



**Survival Guide: 4v4 (U8):** To provide beginner volunteer coaches of 7 and 8-year-old children/players with a process to successfully navigate the soccer season.

**Introduction:** Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association has played a significant role in fostering youth soccer development and promoting the sport's growth within the state of Massachusetts. Established in 1974, Mass Youth Soccer has been at the forefront of organizing, supporting, and regulating youth soccer activities for several decades.

You are going to be a valuable asset to your town's soccer program. Many of you are parents of children in the program and have been asked to volunteer as a coach. At the U8 age group, you may have children that participated in a U6 program within your organization, and you may have some children that are just beginning their soccer journey. Your primary role is to help the children enjoy their experience and continue on to a life-long passion for the game.

Welcome to the team!

**Mission:** Massachusetts Youth Soccer, a nonprofit educational and service organization, is dedicated to the equitable and ongoing development of youth soccer players, coaches, referees, clubs and leagues in an inclusive, unbiased, safe, affordable and fun environment for all.

#### **Prior to the season**

- Complete risk management responsibilities
  - ✓ Each year that you coach in Massachusetts, you are required to complete risk management tasks that help to ensure the safety of the children that you will be working with throughout the year and maintain compliance with Federal and State Law. Massachusetts Youth Soccer Adult Registration
  - ✓ SafeSport Abuse Prevention
  - ✓ Safe and Healthy Playing Environments
  - ✓ CORI verification.

You can find more information on those procedures and links to each of those here: [Massachusetts Youth Soccer Adult Registration Process](#)

Start this process as soon as possible to allow for the CORI verification to process and to allow yourself time to complete the SafeSport Abuse Prevent and Concussion Awareness courses.

- Communicate with Director of Coaching, Recreational or Travel Director, Age Group Coordinator and/or President. Whomever is overseeing the program.

Soccer programs can be governed and overseen with a variety of organizational structures. As a new coach to the program, you need to understand who your direct supervisor is so that you can work with them to get you up to date on necessary items, problem solve together, and use them for support throughout the year. As an example, some programs have dedicated Age Group Coordinators that oversee a specific age group within the program. Some have a Director of Coaching that oversees the entirety of the soccer side of the program, which can be from working with you as you develop as a coach to the creation of the practice schedule. Be sure to understand the roles that each person within your organization plays so that you know who to go to for specific questions or feedback, allowing you to have a more successful year.



The sooner you are able to get the practice times, location, and day of the week out to your families, the better it will be. Even at the youngest ages, children can have multiple after-school activities going on and their weeks can fill up. Along with this, at this age, most games will be scheduled internally and so your program may be able to provide you with game information to send out to the parents as well. An example could be 1 day a week with 30 minutes of training followed by 30 minutes of game play. [OB] Documents to have on hand prior to first meeting. Host organization should provide this information.

- **Receive Roster** – names, parent/guardian information, phone numbers and email addresses
- **Emergency medical information**-allergy, emergency contacts other information needed in the event of unforeseen medical situation
- **Weather related guidelines**
- **Emergency Action Plan** in case an injury does occur on the field.

Many programs will provide you with the necessary equipment to have a successful year ahead with your team. Items like balls (age-appropriate size), cones, pinnies and first aid kit are essential items to helping you run a session. Additional items like small, portable goals (if available) can help enhance your team's experience during sessions.

Communication with the families of your players is an essential part of making sure that your team environment runs smoothly. Building a positive relationship with the families helps ensure that everyone in and around the team is pulling in the same direction. Families want to know that they have someone that cares about their player and is prioritizing a positive experience for the children. Consistent and relevant communication shows families that you are organized and thinking about the best ways to serve their children. At the start of the season, you should reach out to your families and introduce yourself; giving background on yourself, potential involvement in the game in the past, any potential past experiences in teaching or coaching, and noting how excited you are to begin working with the team.

This might also be a suitable time to set expectations around communication from families to you in terms of RSVPing for practices and games, setting boundaries on communication after a game, and telling families about what kind of communication they can expect from you during the week.

*You can find a sample email within the resources.*

### **Communication**

Determine if the club uses a communication app for the parents (ex. Stack Team app or TeamSnap)  
Check with your club.

