



ALBERTA SOCCER ASSOCIATION
The Governing Body of Soccer in Alberta

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Grassroots Coach Clinic

Coach Handbook



#thisis **GRASSROOTS**

GRASSROOTS COACH CLINIC

The purpose of this coaching resource is to support the delivery of a Grassroots Coaching or FUNdamentals Coaching Clinic and provide support to new to soccer coaches.

The Coaching Clinic is not a certification program but an opportunity for local coaches to participate in and observe some practical soccer coaching activities. They will see how these activities may be modified to comply to the various coaching needs of the community/players, with the ultimate goal of “Letting them play”.

the Rule of 3 FOR COACHING SOCCER

This clinic presents three principles to guide successful coaching in Grassroots:

- **Coach the players**
- **Notice a difference**
- **Modify the game**

COACH THE PLAYERS

Many aspiring coaches get lost in coaching the game and neglect the key priority: to **coach players first** and the game second. This concept may seem logical, but is crucial for success at any level, from novice to elite, professional coaches. The essence of coaching is to know your players.

As a coach, do you **have fun** or are you lost in technical and tactical instruction? If you're engaged and enjoying the session, chances are, the players are also. So, lead by example and the players will adopt your approach to coaching within their play.

Coach the players' game. Many coaches develop or mimic drills and activities that reflect an activity that may have little relevance within their game. Players will ask - why are we doing this? Consider each activity and how it may manifest within *their* game. For example, one-two touch play for very young players is unrealistic. So, coach how your players play their game.

THERE IS A DIFFERENCE

Every developing coach should develop an understanding of their ability and whom they are most comfortable coaching. A good U4 coach may not be a good U10 coach and vice versa. Similarly, some coaches are more attuned to coaching girls rather than boys. Know your strengths and coach to these.

The current drop-out rate of girls within sport is alarming, so a consideration for any new soccer coach is to recognize some basic differences at the Grassroots Level of participation.

Below are some **generalisations** to guide your practice across the two genders. Again, **recognize these are observations and not intended to be a standard**. Remember, the first rule is 'know your players'.

Motive: Girls are driven by social and learning goals, boys are more outcome focused. Consider the example of ball juggling, girls will wish to be instructed on how to and not to compete against each other, boys will want to see, model and beat each other to be the 'winner'.

Language: Girls often prefer positive instructional feedback whilst boys are drawn to goal-based, challenging language to support their development.

Demonstration: All demonstrations should be performed to reflect the task being requested. Girls will prefer a more precise (part by part) demonstration of the required actions, whilst boys wish to see the (whole) demonstration performed at game speed and mimic this.

Competition: Girls appear to perform better to positive and qualitative feedback, ("I like the way you moved to the ball"), whilst boys prefer to be challenged ("you need to move to the ball quicker").

Both: As indicated, there will always be exceptions, but whatever style of coaching you adopt, the strongest determinant of an effective youth coach is positive coaching. No one likes to keep getting told they got it wrong. Support, empathy and guidance will always conquer command and autocratic styles of coaching.

LET THEM PLAY

The goal of any developmental program is to present activities that enable to players to pursue developmental challenges within a supportive environment. Consider the STEP process of activity modification when you are coaching players of all abilities.

SPACE: Where the activity is happening?

E.g. modify the space (playing area) by increasing or decreasing the area in which a task is to be performed. More space may enable success to new performers, or the distance from which players shoot at goal.

TASK: What is happening?

E.g. modify the task by changing the demands, rules of the activity, the number of times the child is to repeat the task, teaching cues, direction/level/pathway of movement or length of time to complete the task. An example here would be the distance between cones in a slalom activity, or use of hands in a game to demonstrate the required movement patterns in a tactical situation.

EQUIPMENT: What is being used?

E.g. modify the equipment by changing the size of the target, level of equipment, amount of equipment or the arrangement of the equipment. A light ball is recommended for heading with young children.

PEOPLE: Who is involved?

E.g. modify the people involved by having children work alone, with a partner, bigger teams, smaller teams, as leaders or followers. Allow players to make their own judgements and sometimes the teams may have an imbalance in numbers, this is not a problem, if one team is leading by many goals, switch the teams up.



