Coaching 9 – 13 year olds
Thank You!!!

Thank You for choosing to coach one of our teams! You are about to provide our kids with the experience of a lifetime and they will be forever indebted to you. Our goal with this guide is to help you be the best coach you can be so that each child on your team has the opportunity to develop their skills to their full potential.

The #1 factor for how successful you will be in teaching this wonderful game is not necessarily whether you have played the game before but how much effort and enthusiasm you put into preparing & planning your training sessions!

We hope that this guide helps you to plan your training sessions. Have fun watching your players improve each session and grow their love of the game!

- Ryan Hurley
  Director of Coaching
  PenBay Soccer Club
**OUR GOAL:** Players participate in sports to have **FUN** and to prove their competence on the field of play. We want them to maximize their potential so that they have every opportunity to have **FUN**, be successful, and grow their confidence and self-esteem.

*The ideal that we are striving for after a child has been through our program is that they are:*

#1) in love with the game 😊

and

#2) a technically gifted, thoughtful and creative player, who excels at 1v1 situations on the field of play.

To reach these goals we will focus on the following technical aspects of the game during training:

Dribbling
Shooting
Passing and Receiving
Defending

This focus, along with an emphasis on having **FUN**, a clear practice structure, and the use of small sided games to enhance learning, will make a positive difference for the players in our community.

**A few thoughts from U.S. Soccer to keep in mind:**

Children from about age 6 to 12 have an almost limitless capacity to learn body movement and coordination (i.e., motor skills). At the same time, their intellectual capacity to understand spatial concepts like positions and group play is limited. Work to their strengths.

**Encourage Creativity and Ball Skills Before Tactics!**
PRACTICE STRUCTURE

Practices should be organized around one of our four technical themes and should follow this general format-

1. **Warm Up:** Some type of game where each player has a ball at their feet and works up a sweat. Coaches should interrupt occasionally to have all players perform multiple repetitions of a specific skill. Stretching at these ages is not necessary for all groups other than the 12+13 year olds who should do some form of dynamic stretching. (5–10 minutes)

2. **Technical Work:** This is where we work on our technical fundamentals, working individually or in pairs on the skill focus of the day. (10–15 minutes)

3. **1 v1, 2v1, 3v1, 3v2 to Goal:** This part of practice should be spent developing attacking and defending skills, finishing with a shot on net. Use multiple goals to get as many players involved as possible, limit lines and standing. (10 minutes)

4. **Small Sided Game:** Next we want to play 4 v 4. This number of players allows the players to experience every type of situation that exists in the game but on a smaller scale where they will all be involved constantly. Your players will be learning a lot here just by playing. They should not need a lot of instruction during this time. Let them play, only pausing occasionally on restarts to reinforce that they should have passing options to their right and left and the third player should be stretched down the length of the field (see below.) (10–15 minutes)

---

**Players need to make the space you give them as big as possible –**

- On restarts they should find the boundaries of the field to start play.

**The player with the ball should always have a player to both their left and right as wide as possible and a player stretched down the length of the field as far as possible.**

Pen Bay Soccer Club

A Technical Guide to Coaching 9 – 13 year olds
Examples of 4 different small-sided games to help your players learn to think while they play:

- **Normal 4 v4**
  - Good for learning to play with the head up.

- **4v4 with offset goals**
  - Good for working on turning and attacking the goal with less defenders.

- **2 diagonal goals for each team**
  - One team attacks both red goals, the other attacks both yellow goals.

- **Attacking 2 goals on the end-line.**
  - One team attacks the red goals the other attacks the yellow goals.
  - Great for learning to switch fields and attack the net with less defenders.
5. **Full Sided Game:** Lastly, try to finish with a full sided game playing with the full number of allowed players on the field for your age group. This is why the players play and will keep them motivated and happy. Only intervene when absolutely necessary to reinforce the focus of the day or to celebrate something wonderful that just happened on the field. (10–15 minutes)

**Full Sided Age Recommendations:**

U 10/ 3rd & 4th Graders – 6 v 6

U 11–12/ 5th & 6th Graders – 8v8

U 13–14/ 7th & 8th Graders – 11v11

**A General Summary:**

- Spend \( \frac{1}{2} \) of your practice session focusing on technical skills
- Spend the other \( \frac{1}{2} \) letting the kids play small and full sided games
- Favor competition of mastering skills over outcome of games (ie. who here can do the best Maradona! or dribble the fastest while keeping the ball the closest – over – my team beat your team)
Dribbling

The best gift you can give players in this age group is to develop their dribbling skills as much as possible!