Why it is important to use an app: Soccer programs will typically have some communication protocols that they want each coach to abide by throughout the year. Some may use a communication app, which allows you to not only communicate with your team through a chat/messaging function, but also allow you to input practice and game information and collect RSVPs for each event. If your program does use one of these apps, make sure to touch base with the organization's leadership to see if there are any specific guidelines they have for its usage.

Other programs may choose to stick to email as the primary form of communication. Make sure to determine if the program has certain protocols that need to be followed when emailing individual families or the team as a whole. For example, should everyone be BCC'd on the email to avoid reply-all emails? Does your direct supervisor, Director of Coaching, or President need to be CC'd on emails that



you send to your team? Typically, there are some policies in place that are designed to keep you as the coach covered in case any issues arise.

### **Ask for curriculum from organization**

The most common form of soccer that you see on tv is adults playing 11v11. The game at 4v4, with U8 players is very different and so the expectations and practices that would be suitable for adults will not meet the needs of your U8 players. Most programs, however, will have a week-by-week, season-by-season curriculum built for you to follow that includes the activities/games that will conduct in your session.

Some organizations might give more flexibility to design your own sessions but may ask that you work from a specific methodology such as Play-Practice-Play. There is a list of resources at the end of this section that can help navigate what a practice should look like at this age group.

### **Parent meeting (could be conducted in season after a training/game)**

As mentioned, the families can help you navigate the season successfully. Everyone wants what is best for the children and working together can help make your role as the coach easier. Host a parent meeting early in the season to allow the families to put a face to your name. This could be done in-person or on a video call, which may allow you to have an accompanying presentation. Regardless of the setting, this would also be a good setting to reiterate what your expectations are from the families in terms of communication and field any questions families may have about the upcoming year.

*PROTIP: Use the Team Meeting to learn names of parents, guardians and siblings!*

- Look for help...assistant coaches, snack volunteers, possible social events

Coaching a team can be burdensome if you are left with all the responsibilities. Ask for any volunteers that would like to be an assistant coach so that you have someone there to offer you support and share ideas and plan sessions throughout the season. This can also be helpful in building effective relationships with the children as some coaches may be more effective when building rapport with each child.

### **Resources List**

There are an infinite number of resources out there for youth soccer coaches today. Being able to navigate through what makes sense for you and you're the child in front of you can be tricky and so we have put together a list of resources that can help you:

- [Play-Practice-Play](#): Play-Practice-Play is an approach to coaching that allows for players to play the game in deliberate, game-like situations in an effort to keep players active and experiencing the game of soccer as opposed to standing in lines and doing traditional *drills*.
- [Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association Sessions](#): MYSA offers a number of session plans organized by Player Age Groups and Training Themes that are designed specifically to be age appropriate.
- [Introduction to Grassroots Coaching](#) a free, 20-minute, online course provided by US Soccer.
- [Five Things to know about Play-Practice-Play](#)
- [US Soccer 4v4 Grassroots Course](#): US Soccer offers a full soccer coach licensing pathway, including a 4v4 course that can be taken either online or in-person. The 4v4 course goals are to help you better understand the basic needs of a grassroots player, the basic structure of the game, the basic structure of a training session, and the basic tasks of a grassroots coach while also helping you observe the game, recognize moments, and basic player actions, learn about



the Play-Practice-Player methodology, and create a player-centric environment. [At Home Training Ideas](#): You may find times where you don't have a large number of players at practice. During Covid, MYSA put together 'at home' training ideas for individuals and small groups that you can utilize.

- [The Coaching Manual](#): A tiered subscription service that provides you with pre-made sessions from different contributors across the game, with some accompanying video. It also allows you to plan and design your own sessions.
- [https://mcusercontent.com/b64f740fe225f00687212bb61/files/375fe302-f7ab-2021-f521-d9144af953f6/new\\_coaches\\_starter\\_pack\\_TCM.pdf](https://mcusercontent.com/b64f740fe225f00687212bb61/files/375fe302-f7ab-2021-f521-d9144af953f6/new_coaches_starter_pack_TCM.pdf)
- MOJO
- [Soccer Starts at Home](#): Written by Tom Byer, this book gives parents the tools to help develop their player's confidence with the ball while at home.
- Parent Meeting PowerPoint Template
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*All coaches are strongly encouraged to take the 4v4 Grassroots course (on-line minimum or in-person)*  
[MA Youth Partner access Link](#)

### **In Season:**

- What to expect from this age group

Start with your child. What are their likes and dislikes? What motivates them to play or why did they sign up? Have realistic expectations based on their cognitive and playing abilities. Continue building all your practice activities and games based on the foundation of fun, enjoyment, dignity, respect, safety, inclusion, and development so that all players are excited about coming back for the following session.