GRASSROOTS COACHING GAMES

These are recommendations to support and nurture the passion of soccer within community grassroots soccer. Further recommendations have been developed for league play soccer and are available at <https://albertasoccer.com/player/resources/>

	Active Start	FUNDamentals	Learning to Train
Program complies with the LTPD format of instruction	1 on 1 activities	Skill Stations with no substitutes, all players are engaged and active in activities and games	Skill Stations with no substitutes, all players are engaged and active in activities and games
Sessions incorporate the four training pillar ratios per practice session	General movement 25% Coordination 25% Soccer Technique 25% Small sided Games 25%	General Movement 20% Coordination 20% Soccer Technique 20% Small Sided Games 40%	General Movement 10% Coordination 10% Soccer Technique 40% Small Sided Games 40%
	Under 4 Under 6	Under 7 Under 8/9	Under 10/11 Under 12/13
Recommended team sizes for games	1 on 1 activities 3 v 3 games	3 v 3 games 5 v 5 games (inc Gks)	7 v 7 Inc Gk's 9 v 9 Inc Gks
Duration of practice sessions	30-45 Minutes	30-45 Minutes 45-60 Minutes	60-75 Minutes
Duration of games	Festival format activities 10 Minute games	30 Minutes 40 Minutes	50 Minutes 70 Minutes
Size of the game ball	Three	Three Four	Four/Five Five
Size of the game playing field	Max length 25m Max width 18m	Length 25-30m 30-36m Width 18-22m 20-25m	U10 Length 40-55m Width 30-36 Metres U12 Length 60-75 Metres Width 42-55 M
Size of the goals (Maximum)	Adaptable goals are recommended	Height 1.52m Length 2.44m	U10 Height 1.83m Length 4.88m U12 Height 1.83m Length 5.49m
Modified game rules	Pass-ins and no offside	Pass-ins and no offside	U10 Throw-ins and no offside U12 Throw-ins and offsides

GRASSROOTS COACHING

Presented below are a few of the Grassroots activities that will be used within the Coaches Clinic. For more activities session plans please refer to the Canada Soccer and Alberta Soccer toolkits, that are available at the following link: <https://albertasoccer.com/player/resources/>

1. Skills Square
2. Ball Juggling
3. Tramlines
4. Running Ball Relays
5. Baked Beanz
6. Give and Go Squares
7. Twist and shoot
8. Hunger Games
9. Passing Through
10. 3 Zone Game

DELIVERY

In preparation for each session, check that you have the required resources and players. When establishing areas of play, be reflective of the objective, and not the rules. The goal of any activity is to let them play and guide their development.

GRASSROOTS MODEL ACTIVITIES

SKILLS SQUARE

SET UP:

Set up with a grid marked with cones to meet the age, ability and number of players available, who should each have a ball.

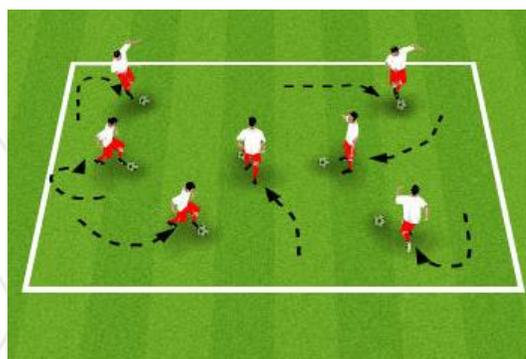
INSTRUCTIONS:

This is a player led activity where the players are instructed to simply move (dribble) the ball within the square and show any moves they may use within a game. The coach should increase the tempo of the dribbling within the square to challenge the players. Once the players are comfortable and moving freely within the grid, encourage selected players to demonstrate a move for the other players to model (copy).

OPTIONS:

Further conditions and games may be added to this activity:

- "Change" - on the coaches command the players stop their ball and run to commence dribbling another players ball within the square.





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- "Flip" - The players perform a sharp turn or somersault with the ball before taking possession of another players ball to move with.
- "Traffic Lights" - using color codes the players react to the coaches command and execute a particular move (red Cryuff, Amber scissors, green Maradona).
- "Numbers" - The players are provided with a number and using just one ball, the players move freely, on the coaches command a number and the player with the ball must identify and pass to the player of the corresponding number. This could be in numerical order to start and then the numbers may be mixed randomly to challenge the players perception of the field.

BALL JUGGLING

Set Up:

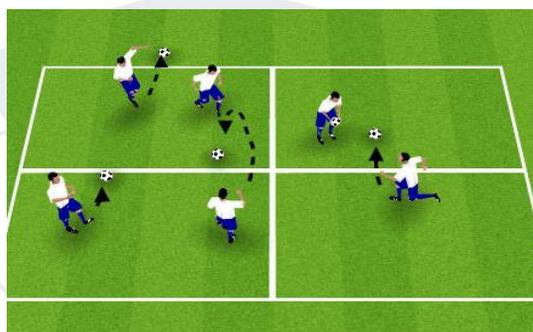
Juggling is an individual technical skill set that is encouraged from a young age. Players simply need to find some space and a ball to practice keeping the ball off the floor.