Dribbling: Essential Coaching Points

- Players on their toes
- Dribbling Using the laces (Big Toe and Little Toe of each foot)
- Try to take lots of small touches where the ball stays within one step away and under the knee of the dribbling foot
- Players should be comfortable using different surfaces of the foot
  - Laces, Inside, Outside, Sole, Heel

Warm-Ups should include periodic stops where the coach has the players do 20–30 reps of each of the following:

- Toe Taps, (light, quiet touches on top of the ball alternating feet)
- Foundations, (ball between the legs using insides of feet to knock the ball back and forth as fast as possible)
- Step Overs (ball between the feet, knees bent, leg comes behind the ball and out around the front of ball back to foot’s original position, repeat with opposite leg.)
- Keep-Ups (players on their toes, use their laces to kick the ball up in the air, move their feet to get near the ball and allow it to bounce and then use laces to kick it up in the air again– hence “Keeping it up” in the air with one bounce in between kicks. Ball should go no higher than head height.)

By the time a player has gone through our program (age 9 – 13) he/she should be able to do the following dribbling moves:

- Cut back
- Lunge with one leg and away with the outside of the
- opposite foot
- Scissors (and double Scissors)
- Step over (and double Step-over)
- Double Tap (small touch with inside of foot and then big touch away with outside of same foot)
- Maradona (also known as Tornado – jump up and stop ball with one foot on top of ball, while spinning in the air take the ball with the other foot)

Players should also be able to perform the following Turns with the ball after completing our program:

- **Inside of foot hook turn** (very important to get both feet past the ball before taking it with the inside of the foot)
- **Outside of foot hook turn** (very important to get both feet past the ball before taking it with the outside of the foot)
- Drag-back
- Walk over the ball, turn and take the ball with the laces

### Sample Practices:

**Key**

- Player 🧡
- Path of Ball ---------------------
- Ball ⚽
- Path of Player →
- Player Dribbling
- Cones △
- Goals ▶️

K – Goal Keeper
C – Coach
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Warm-Up/Technical**                                                      | ![Diagram](image1) | • Players on their toes at all times  
• Using laces, think Big Toe + Little Toe  
• Close control – Every step is a touch  
• Head up– find the open gate/open space and dribble to it  
• Make sure to pause a few times to do: 20 of each of the following - 1) Foundations 2) Toe Taps and 3) Step-overs |
| • Each player with a ball dribbling around the area.                      |         |                                                                                 |
| • Players dribble through cone gates spaced 3 yards apart.                |         |                                                                                 |
| **Progression:**                                                          |         |                                                                                 |
| • Laces only                                                              |         |                                                                                 |
| • Right foot only                                                         |         |                                                                                 |
| • Left foot only                                                          |         |                                                                                 |
| • Sole drag through gates                                                 |         |                                                                                 |
| • If someone is at the gate in front of you drag the ball back and go elsewhere |         |                                                                                 |
| • Timed: Players go through as many gates as possible in 1 min. keeping close control |         |                                                                                 |
| **Group Knockout to Goal**                                                | ![Diagram](image2) | • Keep close control  
• Use feints to avoid the team members trying to steal your ball  
• Use your body to shield the ball  
• Keep the ball moving, laces, laces, laces! |
| • Two teams of equal players                                              |         |                                                                                 |
| - One team behind the goal: waits for coaches signal to come onto the field and try and steal the balls from the other team and put the ball in the goal. |         |                                                                                 |
| - Team on the field, each player with a ball, tries to keep the ball away from the other team |         |                                                                                 |
| **Progression:**                                                          |         |                                                                                 |
| - Allow the team with the balls to dribble for a few moments and then shout GO! - Give the white team 1 minute to steal and score as many balls as possible. |         |                                                                                 |
| - Switch – white team takes field and black team tries to steal balls and score goals. |         |                                                                                 |
| **Game Intelligence: 1v1 w 4 goals**                                      | ![Diagram](image3) | • Allow the players to play  
• if they are not successful with the ball ask them how they were successful during the tag part of the game (they should use feints, disguise, change of speed and direction – just like they do naturally playing Tag!!!) Allow them to figure this out – they need to come up with the answers  
• Reinforce proper dribbling technique |
| • Each player defends 2 goals (3-4 yards wide), one on the endline and one on the sideline. |         |                                                                                 |
| - Player with the ball tries to score in one of his opponents two goals |         |                                                                                 |
| - As soon as attacker touches the ball the defender is allowed to defend |         |                                                                                 |
| - If the defender wins possession s/he should attack their opponent's goals |         |                                                                                 |
| **Progression:**                                                          |         |                                                                                 |
| - Begin by playing Tag, one player tries to run through the other players goals w/out ball |         |                                                                                 |
| - W/ball Each player gets 5 goes as the attacker then switch              |         |                                                                                 |
| **Small Sided/Match Related**                                             | ![Diagram](image4) | • Allow for free play  
• Make sure on restarts the team in possession has a player to both the right and left as wide as possible and a player stretched down the field as far as possible  
• Reinforce proper dribbling technique when appropriate |
| - 4v4 – Each team attacks two goals on the endline                        |         |                                                                                 |
| **Progression:**                                                          |         |                                                                                 |
| - Allow for free play                                                     |         |                                                                                 |
| - Award 2 points for performing skill move of the day (one of the dribbling moves or turns you practiced in the warm-up) and 1 point for traditional goal. |         |                                                                                 |
| **Full Sided**                                                            |         | Finish with a full sided Game!!!                                                 |
### Warm-Up
- Partner Tag
- Players work in pairs, each player has a ball, on coaches command players play a game of 2 man tag for 1-2 minutes.