Your training activities at U8 might start to look a little more like the traditional game of soccer (compared to U6 practices), but children may still need some sort of external references to connect with (example: instead of defenders in an activity, they could be bandits). But, if you reference above and try to consider what drives the motivation in these children, we do know they have very short attention spans and live in, what might be considered, a dream type world.

Dignity & Respect would suggest that each child should receive your undivided attention. As adults, we need to listen to what the children have to say as much as the child should do the same to their teammates and to the coach. Try to create agreed upon behaviors and guidelines to ensure each child feels as though they are not only involved but belong in the group. This can be a challenge as some children can be disruptive at times or unengaged.

Examples of agreed upon behaviors:

- When the coach is speaking, it is polite to listen. When the children are speaking, the coach will listen to you as well.
- When you need to get a drink or go to the bathroom, please ask the coach so we can make sure your parents/guardian can help if needed.
- Where should we place our water bottles during the session? (in an area close to where the children will be playing)
- Why do we have to be careful when kicking a soccer ball during a team water break? (so, no one gets hurt)

Questions such as these can be asked to the player so they feel a part of the process. Yes, some of these questions may seem leading but seeking the answer from the players will help establish the child/coach rapport.



Think of how you can allow each child to experiment with different roles within the activity to make a connection to what they enjoy. Be mindful, there is a reason for each behavior. At times, it may take some trial and error to reach the child. You may not always feel as though you are making headway but, often your positive approach may influence the child in many ways outside of the game.

Safety is an overarching concept. Not only will coaches need to ensure the field is safe, but each child is safe from physical and emotional threats as well. Prior to each session with the team, remember to walk the field and check for any dangerous area. Sometimes animals burrow into the ground or an aluminum can may be chopped up in a lawn mower and create dangerous situations. If these are items that can be safely picked up or repaired, please do so. If not, you may need to adjust the size of your field to avoid the dangerous areas.

#### **Steps when arriving at the field:**

- Have your lesson plan ([Massachusetts Youth Soccer Association Sessions](#)) handy so you can always refer to it. Make sure you select U8 sessions so that they're age appropriate.
- Organize your pennies and balls so that they're ready to go. Usually, each child will bring a soccer ball but sometimes they forget it at home or in the car. Having a couple extra soccer balls, if available, has proven to be a good tip.
- Start setting up your field space. Utilize your cones and visualize your activities. Start setting up backwards which means you set up your last activity first with one set of colored cones. Then you use a different set of cones to set up your 2<sup>nd</sup> to last activity. And then you can set up your 1<sup>st</sup> activity (warm up). It will allow you smoothly to move from one activity to the next without too much headache.
- As each child arrives, greet each child as they arrive at the field; even the child who is arriving late. Connect with each child to find out one personal item. Ask how school is going or if they had any fun adventures.

#### **At the end of the session**

- Ask the children to help you pick up the cones. Make a game (race) out of it but remember to use different colors. If not, kids will pick up any cone they see to win the race. For example, the challenge for the players could be for each child to pick up 1 blue cone and bring it to the coach. All children win when they come back with 1 blue cone. If they come back with the wrong color, check for understanding. Which color cone were you challenged to bring back? Either way, quickly move on, reset the cone if needed and continue with the session.
- At the end of each session, a simple question asking, "What did they enjoy about today's session?" "What did you enjoy about the activity?" Simple questions like these can generate a conversation with the children and help you, as the coach, determine which activities were more enjoyable.

**Weather:** Weather can change throughout the season and even throughout your session. Please be aware of weather-related guidelines to help keep the children safe. Please [click here](#) to see MA Youth Soccer's Weather Policy.

