



Planning your TOPSoccer Session

Creating Your Program

TOPSoccer is unique because each program is created around the needs of the participants. The ability for adaptation, flexibility and creativity on the field will be central as you plan and organize your TOPSoccer session.

Basic Factors

- Length of program (6-8 weeks)
- Design a skills program that is rewarding, challenging and fun
- Have a theme for your practice
- Focus on individual improvements

Variety of choices

- Small-sided games
- Full-sided games (11v11)
- Indoor programs
- Outdoor program
- Camps

Additional questions that should be addressed prior to starting a coaching sessions:

1. Have safety issues been addressed?
2. Are individual goals realistic and geared for the success of the player?
3. Can all the player's needs be met in the session?
4. Are there enough breaks in the sessions to ensure that players are given enough time to hydrate and rest?

Remember to be creative, adapt, modify available equipment and most importantly, have FUN!

The Inclusion Spectrum

The Inclusion Spectrum is an activity-centered approach to the inclusion of individuals of different abilities. This approach aims to empower coaches to encourage full participation and involvement by the TOPSoccer player through the four approaches to the delivery of drills or practice.

1. Open Games: Everyone participates with minimal or no adaptation or modification.
2. Modified Games: Changes made to promote inclusion.
3. Parallel Games: Everyone plays the same game with players organized by ability groups and activity modified to level of each group.
4. Disability Soccer: Players with disabilities participate in specific groups, such as the Paralympics.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Training sessions should be fun and include all players. The suggested length and number of practices depends on the players' age, but can range from 50 minutes to 90 minutes per session.



A sample TOPSoccer Session can be structured as below:

- 10 - 15 minutes of warm up exercises
- 15 - 45 minutes of activities with water breaks
- 10 - 15 minutes of cool down exercises

You should adjust your sessions to accommodate all your players' abilities!

The following sections include sample activities and games that focus on:

- Stretching
- Warm Up Games
- Skill-based Activities
- Additional Games
- Parachute Games

Throughout the game and activity examples are coaching tips that focus on how to motivate your TOPSoccer players and how to create an environment that allows each player the chance for maximum learning.

Planning your TOPSoccer Session

Stretching

A circular formation is the ideal shape to introduce stretching activities.



Static Stretches

Stretching while still; no vigorous movement.

Arm Stretches - Extend arms over the head, bending them at the elbow. Wrap one hand around opposite arm just below the elbow and gently pull the arm toward the head.

Calf Stretch - In a runner's start position, lock knee, shifts body to lean forward. Rest hands on the front bent knee while leaning forward slightly stretching out the back leg by pressing the sole of the foot flat against the ground.

Groin Stretch - Stand with legs spread, bend one knee and shift body to lean. Repeat. Alternatively, sit with the soles of the feet touching, knees bent. Grasp ankles and tuck feet as close to the body as possible while at the same time applying gentle pressure on the knees with the elbows to push the knees downward.

Dynamic Stretches

Stretching while moving

Knee Kicks - Stand, holding the ball in front of the body with arms bent at the elbows. Raise alternating knees to touch the ball.

Heel Kicks - Stand, holding the ball behind you. Kick alternating feet backward to touch the ball with the sole of the foot.

Do the Twist - Start walking, holding the ball in front of the body with arms bent at the elbows. While walking, twist the ball to the right, back to the front and to the left.

MOTIVATING PLAYERS

Coach - Player Relationship

A good relationship between coach in player is the foundation of player motivation:

- Use each player's name during training
- Use plenty of encouraging words and phrases
- Have one-on-one talks with players
- Make feedback specific to performance- explain how to do the task correctly, not emphasizing that they did it wrong

Warm Up Games

When introducing new skills, use the “mirror” method. Coach/buddy demonstrates the skill and the player copies the movement.

Freeze Tag - Create a boundary with cones in either a circle or square shape. Each player is given a ball and dribbles the ball inside the marked area. Buddies/volunteers/coaches will try to kick the ball away from the player. If the player loses their ball, another player must either crawl between the “frozen” player’s legs or touch the players on the arm to unfreeze them. Unfrozen, the player may then retrieve the ball and continue dribbling, trying to avoid the buddy.

Red light/Green light - When the coach says “red light,” players must stop the ball by placing their foot on the top of ball. When the coach says “yellow light,” players must dribble very slowly. When the coach says “green light,” players dribble fast. Once players catch on to this game, add other colors and affix different actions to them (i.e. purple light = hop back and forth over ball, orange light = run around the ball, black light = dance, blue light = hide behind the ball, etc.).

Mr. Wolf, What Time Is It? - Each player should have a soccer ball. The coach and buddies stand 20 to 30 yards from the players who are in a line, standing shoulder to shoulder. Players ask the coach in loud voices, “Mr. Wolf, what time is it?” The coach answers “It is __ o’clock (1-12)”. Players dribble the ball while taking the corresponding number of steps. This continues until the coach answers “its lunch time”. At this point, the players try to reach a safe zone beyond the coaches/buddies while the coach tries to take the ball away from the players. If a player loses their ball, they become a wolf.



Coaching Tip

HOW PLAYERS LEARN

- Observing: By watching the coach, or other players perform the skill they are trying to learn.
- Hearing: By listening to instructions that are repeated as necessary, particularly while performing the skill .
- Visualizing: By seeing him or herself performing the skill.
- Imitating: By attempting to performing the skill observed.
- Practicing: By repeating the skill and correcting errors until the skill becomes learned.

Skill-Based Activities

Dribbling and Passing

Figure Eight - Player dribbles ball around cones in a figure 8 patterns.

