamond.



5v5

• **Team Set Up:**

- 5v5 – Players should learn to play in a diamond with a player in the middle.

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MYSA National Background Check

Due each year is the online national background check as required by our affiliate, MYSA. This process replaces the former notarized paper form requirement in previous seasons. Please note that all coaches/assistant coaches must complete this process.

See below for instructions.

National Background Check Website: <http://mnyouthsoccer.org/programs/backgroundcheck.cfm>

Click on the "Client Log-In" tab

User ID: MYSNLS

Password: MYSNLS

- Click on the "Request" tab
- Type in your full legal name to authorize your electronic signature
- Complete all required fields noted with a red asterisk
- The required searches will automatically populate - do not make any changes/additions
- Click the "Continue" button
- Click the "Add/Edit Jurisdictions" button
- First Search Select: Felony/Misdemeanor, MN, and Statewide
- Second Search Select: Felony/Misdemeanor, MN and enter your county of residence
- Click on the "Add Searches to Order" button
- To complete the process, click on the "Agree and Submit Order" button
- Upon successful completion of the background check, you will receive a confirmation page to print for your records

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PHILOSOPHY

Welcome to the Northern lights Recreational Soccer, where we provide each player (ages 4-13) the opportunity to play soccer in a supportive and rewarding environment that emphasizes fun and skill development.

Our Developmental Philosophy focuses on:

- Age-appropriate soccer instruction and field sizes
- A fun-filled learning and playing environment
- Coaching education and support

What benefits will our children experience in the Northern Lights Recreational League?

- Age-appropriate soccer instruction to develop skills
- Small-sided games that allow for more goals, more touches, more activity, more engagement and more fun!
- Non-pressure playing environment
- Enjoyment of the game through learning, movement, and play
- An end of season jamboree (Super Soccer Saturday)
- Fun, games, more fun and more games!

Northern Lights Soccer Association offers a Recreational Program based upon the guidelines of the United States Youth Soccer (National Organization), which gives kids a quality soccer experience through smaller fields, smaller teams and plenty of experience to handle and be around the ball.

At the Recreational level your child is able to enjoy the fun, excitement and exercise of outdoor soccer regardless of his or her experience. For those players participating in the recreational program who really excel amongst his/her peers, we encourage you to try our traveling (competitive) program, where your son or daughter will:

1. Compete with and against players at a higher competitive level.
2. Experience professional training throughout the winter, spring, summer, and fall.
3. Become a better soccer player!

For more details, please refer to our website at www.northernlightssoccer.org.

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CHARACTERISTICS OF U7-U8 Players

PSYCHOMOTOR

Skeletal system is still growing; plates are near joints, thus injuries to those area merit special consideration

Cardiovascular system is less efficient than an adults; a child's heart rate peaks sooner and takes longer to recover to full resting rate

Temperature regulation system is less efficient than in adults. Children elevate their core body temperature more quickly with activity and take longer to cool down than adults.

There is perceivable improvement in pace and coordination from U6 to U8; however the physical immaturity a U8 is obvious.



COGNITIVE

Concrete operational stage development

Limited ability to attend to more than one task at a time;

The simple tasks of controlling the ball demands most of the attention capacity, there by leaving little or no capacity for making tactical decisions.

Concept of time and space relationships beginning to develop and is limited by capacity to attend to multiple tasks.

Limited experience with personal evaluation; effort is synonymous with performance, .If I try hard, and then I performed well, regardless of actual performance.

Beginning to categorize information; some relationships that do exist are not recognized and some relationships that do not exist are assumed.



PSYCHOSOCIAL

Self-concept and body image are beginning to develop; very fragile.

Great need for approval from adults such as parents, teachers and coaches; like to show individual skills.

Easily bruised psychologically by both peers and adults; negative comments carry great weight.

Like to play soccer because it is .fun; intrinsically motivated.

Their universe is expanding from themselves to the neighborhood

True playmates emerge with the inclination toward partner activities.

Team identify is limited; .I play on Coach Bob's team or I play on the tigers. Club and league concepts are non-existent.

There is desire for social acceptance; they want everybody to like them.

The influential person is most likely their father or significant parent.

