

# GSC U6/U8 Coaching Activities Guide Spring 2022

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The following practice activities can and should all be run within a defined field area, usually with cones, that is about the same size or slightly larger than the 4v4 game fields. Large areas are not necessary for this age group.

## Segment 1: Warmup Activities

- ❖ **Light Touches:** Light touches including: Tic Toc, Toe Taps, Dribbling, and Drag Backs. Limit this activity to five minutes or so when used. Have the players spread out along one sideline (wide side) of the field. Upon the coach's command, have the players complete the light touches. For the Dribbling, have the players cross the short side of the field. The Drag Back should be incorporated into the Dribbling.

**Coaching Points:** Encourage the players to keep control of the ball. This should not be a race, but should be completed with enough speed that it is a challenge for the player to keep control. Obviously, this speed is different for different players.

- ❖ **Freeze Tag:** Just like it sounds. Define a field of play that the players cannot leave, or they become frozen. Coach is "It". Have all the players spread out on the field of play with their ball. When the game starts, the coach tags any player. Once a player is tagged, they are frozen. If a player's ball goes out of bounds, they should bring it back into the field but are then frozen. Have the player pick up their ball and hold it over their head. Also, have the player stand with their legs spread so a teammate can unfreeze the player by gently kicking the ball between their teammates legs. Depending on the number of players on your team, this could last a while.

**Coaching Points:** Encourage the players to keep control of the ball as they flee. Encourage the players to keep moving, and to keep spread out from each other.

- ❖ **Get the Coach:** For coaches that want a workout while coaching! The object of this game is to have each player kick the ball at the feet of the coach. I tell my players that it only counts if they hit the coach below the knees. The coach keeps moving (this is the workout part) to avoid getting hit. The object is having each player hit the coach twice with the ball. NOTE: **never** let a player be the target of this exercise.

**Coaching Points:** Encourage the players to look at their target, and encourage players to keep working. For some players, it will be more difficult than others to "get the coach". These players will require a little more encouragement. It is exciting for the players when they hit the coach with a ball, so take that moment to recognize the player with praise.

- ❖ **Sharks and Minnows:** The game consists of one "shark" to begin and the rest of the

team are “minnows”. The shark is the only player to start without a ball. All the minnows start the game with their ball. The object for the minnows to keep control of their ball within the field boundaries or “shark tank”. The object of the shark is to take or kick any minnows ball out of the field of play. Once a minnow loses their ball, and the ball goes outside of the boundaries, they become a shark. Play continues until there is only one minnow left. Repeat until each player on the team has had a chance to start as the shark. This is a fast-moving game that usually lasts about a minute. This is a physical game activity that encourages players to be “aggressive” when going after the ball.

**Coaching Points:** Encourage players to keep the ball close so that the shark cannot easily take the ball. Encourage sharks (especially the more timid players) to keep after the minnows. Encourage the players to spread out and use the entire field of play, or shark tank. Always use encouraging language.

## Segment 2: Activities

- ❖ **Lines of Attack:** This activity is a fantastic game to practice and teach about space and team play. Set up a field of play with three starting points spread across the width of the field for three lines of players. The coach will pass the ball to any of the lines to start each line. Have the player “trap” or “receive” the ball to start. The first or next player in each line will attack the goal together as a team. Require a minimum of one pass to score. The coach should defend the goal simply by blocking the easy goal. Very little defensive pressure should be used. Players should discover that scoring is easier than they thought. Each line should take 10 or 20 seconds of time. Keeps players moving so that they hustle back to any line after the attack. Keep things moving so that kids don’t lose interest.

**Coaching Points:** Encourage the player to start by “trapping” or “receiving” the ball. Establishing control of the ball, by trapping or receiving, will help each subsequent touch that follows. Encourage players to “find space”. “Find space” means to spread out to an area that has space, or is not crowded by teammates. You should encourage the players to find space while attacking the goal as a team. Pay no attention to lanes or pre-determined line locations. Constantly asking a player to get back in position will stifle their enthusiasm, and encourage staying still in a position – which is a bad thing.

- ❖ **Defending from Behind:** This activity teaches to be aggressive in defending the goal and winning possession. While there are both attacking and defending skills being used, only reinforce the defending portion. Begin by setting two starting points that are about 10 or 15 feet apart from each other across the width of the field, with plenty of room to run upfield. Make sure the next player from each line is ready, then, pass the ball to either of the two players. The player who receives the ball from the coach will try to dribble and control the ball all the way up the field, and finally try to dribble through the end of the field or “goal”. Don’t use an actual goal, we want the attacking player to dribble all the way through. The defending player is to defend the goal by kicking the ball away from the attacker, and if possible, take

control of the ball. The players hustle back to line once the defender wins or kicks the ball away, or when the attacker goes through the goal. Repeat.

**Coaching Points:** Have the defending player focus on the ball. Coach the defender to look at, and chase the ball, not the player with the ball. Encourage the defending player to disrupt, take, or kick the ball away from the goal. If the defending player is successful in stopping the attack, simply praise the player and go on to the next two players. Only coach this point when the defending player runs next to the attacker, but does not engage the ball. Again, this should be done when the defending players simply runs next to the attacker, and does not engage or challenge for the ball.

- ❖ **Get Out of Here:** This activity helps build confidence, dribbling, and defending skills. The coach should be positioned in the middle of the sideline with the players evenly split on both sides of the coach. This activity should start with one player from each side entering the field upon the coach's command, defending their side of the field and attacking the opposite side. Once the ball goes out of bounds or once a player scores, the coach yells "Get Out of Here." This is the queue for the next players waiting to rush onto the field for their turn. The coach sends a ball into the middle of the playing field quickly to keep things moving. Remember to keep this moving, lines are the soccer coach's enemy. This can progress from 1v1 to 2v2 and 3v3 and even 4v4 if there are enough players present. Spend time building up to the largest possible size of 4v4.

**Coaching Points:** I typically only coach the players to be aggressive and leave alone all other mistakes in the beginning. After several practices, additional coaching points can be added like controlling the dribble, finding space (for multiple players), and engaging the ball as a defender.

### Segment 3: Scrimmage

- ❖ **Scrimmage:** The third segment should consist of a scrimmage. Each practice should end with a scrimmage. Use all the players on the team. If there are only 3 players, play 2v2 with the coach helping one of the players. Play 3v3, 4v4, etc. If you don't own goals, then you can use cones to represent the goal. An additional option for scoring is to have the players dribble through the goal instead of kicking the ball into the goal or through the cones.

**Coaching Points:** This is the time to let the kids play. Only coach the players on points when absolutely necessary. The scrimmage portion is usually the players favorite part, and over coaching will stifle enthusiasm. It is okay if the game looks more like something the kids would do at recess or on their own. Remember, the key to success is keeping a fun environment. Make sure that you stop play for a water break on regular intervals particularly on hot days.