**Water breaks:** a general rule of thumb, anytime a child asks for water, always allow them time to drink. Even if they just came back from a drink, it is ok to ask for another. Many times, this is a chance for them to check in with their parents/guardians to ensure they are watch as well as an extra sip of water. Be mindful of temperatures as it may not seem hot to an adult coach, children's bodies regulate differently so they may need more breaks than an adult would. Sometimes, this also creates a moment for you, the coach, to reorganize your activity or even set up for the next game.



## **Educational/Developmental Considerations**

The development of each player is one of our goals as coaches. However, development comes in many shapes and sizes. Development could include helping the players understand the boundaries of the game field, the direction they play when in possession of the ball. How to keep the ball in play while dribbling. How can they use soft touches to keep the ball close or big touches to push the ball further in front of them. Development can also mean improving a child's ability to focus on specific tasks for a period of time.

Layering an activity is a method of introducing an activity and slowly adding new rules or conditions as the game goes on. This is a means of keeping the child engaged, acknowledging their short attention spans and allowing for the child to process small bits of information instead of trying to remember a list of guidelines. Making games inclusive rather exclusive. Can we give our children a different task to stay mentally engaged in the training session so that he/she doesn't become disruptive?

For example, consider the game FREEZE TAG (with a ball). We can take a step-by-step process to help the players process the game and rules. Be mindful, in a 15-minute activity, children are more likely to stay engaged and focused when playing 10-12 (1-minute rounds) instead of 1 15-minute game.

- Round 1-all children with a ball. Dribble around to understand the boundaries. No kid should be at risk of being tagged yet. (1-minute)
- Round 2 & 3-all children with a soccer ball. Dribble within the defined space. avoid being tagged by the coach. See which kid can get tagged the fewest number of times. This allows children to improve their ability to manipulate the ball as this is a DRIBBLING activity and not a tagging activity. Tagging simply turns it into a chase type game. (1-minute x 2 rounds)
- Round 4 & 5-In this round, we introduce temporary consequences. While dribbling in the space, if tagged by the coach, you are frozen for a count to 5. After the child counts to 5, they can begin dribbling again. (1-minute x 2 rounds). Each round, children should try to improve on the previous round.
- Round 6 & 7-ask players, when a teammate is FROZEN, how can we unfreeze them? Maybe it is when their teammates tag them, they are unfrozen or passing their soccer ball through their legs to unfreeze (players choice). If a player is frozen, they should hold the ball above their head, so their teammates know they are frozen. This will encourage players to dribble with their head up to find the frozen teammates. (1-minute x 2 rounds).
- Round 8, 9 & 10-now we add the children in as the FREEZE monster. New Freeze monsters each round. The Freeze monster tries to tag their teammates to freeze them. The dribblers will try to avoid being tagged and unfreeze their teammates as needed.

As you may notice, all these steps will not be in a lesson plan because of limited space in the plan. All players remain engaged in the activity and each new layer seemingly creates a new game within the game. It is helpful to review each activity you intend to play during your session to determine how to introduce the boundaries then provide simple steps for the children to learn new steps along the way. A simple question asking, "What did they enjoy about today's session?", can generate a conversation with the children.

## **How and why do we make games Inclusive instead of Exclusive?**

**Inclusive Activities** are games which keep the children involved and fully participating. They should not be sitting on the side watching the other children play. If their soccer ball gets kicked out of play as part of the activity, for example, ask the child to retrieve it as quickly as possible and join back into the game.

**Exclusive Activities** are games which include elimination in the game. Same example as above, if their soccer ball gets kicked out, the player sits on the side for a period of time.



If we pause for a moment and think about the environment. Which children tend to be eliminated from an activity? Generally, it is the player who is struggling the most in the game. This is the player who needs to be included in the game and encouraged to try do better instead of feeling a sense of frustration or discouragement. This is why it is so important to keep the children engaged and included instead of excluded.

### **Player's equipment needs and how to know what to get and how to wear**

Below is a list of equipment children should bring to each session and, in some cases, must be worn in order to participate.