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TRAINING PRIORITIES OF U7-U8 PLAYERS

Skill Priorities

- Dribble with all sides of both feet
- Dribble out of trouble
- Dribble past someone
- Shielding
- Soft first touch
- Introduce proper shooting technique
- Introduce passing

Techniques (skills)

- **Dribbling** - With outside of the foot. Change of speed and direction
- **Receiving** - Ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of foot. Bouncing balls with various body parts. Ball lifting and juggling
- **Passing** - With toe, inside of foot and laces. Throw-ins
- **Shooting** - With toe, inside of foot and laces
- **Tackling** - Toe-poke
- **Catching** - From self and from partner. Rolling, bouncing, and air balls

Psychology (mental and social)

- Working in pairs
- Sportsmanship
- Dealing with parental involvement
- "How to play" (social cooperation)
- Emotional management

Fitness (movement education)

- Introduce the idea of warm-up
- Agility
- Leaping
- Tumbling
- Eye/foot & eye/hand coordination

Tactics (decisions)

- Being exposed to all positions
- 1 v 1 attacking
- 1v1 defending
- 2v1 attacking
- Introduce the names of positions
- Shape (triangles)

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Player Characteristics	Short attention span but better than U-5 and U-6.
	They will dribble and SOMETIMES pass. It is OK! They are learning to cooperate with others and share.
	Demonstrate all activities and rules. Be Clear, Concise, and Correct
	Psychologically fragile
	Starting to become more coordinated and fall less often, but still fall a lot.
	Need role models (older players)
	They are not aware of their cooling system and need water breaks.
	Want to play rather being told to play
	Begin to associate with being on a team

Coach Characteristics	Positive reinforcement needed – encouragement
	Enthusiastic and able to laugh when they do something funny – sense of humor
	Ability to play with them and have fun is key
	Patience and the ability to let go of having things work out perfect
	Be able to provide many activities to accommodate short attention span
	Basic knowledge of the game
	Begin to set good habit and good sportsmanship

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How Should I coach my team?

Spend 20-30 minutes playing **dribbling games** every day = 1 player, 1 ball ratio

- a. Follow the curriculum. Everything you need is provided for you here!
- b. Use games in your training! Have fun with your kids and **be enthusiastic**

A Typical Session: following a progression should be utilized most of the time:

Warm-up (**A Fun Game or 2v2, 3v3 Street Soccer**)

Play fun dribbling games

1 v 1 Get Outta' Here (Coach controls the game and flow with the balls)

Finish with a 4 v 4 game or scrimmage another team. **DO NOT** play bigger than 5v5.

Focus on Dribbling Skill. This is the most important skill for our younger players (U8 and younger) to learn. Your players will naturally look like a beehive chasing the ball. That's OK! Let them run and chase. Don't get caught up into having them play specific positions at this age.

Ideas for attacking and defending

- a. **Encourage your defenders to move up the field with the ball and attack** (dribble, pass, shoot).
- b. Shapes of Diamonds and Triangles all over the field
- c. Components of Attacking Shape
 - i. Length – provided by at least 2-3 attackers (this doesn't mean forwards don't defend!)
 - ii. Width – provided by wide defenders or wide forwards/wingers
 - iii. Support – Defenders or Midfielders that drop to support the ball
- d. Spread out on offense, become compact on defense!

Your team should start each kick off in the shape of a diamond for 4v4.

Positive Coaching is a must! Some positive coaching responses...

Well done...now, how can we do it faster?

Good job...now, can you show me how to dribble with your feet?

Let them play! The game does not have to ever stop for you to coach. Coach and guide player's while the game continues on. Avoid the impulse to "coach" your players from "play to play."

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL SHOOTING

- The non-kicking (plant) foot should be beside the ball, with that toe pointed towards your target.
- Keep the toe of your shooting foot pointed down.
- Keep the ankle of your shooting foot locked – plantar flexed (toes curled down).
- Strike the ball with your sweet spot – which is the hard bone on the inner part of the shoelaces up towards the 3rd/4th eyelet.
- Swing from your hip, not your knee.
- Strike through center of ball and follow through.
- Land on shooting foot if possible to gain power.
- Keep your body relaxed (except keep the shooting ankle locked).
- At contact, your upper body and the knee of your shooting leg should be over the ball.
- Aim for bottom corners of goal. Accuracy before power.
- Practice with both feet!

