



What Kids Should Be Learning: Ages 6 to 8



US Soccer
Initial Stage:
Ages 5 to 8



NSCAA
Stage 2:
Ages 6 to 8

This stage for players is very important and hugely transitional. At the end of this stage, many players refine skills and start to differentiate between recreational, rec+ and competitive play. Players also understand the game better and love of the game is significantly fostered. This age sets the tone and establishes the conditions and foundation for all that follows. The clear emphasis should be on technique, learning “space” and having FUN with it.

Dribbling/Turning/Shielding

Players should be comfortable with the ball. Moving with, turning with and protecting the ball are the most important skill areas at this age and are the building blocks upon which all other parts of the game depend.

Children should be dribbling while changing speed and direction and controlling the ball with all foot surfaces. This includes working with both feet.



Receiving

Kids should be working on receiving ground balls and follow with receiving in the air with feet and upper body. Focus should be on positive touch and good form (ankles locked, cushioning, toe up, etc.).

Learning receiving should be with a purpose – players want to control the ball, keep it close, and receive with the idea of setting up what they will do with the ball next.



1v1 and early 2v2/3v3: Attacking and Defending

Working on 1v1 skills in attacking goes hand-in-hand with dribbling, turning and shielding. Kids love to try moves and with that comes lots of chances to be creative. The emphasis first is on attacking but fundamental defending skills and working in pairs gradually also begins. 1v1, 2v1 and 2v2 work should be common in practice.

2v2 and 3v3 will also contribute to first learning about support and movement without the ball.



Short Passing

Short passing is introduced at this age with progression from about 5 to 20 yards as they near age 8. Kids will be working on good form – at first with the inside of their foot – as well as accuracy and pace (speed of the ball). Players will also begin to learn about disguising passes to add deception.



This is a long-term process that will continue through ages 10 or 11.

Coordination/Agility

The focus for players should be on running, jumping and turning as kids become more coordinated. Activities should be fun and challenging. Work should be with and without the ball.



There is no need for cardio activities or even warm-ups at this age; and no stretching. Children should be jumping, running sideways, changing direction, sprinting, hopping, hurdling and so on at various times during practice.

Shooting

Players at any age LOVE shooting! At this age, they are gaining coordination to take deliberate shots. Kids will be working on good technique such as using laces, using a plant foot, body over the ball and follow through.

Players will progress through this stage as they age with more flighted shots and from a greater distance. Coordination to shoot on the move also increases.



Players at this age do not have the ability to think too far ahead, anticipate, or work with more than a few teammates. Passing is just developing. Keeping a simple shape that has width and depth is effective but not limiting or over players heads. Players are learning to create and use space.



Players should have fun and lots of chances to touch the ball and make decisions while developing game awareness.