- Jersey/t-shirt – often provided by the organization.
- Shorts – (sweatpants/shirt when the weather turns cold)
- Shin guards – cover the shins and will need to be purchased by the parents at a Dick's store or Walmart. (These are mandatory, and children may not participate without them)
- Socks – Shin guards should be covered with the socks. Therefore, "soccer socks" will seem long but they are meant to be worn over the shin guards.
- Shoes - can be flat "sneaker type" shoes. Shoes can also be cleated shoes. However, no metal cleats are baseball type shoe can be worn. Soccer shoes tend to be more universal than most other shoes. It is helpful to ask at the store what shoes can be worn for soccer.
- A soccer ball – size 3 or 4 (size 5 is too big for this age group)
- Water – bring plenty of water for the length of the training. Be mindful, children will spill or splash some of the water so this should influence the amount of water provided.

Layout and follow up based on the Pre-season team meeting. (Ex: Socks over shin guards, water bottle, soccer ball,)

### **Choose a session for your weekly training.**

The training session should be player not coaches centered. Be prepared to adapt and modify the session based on their mood and attention span. Provide demonstrations for visual learners, students enjoy players experience success and use mistakes as meaningful learning opportunities. Everything is based on the individual player and his/her ball.

### **Create a Safe Environment**

Multi-tasking is the key to making sure all kids are included and treated fairly. Have a safe learning conditions that are free from physical harm, intimidation, harassment and bullying. It's all about the kids. Help and guide kids through mistakes so that they feel safe. All players can play to win but learn through losing. Be positive in your verbal expression and body language. Every player plays at least 50% of the time. Make sure that also the less gifted players enjoy themselves. Understand that motivation for playing is about participation and a love for soccer. Efforts are valued to build self-esteem. Build Rapport with each kid-building rapport starts with a positive word or welcome to each child as they arrive and before they leave. High 5's can complement your greeting and children enjoy jumping the achieve the high 5's. Asking children about other activities they are involved in, life at home, and school can reveal the core motivations of what each child enjoys and how to motivate them.

### **Conduct your session** (may not look like soccer at this age but should look similar)

- Select a training session theme. This may come from the organization or, feel free to use our list of sessions [MA Youth Soccer Session Plans](#)
- Allow yourself time to review the plan. Remember, the session plan is a guide and can be modified if needed for the number of players or available space.



- Arrive at the field at least 15 minutes early to set up the first activity before the children arrive. Once they arrive, your focus will be on the children instead of on the set up.
- Greet each child. Ask how school is going or how their day was.
- Get the children playing the game as soon as training begins. Be careful not to start too soon as children will begin to tire of soccer before the session is over and may want to go on to their next scheduled event (play date, swimming, other sport)
- As you review each activity, be mindful that children cannot process all the details, only 1-3 concepts at a time. This would suggest you set up the activity and provide just enough information to understand the boundaries and direction of the game. Each round, you can layer additional information into the game.
- The methodology we currently follow is Play-Practice-Play. This is designed to ensure children spend more time in game-like activities rather than “drill-like” activities. The first Play phase allows for children to arrive at the field and immediately begin playing the game the way they view the game; minimal instruction. The phase will help you, the coach, introduce a few concepts related to the session plan’s theme (attacking or defending). Generally, attacking themes tend to be more enjoyable than defending themes and are helpful in creating more comfort with the ball. The first Play phase is not necessarily a teaching phase. Instead, this is your chance to guide the players in the environment you hope to create. In a sense, you are helping the children put on their soccer hats and begin to think about the game.
- The next phase is the Practice phase. This is the phase where the coach teaches or attempts to change player behavior from where they currently are to the desired behaviors we hope to see. Since this age group is quite egocentric, the primary emphasis is the player and the ball (me and my ball). Consider what the play can do such as dribble the ball, pass the ball (only the technique of passing not the receiver/teammate) & shooting. For the team without the ball, the individual actions are to protect the goal (get between the ball and the goal) and steal the ball (tackle the ball away from the opponent. See resources for individual action resources.
- The next phase is the Play 2 Phase. Quickly transition from practice to second play phase by organizing players, removing cones, adjusting goals, ball, etc. Involve players, for example. Make a game out of it. Think about your position and that of your players (sun/wind in your face, not theirs; use a circle/half circle where everyone is in the 1<sup>st</sup> row, etc.) Brief explanation (30 seconds) of the second play phase. PEP. “picture”, “explain”, “play”. No referee needed. In this phase, you, the coach, will determine if the children have been able to process the concepts you introduced in the Practice phase and apply it to the game.
  - *U.S. Soccer Play On: Overview for Coaches and the Player Development Initiatives (PDI’s) Pages 13-23 are in resources and is helpful when creating a safe and fun environment!*