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL PASSING

- Use the inside of your foot for accuracy (it's the largest surfaced area of the foot).
- Use other surfaces for higher skilled players and situations.
- Just like with shooting, the non-passing foot is beside the ball with the toe of that foot pointed towards the passing target.
- The toe of the passing foot should be pointed up, and the ankle should be locked.
- Both knees should be slightly bent.
- Strike the middle of the ball with a nice, smooth passing stroke.
- As the passing foot comes through the ball, your feet should form a right-angle.
- Follow through with the passing leg towards the target.
- If done correctly, a passed ball should have perfect top-spin. Side-spin means that you lost the 90 degree angle between your passing and plant foot.

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Coaching Points

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL DRIBBLING

Keep your knees bent for balance and quick direction changes.

For dribbling with speed, rotate toes slightly inward making contact with the little toe

Guide the ball, don't force it to.

Use all parts of your feet in warm-up: inside, outside, laces, sole, heel.

Change speed and direction cutting with inside/outside of foot.

Don't focus (keep your eyes) only on the ball, lift your head often.

KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL GAMES

Keep them moving.

Encourage and reward hustling.

Provide a positive and fun-filled atmosphere.

Coach, educate, and support during games.

Explain the rules of the game

COACHING ACTIVITIES CHECKLIST

The following list is provided for coaches to use after every practice or game. The list is actually appropriate for coaches of players of any age. If the answer is YES to all the questions posed below, then it is safe to say that the children were involved in a DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE, safe, and fun environment directed by a coach who taught, cared and communicated well. If there are SMILES ON FACES and they are EXCITED about coming back to the next practice or game, then they had FUN and you were successful.

Are the activities **FUN**?

Are the activities **ORGANIZED**?

Are all of the children **ENGAGED** in the activities?

Is **CREATIVITY** and **DECISION-MAKING** a part of each session?

Are the activity spaces **SAFE** and **APPROPRIATE**?

Is the coach's **FEEDBACK** positive?

DO'S AND DON'TS OF COACHING

USE GUIDED DISCOVERY...ASK MEANINGFUL QUESTIONS. The coach guides the players, through effective age-appropriate questioning, to discovery.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE. Be motivational and inspirational. Enthusiasm and positive energy are contagious.

KEEP PLAYERS ACTIVE AND ENCOURAGE PLAYER MOVEMENT. If the activity is static, use helpers or assistants (parents) to keep everyone involved and active. Stay away from lines in training as they keep players waiting, losing attention and focus.

REINFORCE CORRECT TECHNIQUE. In all activities and games continually emphasize the use of correct techniques. Reinforce good technique positively.

ROTATE POSITIONS. In game situations change positions often to give players a taste of various aspects of the game.

USE 1 V 1 AND SMALL-SIDED GAMES IN EVERY PRACTICE. This is the foundation for developing confident players.

DEVELOP PLAYER RESPECT AND SPORTSMANSHIP. Continually get players to support one another and to show good sportsmanship towards all players.

FUN AND ENJOYMENT. Players will respond and want to continue if things are fun. Create their enjoyment. Use positive reinforcement and refrain from negative comments.

LET THEM PLAY! Players need to learn from the game and have a mind of their own when it comes to skill development.

NO LAPS, NO LINES, NO LECTURES

They don't want to run without the ball, they don't want to stand still, they don't want to hear you talk!

DO NOT CONTROL THEM, GUIDE THEM

Show them the direction to go and let them go! Do not tell them when to pass, dribble, or shoot.

DO NOT REACT NEGATIVELY DURING A GAME

If you're a negative coach, you're developing negative people.

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GET OUTTA HERE!

Two teams, one lined up on each side of the Coach, who is the Boss of the Balls on the sideline in the middle of a 20 x 12 yd field. The game starts when the coach rolls a ball out into the field (DO NOT constantly remind players to GO!). The first player from each line enters the field to play 1 vs. 1 to goals.