**Progression:**
- In between games coach pauses while players do:
  - Toe Taps
  - Foundations
  - Step overs
  - Keep Ups

### Technical: Turning – Dribble across the Square
- 10 x 10 yard grid
- All players with their own ball, 2 players on each side of the square
- On coaches command each player dribbles across the square and back to starting position 3 times.

**Progression:**
- First Set of 3 1) Inside of foot hook turn
- Second set of 3 2) outside of foot hook turn
- Third set of three 3) Walk over ball and take with the laces

**Players on their toes**
- Use laces, Close control, head up, avoid other players
- When performing turn make sure to get both feet beyond the ball before changing direction

### Game Intelligence: 1 v 1 diagonal goals
- 10 x 20 yard grid
- One player attacks goals A and the other player attacks goals B
- Play for 90 seconds and pause

**Progression:**
- expand to 2 v 2
- rotate so everyone plays someone new each game

**Close control**
- Change 1)pace and 2) direction to beat your opponent
- When closed down use one of your turns to head to the opposite goal

### Small Sided/Match Related
- Same setup as above but with larger space and 4v4
- all restarts start with a pass
- first pass is free
- Award 2 points for a turn and 1 for a traditional goal if players aren't using the turns enough

**Players use the entire space**
- proper dribbling, laces, on toes
- use of turns
- on restarts reinforce that the player on the ball has a player wide left and right and the third player stretched down the field as far as possible.
- recognize and praise the players when they make good decisions, ie. turning when the goal they are attacking is well defended or dribbling when no one closes them down

### Full Sided
- End with a full sided Game

**Allow for free play – praise players who turn when appropriate and also those who attempt one of the turns they learned today
Passing & Receiving

Passing and Receiving: **Essential Coaching Points**

- Players on their toes while passing **and** while waiting to receive
- Players use inside of foot to pass ball with a firm ankle
- Plant foot next to ball and pointed at target
- When receiving, players first touch is with inside of foot and out in front of the feet so they can take a step forward to pass the ball with their second touch.
- Player should take a step or two towards the target after striking the ball to improve accuracy.

Sample Practices:
**Warm-Up**

- 30 x 30 yard space, series of cone gates 2-3 yards wide spread throughout the area.
- Players organized in pairs with one ball between them.
- Players move about the grid passing through the gates to their partner.

**Progression:**
- Timed, how many gates can they pass and receive through in 1 minute.
- Between competition do partner toe taps, partner keepups or pairs heading.