### **Once the session ends**

- Collect all equipment by involving children.
- Check in with children for well-being after each session.
- A simple question asking, "What did they enjoy about today’s session?", can generate a conversation with the children. This can be a group discussion.
- This may seem obvious but always remember to say goodbye to all children and parents and thank them for their participation.





### **Game Day coaching tips and expectations**

- Plan your game ahead of time. Consider how many players may be in attendance. What formation or shape you intend to play. This could be a triangle shape (3 players), a diamond shape (4 players) or a box shape (4 players). Do not be overly concerned with positions because positions may not make sense to the players. It would be a great idea to start introducing the different positions within a shape but try not to fixate on where they should be. This will take time and make more sense as the children grow with the game.
- Many organizations still do not use goal keepers at U8, but you do need to find out what your organization or league's rules are for U8.
- Consider how you intend to substitute players.
- Discuss roles with your assistant coach. 1 coach may need to be on the field to monitor the game and encourage the players while the other coach manages the players on the bench (coaches can switch roles weekly so they can experience both roles).
- At this age group, different organizations and leagues have different rules around whether there are throw-ins, goal kicks, corner kicks or free kicks. Make sure to check in on the rules before your first game. For this age group, the priority is helping to keep the ball in play for as long as possible. Coaches should keep a supply of balls close by so as soon as a ball leaves the field, another can be put into play immediately. Some towns may use more of the FIFA Laws of the Game for restarts and/or fouls. Remember to check with your organization to determine which game format they use.

### **Mid-season check in with players and parents**

- Throughout each session and throughout the season, check in with the children and the parents. An ongoing process to build relationships with parents can help you create and influence that perfect performance environment. Follow up with parents that have specific tasks on your team.
- Discuss any evaluation and reflection process the organization implements. Some parents' feedback will help you assess your impact on players and entire team and then connect it with your desired outcomes.

### **Post Season (usually follow last game day) Not much interaction takes place post season)**

End of season meeting with parents to thank them all for their support and provide next steps for the children if they plan to play again in the spring season. Some programs may offer winter training as well. Please check with the organization to help provide information to the parents.

### **Close of the season with organization**

- Return equipment to the organization for inventory and storage for the next season.
- Follow up on any club driven surveys if applicable. These can also be addressed during the end of season meeting.
- Inform the organization of your intentions volunteer again the next session. Be careful! You may have found a new favorite past-time.



Once again, thank you so much for volunteering with your organization. The organization is always appreciative of your efforts. What you put into the program makes for a better environment for all. Below are a few resources which you can use to help get you started with introductions, meetings, training sessions & games. If you should have any additional questions, please reach out to the MA Youth Soccer Technical Department.

Tommy Geis  
Technical Director  
[tgeis@mayouthsoccer.org](mailto:tgeis@mayouthsoccer.org)

Michael Ndoumbe  
Assistant Technical Director  
[mndoumbe@mayouthsoccer.org](mailto:mndoumbe@mayouthsoccer.org)

Peter Motzenbecker  
Assistant Technical Director  
[pmotz@mayouthsoccer.org](mailto:pmotz@mayouthsoccer.org)

**Resources:**

[US Youth Soccer Player Development Framework](#)

[US Soccer Play On: Overview for Coaches](#)

[Player Development Initiatives \(PDI's\)](#)

[Coach introduction template \(page down\)](#)

[Example of a parent meeting agenda \(2 pages down\)](#)

[MA Youth Partners](#)



### **Coach introduction template** – *Please edit as needed for your team*

Dear Parents & Players of **Insert Team Name**

Hope you are all well and enjoying your **summer**, it won't be long now until we are back out on the field!!!

Please take a moment to read through this message as it will help ensure a smooth start to our upcoming season.