- The two players retreat back to their lines when
 - 1) the ball goes out of bounds,
 - 2) coach yells "GET OUTTA HERE!", or
 - 3) a goal is scored.
- Coaches can roll more than 1 ball out at a time but should not roll more than two.
- COACHING POINTS:**
 - 1. Players should lower their center of gravity by bending down. This will allow sharper changes of direction.
 - 2. Can you fake out your opponent?
 - 3. Celebrate all goals!
- TRY THESE VARIATIONS:**
 - 1. 2 v 1. Roll a ball out to play 1 v 1, whichever player can get the ball back to their own line gets to add a player to attack opponent 2 v 1.
 - 2. 2 v 2

BODY PART DRIBBLE

All players start with a ball and dribble in a confined space. The group leader calls out a body part, for example, "KNEES". Players must stop the ball with that body part as fast as possible.

- Try: Head, elbow, heel, nose, left ear, etc... be creative!
- COACHING POINTS:**
 - 1. Players should avoid collisions and control the ball.
 - 2. Encourage moving at different speeds and in different directions.
 - 3. Leader should vary timing of stoppages so players must work on reaction time and listening skills.

CONES DRIBBLING

Spread cones or discs all over the field. Coach signals to begin the game. All the players pick up as many cones as possible while controlling their soccer ball. Each player should keep track of how many cones they get. In the next game they try to get more.

- COACHING POINTS:**
 - 1. Make sure the players dribble while they go from cone to cone.
 - 2. As players pick up cones they must bend down, this is good dribbling form especially when changing direction. Players should lower their center of gravity by bending down. This will allow sharper changes of direction.
 - 3. Encourage players to beat their best. This will force them to go faster.
- TRY THESE VARIATIONS:**
 - 1. Use only right foot, then only left.
 - 2. Player must dribble around the cone before you pick it up.
 - 3. Player must roll ball over cone with the sole of foot.

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DRIBBLING

Each player has a ball and play takes place in coned area. Players make eye contact with each other and dribble under control straight at each other. At the last possible moment, players avoid contact by going around each other with quick footwork.

•Players continue to dribble and seek another player to oppose.

•**COACHING POINTS:**

- 1. Players should be moving fast, but under control. The object is to avoid contact.
- 2. Players must dribble straight at each other, not angle away.
- 3. As opposing players get closer to each other, smaller steps and more contacts with the ball will aid in control, but must be performed quickly.
- 4. While players seek opposition, they must keep the ball moving.
- 5. To improve players' vision, divide the field into two or three sections. Players must find challenges in other sections. This will help their vision away from the ball.

RED LIGHT GREEN LIGHT

Each player has a ball. Lines from start to finish should be approximately 20-30 yards. Players start a line opposite the Coach. The Coach faces away from the group and calls out "green light". Players begin to dribble toward the Coach. When the Coach turns around and calls out "red light", players must freeze their bodies and the ball. If the Coach catches players still moving or dribbling, he sends them back to the starting line. The first player to cross the line where the Coach is standing is the winner.

•**COACHING POINTS:**

- 1. Encourage players to dribble under close control.
- 2. This drill promotes quick reactions and balance

HOSPITAL TAG DRIBBLING

All players with one ball in a defined space. Set up a second space for the hospital. Players must dribble around in the main space and try to tag other players while controlling the ball. If tagged, player must hold the part of the body that was touched by the ball. After player is tagged for the third time, he must go to the hospital. While in the hospital space, the players practice some dribbling move. After completion they come back to the game and begin to play with a fresh start.

•**COACHING POINTS:**

- 1. Make sure players are controlling the ball while tagging others.
- 2. Encourage rapid changes of speed and direction. This will help them catch other players by surprise.
- 3. Encourage players to attack while they have free hands, but when both hands are holding tagged body areas they must employ defensive dribbling and go away from attackers.
- 4. Give players various dribbling moves, such as pull backs, stepovers or quick feet.

•**TRY THESE VARIATIONS:**

- 1. Can only dribble with one foot. Use one up, the other down to help players remember.
- 2. Can only use the inside of foot to dribble. Can only use the outside of foot.

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Passing Challenge

Players start at the marker and pass their ball as close as possible to the line without going over. Players should run after the ball and mark the location where it stops. Then try again, attempting to get closer than previous tries without going over.