Fish Bowl - Create a circle using cones. At a given signal, (using whistles, if possible) dribble the ball while keeping the ball away from the coaches and/or buddies.

Team Go - Divide the players into two teams, lining up on opposite sides of a rectangular area. Players will dribble the ball to the other side and then back to their starting position. The team getting all the players back to their starting point first is the winners.

Diminishing Goal - Divide players into pairs, or partner them with a buddy. Give each pair one ball and two cones. Set the cones several yards apart and have the players face each other across the cones. When each player completes a pass to the other, the cones are moved closer together. The object is to execute a pass through a space that is becoming increasingly smaller. When the ball can no longer pass through the cones, the players then try to knock them down.



MOTIVATING PLAYERS

Coach Expectations

Coaches need to measure and be flexible with their expectations. Often improvement is small so coaches need to set their players up to succeed and give positive feedback often.

- Do not ignore the faults of better players or pick on minor faults of weaker players
- Each child should always know what is acceptable behavior
- Always give players the benefit of the doubt

Coaching Tip

PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS

- Provide balance assistance as needed: hand to hand, trunk stability, etc.
- Create safe playing situations: balance, support, shielding player from other players/on-coming balls/etc.
- Create opportunities for play: feed the ball to the player, direct the play, create "space" for player to negotiate, etc.
- Provide a safe opportunity for player to practice skills, for example, 1:1 practice with dribbling, shooting, being goalie prior to engaging in group play
- Assist player to get into position for play – move up front

Skill-Based Activities

Shooting

Coaching Tip

COGNITIVE LIMITATIONS

- Provide instruction directly during play – break down directions, model the desired skill, guide into position
- Create opportunities for play
- Help to define the space and “strategies”: lead into play, direct, guide, etc.
- Ensure safety



GOAL - Place 5-6 balls in a semi-arch in front of a goal. The player shoots the ball one at a time until all balls have been kicked into the goal.

You vs. Me - Divide players into small groups, facing each other across the field along opposite touch lines or a rectangular grid. Place beach balls in the center of each group. Players attempt to shoot the beach ball over the opposite line using their soccer balls as shooters.

Coaching Tip

BEHAVIORAL LIMITATIONS

- Provide 1:1 assist to model desired behaviors
- Define directions and rules
- Create opportunities to be safe and to be able to have a quiet “time out” as needed without being negative in nature



Planning your TOPSoccer Session

Additional Games

Body Part Dribble – In designated area, the coach has all players dribble a soccer ball. When the coach yells out the name of a body part, players must touch that body part to the ball as quickly as possible. Coaches should vary body parts and the rate at which they call out body parts.

Planets – Set up cones into multiple squares or triangles that serve as planets (or cities). All players must follow coach's order and dribble into the planet they call out. The coach can have all players follow the same directions or break up teams so they start at different planets and then have them dribble through the solar system clockwise or counterclockwise.

Gates – Set up pairs of cones (with roughly 2 yards in-between pairs) all around the playing area. These pairs serve as gates or many mini-goals. Players each have a ball and must dribble through the gate in order to score. Have players count how many goals they score and when playing a second time ask them if they can beat their score by one goal. Coaches can vary this by asking players to dribble with their left foot or right foot. If players end up dribbling back and forth through only one goal, set up a rule to protect against this.

Team Gates – Break the group into two teams and have them dribble through gates but only gates of the same color as their team. Make this a team competition by keeping score for each team. *Version 2:* If players appear comfortable, challenge them by asking them to do this in pairs. *Version 3:* Limit balls to three and have teams compete to get the ball and score on goals of their own color.

MOTIVATING PLAYERS

Building Self Confidence

Players develop the ability to believe in themselves by being allowed to make mistakes and learn from them.

- Encourage everyone to be involved
- Use numerous demonstrations and repetitions of correct performance
- Focus on participation and learning

Coaching Tip

Vision Impairment

- Describe the environment and activity
- Use voice to guide and direct
- Create a safe environment – space around the player, clear obstacles, be a “cushion” for oncoming or unexpected players or balls/goals, etc.
- Direct the ball to the player for touches and contact
- May provide a balance and mobility support, with player holding forearm for example

PARACHUTE GAMES

Roller ball-

Everyone holds the chute taut. Place a large ball near the edge. Try to make the ball roll around the edge of the chute.

Big Turtle-

Have the children get on their hands and knees under a large "turtle shell" and try to make the turtle move in one direction. As a cooperative game, children have to work together to get the turtle to move.

Seesaw Pull-

From a sitting position, have the children pull the chute back and forth in a see-sawing motion. See if they can get the ball to roll to their side.

Mushroom-

From a standing position, have everyone raise the parachute high over their heads and then crouch down, pulling the parachute tightly behind them.

Parachute Tag-

Lift the parachute high overhead. Call one child's name and have him/her run (skip, hop, twirl or crawl) to the other side before the parachute comes down and tags them.

One Hand Run-

Have each child hold the parachute with one hand, extending the opposite arm out for balance. Run around in one direction, then change and run around in the other direction.

Running by Numbers/Colors-

If the chute is a large one have the kids run underneath and switch places with one another.

Drop the ball-

Place a soft ball of any size in the center and you have to try to keep the ball from falling off on your side.

Coaching Tip

SENSORY LIMITATIONS

- Provide a stable and reliable (trusted) anchor in the often chaotic environment!
- Provide a practice environment that will reduce the sensory stimulation. For example- practice to the side of the group but perform the same skills
- Allow for quiet time and breaks from the sensory overload

