

**At Under 5 & Under 6**, children play 4 v 4 without goalkeepers.

Developmentally, children at this age are still discovering themselves. They play in 1 v 1 and alone with imaginary friends, so we only teach soccer technique geared to that self-discovery. Through activities and games, we teach them to dribble with laces, inside, outside, and the bottom surfaces of their feet. Most of the players find a comfort zone of one or two surfaces, and we challenge them to do more.

We also teach them to shoot with the insides of their feet - which is physically very challenging at their age: the player needs to coordinate a complex series of new movements of turning their leg, striking the upper half of the ball, and following through with a knee lift for accuracy. That's a lot to deal with at that age.

The only real tactics we teach are the boundaries of the field and which goal to attack. As you've seen on game day - most of the kids get that much.

We don't teach team-oriented tactics since the kids aren't psycho-socially developed to that extent at that age. We do have a couple of lesson plans devoted to passing - which is the simplest team tactic - but we do so to repeat the shooting technique in a new setting, and to introduce the term "pass". We don't expect passing to occur, but it may start to show up later in the season with a few of the 5-10% most developmentally advanced Under-6 children.

Our goals and expectations are that the children develop a love of playing games with their feet, and grow their individual abilities with their feet. That's why we focus on dribbling the ball rather than kicking it. All children love to kick a ball -but kickball and soccer are different games, and we want the kids to develop a sense of "touch" when they play.

If your child has fun at practices and games, we've succeeded in our core purpose. Over the course of the season, we also see them improve their individual touches and control on the ball - and that's a real bonus.

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