•**COACHING POINTS:**

- 1. This activity helps players with the pace of their passing.
- 2. Vary the distance of the line.
- 3. Have players practice using different foot surfaces for passing.

•**TRY THESE VARIATIONS:**

- 1. Players must run at top speed and stop ball when they get to line.
- 2. Have players dribble in place before they pass the ball.

CLEAN YOUR ROOM

Create a 5-10 yard neutral area that no player can enter. Use a minimum of one ball per two players (for best results, use a ball for each player). On command, each team tries to keep its side free of balls by kicking through the neutral zone to the opposite side. Play for a specified time limit.

•After players understand the game, try some of these variations:

- 1. Must use two touch, one to receive, second to pass the ball back.
- 2. Only use inside of foot when passing.
- 3. Only use instep (laces) when shooting.
- 4. Must do a soccer move, then pass it across.
- 5. As players get better and more powerful, increase the neutral area to promote longer passes.
- 6. Use fewer balls. Now players must make a pass to a teammate, who then passes the ball across.

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RECREATIONAL SOCCER RULES OF THE GAME (U7) Revised April 11, 2011

Rules are based on the US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game. FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at www.ussoccer.com/referees.

Law 1 – The Field of Play: Field Dimensions = 20 x 30 yards

Law 2 – The Ball: Size three (3)

Law 3 – The Number of Players: (4v4)

A match is played by two teams, with each team consisting of not more than 4 players. **There are NO goalkeepers.** If one or both teams have fewer than 3 players, make the best game you can (have fun, you can share players).

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time.

Law 4 – The Players' Equipment: Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

The NLSC team uniforms must be worn; no look-alike T-shirts should be used. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but the NLSC jersey should be the outer layer.

All players must wear shin guards and socks that entirely cover them.

Tennis shoes (not slip-on shoes) are acceptable, cleats or turf shoes are optional.

No jewelry is allowed such as bracelets (including fabric bands), watches, neckwear, earrings (including small studs), or hair ornaments containing metal or hard plastic. Prescription glasses are permitted if secured with straps.

Law 5 – The Referee: No Referees for U7 games. Teams may have one coach from each team on the field to guide and teach the players.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referees: None.

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match: 40 minute games. Four 10 minute quarters of running time. There shall be 2 minutes between quarters and 5 minutes between halves. Alternate the team kicking off each quarter.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play: Conform to FIFA, with the exception of the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

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Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play:

No throw-ins for U7games. When the ball goes out of play across either sideline, a kick-in or will take place according to the directions below. This will help keep the game flowing.

Instructions for kick-in: The player whose team gains possession of the ball places the ball on the touchline where the ball originally exited the field and passes the ball back in to a teammate. The ball is immediately in play once it is touched. No defender may be within 5 yards of the ball at the start of the kick-in.

A Goal kick will be awarded when the ball crosses over the goal line and a goal is not scored. The ball is placed on the end line and a player may pass it in. The defending team must fall back behind the center line at the start of a goal kick.

Kick-off from the center line when a goal is scored.

Other specifications for ball being out of play

The ball is considered out of play if it crosses completely over the goal line or sidelines.

A ball that bounces off of a goal post or cross bar remains in play. A ball that bounces off of the referee remains in play.

“Touched” is used in the descriptions below, not “played”. For example, if a red player kicks the ball and it touches a blue player before crossing the line, the ball is awarded to the red team.

At any time during the game if a team is having trouble and taking too much time to get the ball in play, either coach on the field can start the game by rolling a ball out into the field of play. This method will help keep the players playing and moving – as well as keep them psychologically engaged.

Law 10 – The Method of Scoring: Conform to FIFA.

A goal will be awarded when the ball passes underneath the cross bar between the goal posts and completely over the goal line, if no rule violations have been committed.

If the ball is in play, a goal is awarded to the attacking team regardless of how the ball crosses the goal line.

A goal can be scored from field play as well as directly from a kick-off and kick-in.

After a goal is scored, the game is restarted by a kickoff at the center of the field by the defending team.

Law 11 – Offside: None.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA with the exception that all fouls shall result in a direct free kick. The referee/coach/parent must explain ALL infringements to the offending player. No cards shown for misconduct.

Law 13 – Free Kicks: Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that all kicks are direct and all opponents are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick: None.