**Technical**

Dutch “Y Form” passing.

- 2 players at each cone – 10-12 players total.
- A1 takes a touch to alert A2 that he is ready to pass, on the touch A2 moves away from A1 and then checks back to receive the ball from A1.
- A2 takes first touch with inside of foot and with second touch plays the ball in front of A3.
- A3 runs onto the ball and carries it with laces back to where A1 made the first pass.
- Each player follows the direction of play to the next cone.
- Once A3 touches the ball B1 begins play on the opposite side.
- After players complete the A circuit they go to the B side.
  - Progression -
    - A2 and B2 use the outside of the foot to receive and then play a pass with the inside of the foot to the third player.

**Game Intelligence**

- 3 v 1 Keepaway
  - Progression -
    1. No space restriction
    2. Restricted space ie. 10 yards x 10 yards
    3. Add another player centrally in the middle of the triangle to play 4 v 1
    4. Add another defender to play 4 v 2

**Small Sided/Match Related**

4 v 4 Regular

- Proper technique
  - Players on their toes
  - First touch in front so they can step towards the ball to play
  - Encourage the use of disguise when passing, use feints etc.
  - When playing 4 v 1 with a player centrally encourage playing to the central player as a first option when they are open

**Essential Points**

- Communicate with your partner with your:
  - Voice or
  - Eyes or
  - Outstretched hand
  - About where you would like the ball to go
- Partner off the ball should run to the gate that would be easiest for their partner to play to and should try and keep their chest facing the ball as much as possible
- On your TOES!!! Passer & Receiver
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-Up</th>
<th>Fish in a Barrel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- All players with a ball in a 20 x 20 space</td>
<td>- Fisherman uses good passing technique to try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 1 player chosen as the Fisherman, this player</td>
<td>and hit other players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attempts to hit other dribblers below the knee</td>
<td>- Everyone moving the entire time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with her ball.</td>
<td>- Find the open space to avoid the fisherman!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Players who are hit with ball must do 2 laps</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around the space with their ball before rejoing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the game.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Play 3 minute games rotating who gets to be the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- add a second fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Add a third fisherman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Player work in pairs, 5-10 yards apart with a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cone gate 3 yards wide between them. Players</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pass the ball back and forth through the gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Progression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) receive the ball with the inside of one foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and play it back with the opposite foot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) receive and play with the inside of the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>foot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) A plays the ball to B to the outside and left</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the cones – B plays the ball through the cones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Reverse direction of the ball- A plays the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ball through the cones – B plays outside to his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>right. (Ball now moves counter clockwise).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game Intelligence</th>
<th>3v1 to goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Use half a field</td>
<td>- On your toes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Rotate defenders</td>
<td>- emphasis on good first touch in the direction of play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Try to play forward first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- accurate passes with inside of feet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Keep the ball moving and run to create space</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Sided/Match Related</th>
<th>4 v 4 with offset goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Progression</td>
<td>- Let them play!!! The game will teach them all they need to know.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) unlimited touches</td>
<td>- Reinforce positive things that happen – ie. Excellent First touch! Great Decision!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) 3 touches</td>
<td>- Encourage good inside of the foot passing and receiving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) 2 touches only</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Full Sided |
Shooting

For most players this is the most fun part of the game. It also happens to be the most difficult so make sure you are doing at least 5 minutes of shooting every practice!

Shooting: Essential Coaching Points

Similar to passing – Players on their toes
- Plant foot next to ball and pointed at target
- Use laces or inside of foot (ankle firm at impact)
- Follow through where you want the ball to go
- Head up – Look for keeper – Hit it where the Keeper isn’t!!

Sample Practice Plan:
## Warm-Up
**Clean Your Room** -

40 x 40 yard space – divided in half by cones.

- Players divided into two teams, every player has a ball.
- Coach gives teams 2 minutes to get the balls off of their half of the field by kicking them to the other teams side. Whoever has the most balls on their half of the field at the end of 2 mins. Loses.
- Pause at the beginning of games to do: 1) Keep-Ups 2)Foundations 3)Step-overs 4) Toe-Taps

Use inside of foot or laces to clear the ball to the other team's side.

## Technical

20 x 40 yard space – Penalty Area

- two lines per goal with a goal keeper or coach in net.
- Players dribble along top of the penalty area, play the ball around the cone, run around the cone to shoot on net.