Instructions:

This activity may commence with players practicing one bounce and one touch, remembering to strike the bottom of the ball with the top of the foot softly.

As players develop their ability and confidence other body parts should be incorporated to the sequence - head and knees.

They should further attempt accumulating as many touches as possible between the ball touching the floor.



TRAM-LINES

Set Up:

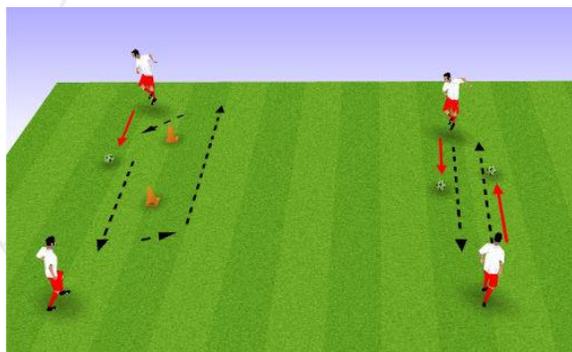
This is a challenging passing activity for players working in pairs. The initial drill is played around two cones and encourages the players to receive and move the ball on the players first touch, so they must play around and along the channel of cones on two touches.

Instructions:

Players should be encouraged to use a specific foot and consider their body position when receiving, moving and playing the ball.

Options:

The second activity is played between two players with no cones, but a ball each, so the players pass and receive a ball at the same time. This activity encourages players to consider the movement of the ball and the strength of their touch on receiving the ball.



Once the basic movement patterns have been mastered, players should be encouraged to rotate the directional play, so instead of receiving on their left and passing on their right, they play the opposite direction, hence receive on their right and pass with their left foot.

They may be instructed to play off one foot, so players should receive on the outside of their right foot and pass with the inside of the same foot.

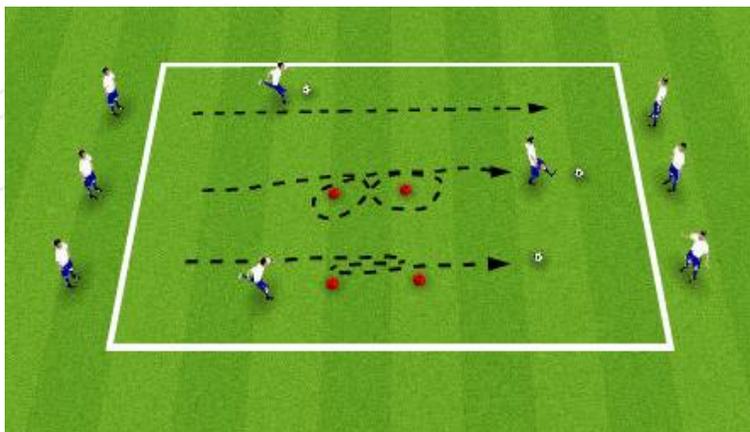
RUNNING BALL RELAY

Set Up

Players are grouped into threes and placed with two players on one side and one on the other of a divide that encourages them to run at speed with the ball. Start the drill with places simply racing each other across the field.

Instructions

Progress the drill to add in a ball and encourage the players to push the ball ahead of their stride with the top of the shoe. Players should seek to cover as much ground as possible with the fewest amount of touches, whilst also allowing them adequate time to lift their head and make a clear observation of the game between touches.



Options

Two suggested progressions

1. Include a slalom (figure of 8) dribble to encourage the players to recognize the importance of close control (dribble), loose control (running the ball).
2. Run with a sudden turn station in the middle, so again the players are required to maintain control of the ball while executing two sharp turns and then exiting the final turn with speed...

BAKED BEANZ

Set Up:

This is a dribbling relay activity and the players work in pairs. Each pair has two cones placed before them, the distance will be dependent upon the challenge required by the players and one ball per pair. Players should commence the drill without the ball first and then add in the ball to focus on technical development.

Instruction:

The players are instructed to run around and between the two cones in a figure of 8 pattern for two loops '88'. They then return to their partner who repeats the sequence. In a race, the first pair to complete the sequences wins, however in the drills the emphasis should be on technique and movement patterns.



Options:

As indicated it is a good idea to observe the players performing the right sequence (pattern) first, without a ball. Then add in some fun physical literacy actions such as laying on your stomach at one cone and sitting on your butt at the other?

Finally add in the ball and guide the players to understand which is the most efficient part of the foot to use in the sequence.

1. Right foot only (inside and outside of the foot)
2. Left foot only (inside and outside of the foot)
3. Inside of both feet (left foot around one cone and right foot around the other)
4. Outside of both feet (left foot around one cone and right foot around the other)
5. Drag through - no conditions except when passing between the cones the player must drag the ball with the bottom of the shoe.