### **Coach Introduction**

**Introduce yourself as the coach. Talk about background in the game, any licensing that you, make parents aware that you've completed SafeSport, Concussion Recognition, and any other health and safety certificates you have in order to keep their child safe. Include your reason or "WHY" you are volunteering to coach.**

### **Expectations**

If this is your first season with **INSERT ORGANIZATION**, welcome. If your child is a returning player, welcome back! Hopefully when registering for the team this season you were aware of the program's mission statement and philosophy.

This link will allow you to take a closer look at some of the great reasons you are part of **ORGANIZATION NAME: INSERT 'ABOUT US' SECTION OF ORGANIZATION IF AVAILABLE**

Your child has their own development process. My first goal is to ensure your child enjoys their experience in the game. My next objective will be to help your child gain a better understanding of the U8 game and develop their ability as a player. I will work to build on their unique strengths while improving their areas of growth. I will take a holistic approach to better understand and appreciate your child both on the field and off so I can help them grow as players and people. Be mindful, this is a process and it will take time & patience so please work with me to help your child gain a passion for the game of soccer.

As a parent of a child in the organization, I ask that you support the development process of your child. **IF YOUR PROGRAM HAS A DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY - Here is the development pathway within the club: INSERT LINK**

What all of this means is that we do place an expectation on you as parents. We simply ask that you provide your children with support, you allow me the ability to coach and that you and I are aligned with what the goals are for your child. As a program with a development-first mindset things will take time, what is key is that we understand that to provide your child with the most enjoyable and developmental they have to be willing to fail and make mistakes, that is one of the biggest learning tools and something that has to be embraced.

Communication throughout the year is a key part to our success on and off field. If your child is going to miss practices or games, it is important to me to know. The best way to reach me is **through text or email. I check this regularly. Here is my contact information (your phone number & email)**. I am usually available up until **9:00pm**. After this time, I tend to shut down my computer and phone.

Each player should come to training with:

- Jersey/t-shirt – often provided by the organization.
- Shorts – (sweatpants/shirt when the weather turns cold)
- Shin guards – cover the shins and will need to be purchased by the parents at a Dick's store or Walmart. (These are mandatory, and children may not participate without them)



- Socks – Shin guards should be covered with the socks. Therefore, “soccer socks” will seem long but they are meant to be worn over the shin guards.
- Shoes - can be flat “sneaker type” shoes. Shoes can also be cleated shoes. However, no metal cleats are baseball type shoe can be worn. Soccer shoes tend to be more universal than most other shoes. It is helpful to ask at the store what shoes can be worn for soccer.
- A soccer ball – size 3 or 4 (size 5 is too big for this age group)
- Water – bring plenty of water for the length of the training. Be mindful, children will spill or splash some of the water so this should influence the amount of water provided.

### **Fall Training and Game Schedule**

Below is the fall training schedule and game schedule. Please note this is subject to change and any changes will be communicated directly to you.

**INSERT TRAINING SCHEDULE AND GAME SCHEDULE (LINK)**

**Please try to have your child available each week for our training. If, for whatever reason, you will be missing or running late, notify me as soon as possible so we can properly prepare for our training activity set up.**

We will host a parent meeting on **date (usually following training or game)** to further discuss our program, create a snack schedule for post games and answer questions you may have moving forward.

I look forward to a great season ahead and working with everyone to ensure that the players enjoy themselves and learn.

### **Example of a parent meeting agenda - Please edit as needed for your meeting (remember to take notes)**

(meeting should be limited to 15-20 minutes as many children and parents will other events to attend)

Welcome statement

Brief recap of who you are (introduction)

Review of any club or league policies

Updates to schedule (if applicable)

Ask parents their expectations from the programs (it is always important to hear from the parents in order to be aware of any concerns or comments)

Review coach expectations of parents

- Support for coach
- sideline behavior
- How parents can help managing children
- Child drop off and pick up (usually parents stay at training and game but in case they do not)

Identify volunteers for post-game snacks as well as volunteers to help any social events for the team. (This may also be a good time to identify an assistant coach if needed.)

Q & A

Next steps and recap of the meeting

(Meeting should be **informative**, **involve** and engage the parents and **inspire** the group to positively support the team and program)