- Progression-
  1) players alternate sides to practice using both feet.
  2) goal keeper passive but moving
  3) goal keeper active
  4) Have two teams and make it a competition – which team can score the most goals in 2 minutes/switch sides.

- Players on their toes, plant foot next to the ball
- Laces for power, inside of foot for placement
- After the ball is played by the cone, LOOK up, SEE where the Keeper is, Shoot it to where the KEEPER ISN'T!!!

## Game Intelligence

### 1 v 1 to Goal

- 2 lines of players per goal, Black defenders, White Offensive player
- 40 x 40 yard space
- Coach plays ball to Attacker, Defender not allowed to challenge until coach plays the ball in.

- Progression---
  1) 1v1
  2) allow a second attacker to come from the attacking line as soon as the 1st attacker touches the ball
  3) Make it a competition w/teams, take turns at offense and defense, see who scores more goals

- Attacker comes with speed to meet the ball
- First touch towards goal
- attacker on toes, plant foot next to ball
- check the keeper before shooting, hit it where they aren't!!
- Be creative, keep the ball moving

Encourage lots of shooting! Shooting as a first option.
- Communicate with one another

## Small Sided/Match Related

- 50 x 50 yard field
- 2 full sized goals placed back to back in the middle
- 2 Teams of 7
- 4 attackers in one half vs. 2 defenders and their keeper, same thing on other half
- Attackers and Defenders not allowed to cross the half line, must stay on their side.
- Keepers must distribute the ball to a defender on their side before the ball can be played into their teams' offensive zone.

- Progression---
  1) take away the restriction, players are free to move wherever they want
  2) add a second ball

- Communicate with one another

## Full Sided

**Shoot Shoot Shoot!!**
Defending

Your players will spend at least 50% of every game trying to get the ball back from the other team... ie. Defending! Teaching them how to defend properly will make them a complete player.

Defending: **Essential Coaching Points**

- Sprint to close the space between themselves and the attacker
- Bend the knees, slow down right before they are arms length away from the attacker
- Get in good body position – Jockey, one leg in front of the other on their toes and don't cross your feet if you don't have to!
- Stay on your feet! You'll get more opportunities to win the ball back this way!
- Wait for a mistake and then take the ball away, make the attacker beat you.

Sample Practice Plan:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Warm-Up</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1 v 1 Tag  
20 yard x 10 yard space  
- 1 player is the attacker and the other is the defender  
- The attacker tries to run from his endline over the defender's endline w/out getting tagged.  
- The defender is allowed to move only after the attacker begins running  
--Progression--  
1) attacker runs at half speed  
2) attacker runs at full speed | ![Warm-Up Diagram](image) | - Defender should get towards the attacker as quickly as possible,  
- Defender should start to slow down around 3 yards away.  
- Defender should get sideways on to the attacker. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 15 yard x 15 yard space  
1 defender and 1 attacker  
- Defender plays a firm ball into attacker 15 yards out and immediately closes the space to prevent the attacker from dribbling through the cone goal | ![Technical Diagram](image) | - Close the space quickly  
- Get side-on  
- Stay arms length away once the attacker is closed down  
- Take a path to the attacker that prevents him from dribbling over the line |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game Intelligence</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 30 x 15 yard space  
- 2 cone goals, a 1 point goal and a 3 point goal  
- 3 players  
- Server plays ball into attacker  
- Defender tries to prevent attacker from dribbling through cone goals.  
- Attacker gets 3 points if they can dribble through the 3 point goal and 1 point for dribbling through the 1 point goal  
- Attacker gets 5 tries then rotate positions | ![Game Intelligence Diagram](image) | Close the space quickly  
- Get side-on  
- Stay arms length away once the attacker is closed down  
- Take a path to the attacker that prevents him from dribbling through the 3 point goal |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Small Sided/Match Related</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 4 v 4 with the same game as above but in a bigger space with large goals. Each team defends one set of goals on the endline. | ![Small Sided/Match Related Diagram](image) | - Allow for free play  
- Praise the players when they defend properly |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Full Sided</th>
<th>Diagram</th>
<th>Essential Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finish with a full sided game:)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Full Sided Diagram" /></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>