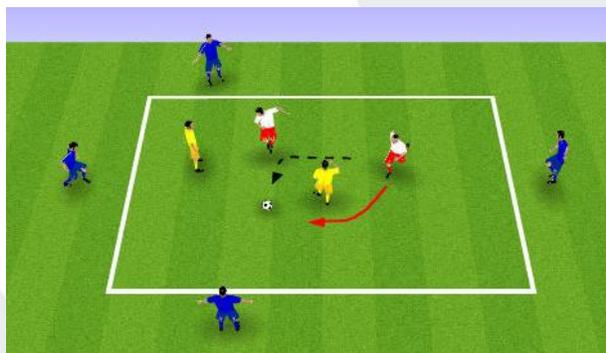
The key is to change feet whenever passing between the two cones.

A further challenge maybe to place a spare ball on the two cones and the players are conditioned to avoid knocking these off the cones.

GIVE N GO SQUARE

SET UP:

Two teams compete within a square zoned to complete give and go moves (one player passes and receives an immediate return pass from their colleague to evade an opponent). The players on the outside act as 'floaters' and play to whichever team passes to them.



If a give and go is completed with a 'floater' that team scores one point. If a give and go is completed with a team-mate in the central zone the team scores two points. The first team to score five points wins. The players should be rotated through so everyone plays in the central zone.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Attacking players should adopt a position to face their opposition in order to complete the move. The players on the outside should remain vigilant at all times to offer support to the central players.

OPTIONS:

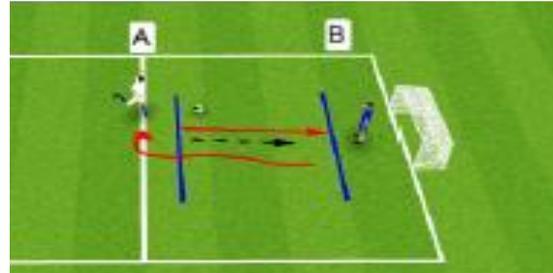
The size of the field and number of central players may be varied. The next progression is to play with the same conditions in a game. So players are encouraged to create space and play with quick short passes. The 'floating' players are key to the success of the drill and provide a real game context, where the play is not always focussed upon the action near to the ball, but the support away from it.



TWIST & SHOOT

Set Up:

The dimensions should match the age and ability of the players, who play in pairs. Ideally the distance between the two lines should be sufficient to challenge the striker and allow the receiver an opportunity to save the shoot.



Instructions:

The players start at each line and the player standing furthest from the goal (player A) and passes to player B who then makes a retreating run to defend the goal, whilst player B moves with the ball to the outside line that they must cross and turn with the ball as quickly as possible, before attempting a shot on goal. The shot must be taken from beyond the line. Each player then reverses their roles after each shot.

The player receiving the ball must attempt to save a goal from being scored by using their body but not their hands or arms.

Options:

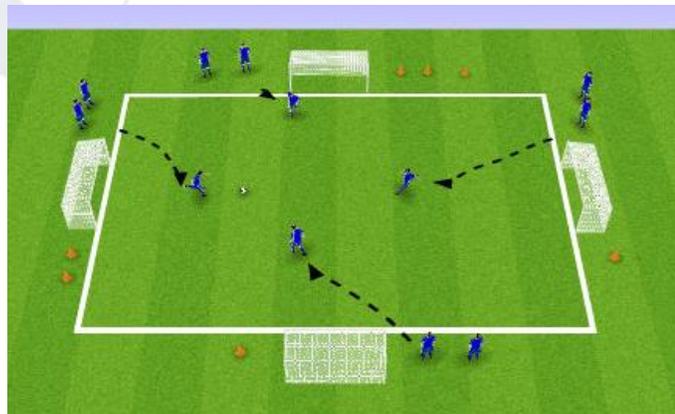
The main techniques for this activity are running with the ball, turning and shooting. The essence is to push the ball ahead on the run, perform a tight turn that plays the ball ahead of your body as you turn, so that you can move on to strike the ball effectively. If the ball is still under the body following the turn, it will require an additional touch or step back to perform an effective shot.

Certain conditions may be placed on the activity to make it harder, such as conditioning the specific use of either foot, are requesting specific turns and then possibly positioning cones in between the lines to present a slalom run.

HUNGER GAMES

Set Up:

This activity is for large groups and takes place on a square field with four goals, marked and positioned within the middle of each side line. The players are split into four teams and allocated numbers, then positioned next to their goal. Each team goal will be marked with a number of marker (life) cones. The coach is in control of the service and tempo of the game and serves the ball into play, so a large supply of balls is required to keep the game flowing.



Instructions:

The coach calls a random number and the respective number from each team enters the field to compete for the ball. They attempt to score in one of the opponents goals. If successful, the team that is scored upon loses a life (cone). When a team loses all their lives they are disqualified from the competition.



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Players may seek to form allegiances with other teams and so work together to eliminate an opposing team. Although eventually all such allegiances must be broken. The last team remaining is the winner.

Options:

This game requires good dribbling, defending, passing and finishing skills. Other options for the game include

- More than one number called at one time (passing as a team)
- Goals are scored by dribbling in control into the goal (through two cones)
- Goals must be shot on one touch
- Type of service into the middle (aerial or on the floor)
- Providing Goalkeepers
- A further option is a large number of goals and smaller team rosters.

PASSING THROUGH

SET UP:

This drill takes place in and around a grid that should be measured to match the number and ability of the players taking part in the activity.

INSTRUCTIONS:

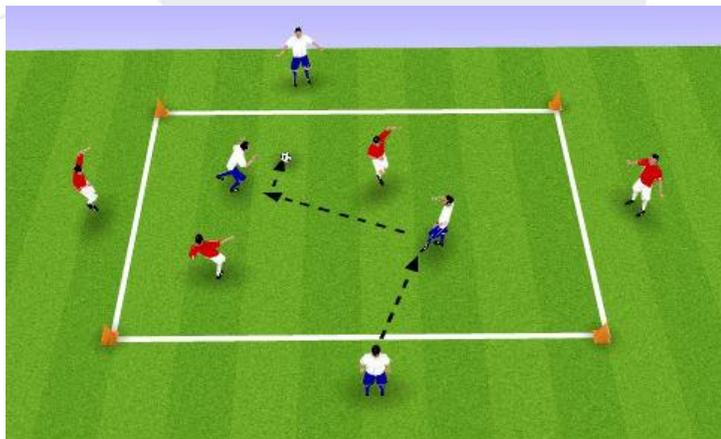
This demanding activity can be used to support either attacking or defending principles. The objective is for one team to pass the ball through the grid to their colleagues on the opposite side of the grid without their opponents intercepting the pass. The ball may be played from either side and must be received in control by a team-mate on the receiving side of the grid to gain a point. If the opponents gain possession of the ball then they resume the game by playing across the grid to their team-mates. The ball may be played back to the initial passer (to retain possession) or straight through the grid (from external (support) players to change angles and passing options) but no point will be awarded unless possession is played through a central player.

OPTIONS:

Various conditions maybe added to increase the demands of the activity, such as each central player must play the ball before a point may be scored (encouraging support play).

Player passing the ball to a floater, must follow their pass and become a floater, whilst the player receiving the ball (floater) enters the square on their first touch to play as a central player.

The game is played until one team achieves three points and then the central players should be rotated.



3 ZONE GAME

SET UP:

This activity takes place on a adapted field for 8 v 8 and to meet the requirements of the players. The game is played to regulation rules with the initial condition that each player (in this case both teams playing a 3-2-2 formation) must remain within their allotted zone.

The focus of the game is to encourage players in the possession zone, to look forward into the next zone for players who are adopting positive support positions.



INSTRUCTIONS:

If the ball is in the central zones, then both defending players and attackers need to be alert to adopting positive support play and observing opportunities to penetrate the opposition lines.

OPTIONS:

The next progression is to allow players to carry the ball across zones on the condition that if a player does cross a zone, their position must be covered by a retreating player from the zone they are entering.

This practice is a logical progression from the Passing Through Drill. Once the players have gained an understanding of their roles, all conditions should be withdrawn to observe the players understanding and application of the principles. Then also the requirement to rotate roles in order to maintain their team shape.

SMALL SIDED GAMES

Small sided games are the essence of soccer development and may use any number of adaptations. The key is to present an environment that supports an element of the game. As indicated the dimensions should always seek to comply with the age, ability and resources available.

In terms of adaptations, there are many and varied and may be applied for extended period or short developmental bursts. The number of players in a game should also reflect the desired outcome of the practice. Below are a few examples of adaptation that would be applied to a game.

- Condition the number of touches players have in a game (one for passing, two for receiving, three or more for dribbling)
- Unbalanced players on a team – encourage one team to consider defensive tactics
- Size and number of goals. Narrow goals for central attack, wide goals for wide attacking
- One touch finishing in a game
- Everyone must be in the opponents half for a goal to be scored

THE ESSENCE OF COACHING: LET THEM PLAY



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