



GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY SOCCER

Learn to Train Soccer Guide





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Mission Statement:

The ASA Technical Department seeks to promote personal development and well-being through the provision of soccer participation opportunities for all within Alberta. The sport of soccer provides a lifetime of opportunities for players, parents, coaches, officials and administrators: the ASA Technical Department seeks to provide guidance and support to all those wishing to embrace the sport that has become the World's Game.

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INTRODUCTION

The sport of Soccer has evolved to proudly boast itself as the World's Game. However in order for any sport to grow, it must provide a vibrant and active entry level of performance: The Grassroots of Sport.

The game of soccer has developed over the years and is presented in many different formats and name adaptations today. Some of these adaptations are for better and some a twist on an existing theme. This document aims to provide an insight and guidance on "The Alberta Way". A game plan to take the sport of soccer forward in Alberta for all those involved.

As the governing body for soccer in Alberta, ASA holds responsibility for developing and administrating the game at all levels. The technical coaching team has specific responsibility for nurturing the development of coach and player pathways.

Presented on the ASA website are a series of informational documents to support your understanding and development as a player, coach or parent/guardian supporter of grassroots soccer. The goal is to offer a series of practical informational documents to support your enjoyment and experience within soccer, without presenting a comprehensive digest of the rules and tactics etc. There are some obvious cross-overs between each of the documents, but feel free to browse and use these documents to support you understanding and the development of players coming into the sport.

This document will illustrate the opportunities that exist to enable the presented mission statement to be fulfilled. If there are any questions relating to the information provided here within or coach/player pathways please contact the technical team at Alberta Soccer.





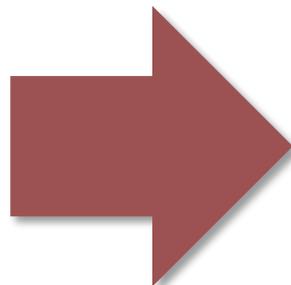
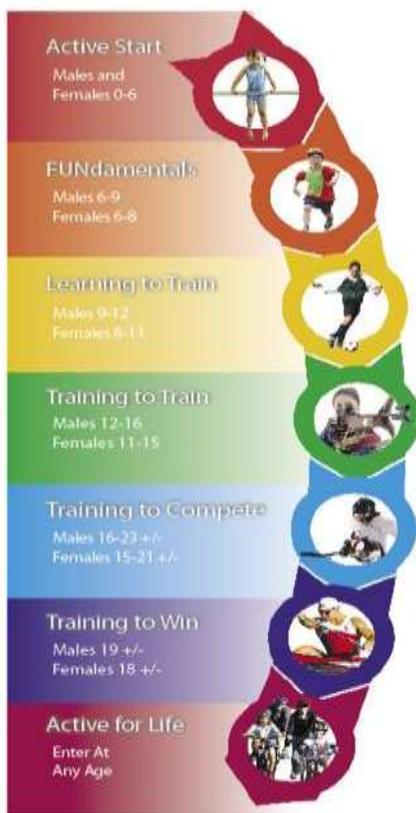
"THE ALBERTA WAY"

The principle objective of this document is to offer a standard guide to support the many players, parents, coaches and administrators that promote the game at a Grassroots level of participation. It is recognized that this entry level of participation is critical for the players and game as a whole, where all those introduced to the game may be offered the opportunity of nurturing a lifelong passion for the sport.

Therefore this guide should be used to promote a standardized program of play across Alberta, in the hope that when players from different clubs, associations, districts and regions of the Province come together; they have all been afforded the same opportunities and framework within which to participate. All current coach and player programs are being aligned with the Canadian Soccer Association model of Long Term Player Development. This is a framework that was developed by Sport Canada as Long Term Athlete Development and provides guidance to support children and adults in terms of their physical, tactical, technical and psychological development. For further information on the model of Long Term Player Development please visit:

www.canadasoccer.com/wellness-to-world-cup

7-Stages of LTAD



7-Stages of LTPD





STAGE 3: Learn to Train (U8-U11 Female/U9-U12 Male) Soccer Guide

This stage is known as ‘The Golden Age’ of learning. By this stage players should have developed a strong degree of their physical literacy and confidence with the ball; they are now ready to play the game. The game really is now a team game and introduces tactics and team formations. It is important to consider the players characters and where they are within the education system and their personal development. They would have been in education for some time and mastered the social skills of learning, receiving instruction, sharing and co-operating in group tasks. Essentially they are more ‘community’ group focussed and ready for the team environment. They will also have developed a desire to question instructions and find solutions to problems unassisted, all these qualities should be used in supporting their further development and passion of soccer.

THE GAME

As indicated this stage introduces the first real stage of team tactics and formations, although in an adapted small sided game format. It is here that the principles of invasion games and possession should be encouraged. The main principles are when a team is in possession they should create space, when the opposition is in possession a team should deny space.

Due to the changing team emphasis, there will be a greater focus upon the techniques of passing and receiving, the game is based upon moving the ball quicker than your opponents may pursue it. Therefore players need to recognize when to dribble and when to pass, and also the benefits of these skills in relation to the respective area of the field. Children are now students of the game and should be encouraged whenever possible to not only play but also observe games to mimic the plays they witness.

The game now introduces a more structured approach. The element of competition is important to players of all ages, as a test of one’s ability and development. It should again be reiterated that these are young players and although they are embracing more structured competition, there will continue to be mistakes as they remain in the early stages of their overall development. It is encouraged that players, parents and coaches should view any mistake as a learning opportunity to support and promote future growth and development.

TEAM SIZES

U9	7 V 7 (includes goalkeeper)	8 Min-14 Max	Community
U10	7 V 7 (includes goalkeeper)	8 Min-14 Max	Community or Competitive
U11	8 V 8 (includes goalkeeper)	9 Min- 16 Max	Community or Competitive
U12	8 V 8 (includes goalkeeper)	9 Min-16 Max	Community or Competitive





FIELD SIZE

U9/U10	40 meters	30 meters	55 meters	36 meters
U11/U12	60 meters	42 meters	75 meters	55 meters

GOAL SIZE

Age Group	Goal Height	Goal Length	Option
U9/U10	6 ft / 1.83m	12 ft / 3.657m	none
U11/U12	6 ft / 1.83m	18 ft / 5.486m	none

BALL SIZE

Players should use a regulation size four ball. These would be available through a reputable sports store.

RECOMMENDED PRACTICE/GAME RATIO'S

45-75 minutes practice times.

The recommended practice to game ratio is 2-3 practice sessions for every one competitive game.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As indicated this stage requires greater knowledge and support of the game. Coaches are recommended as at all stages to gain coaching support through certification. The premise of this stage is to encourage greater inter-dependency between players. So try to develop drills and activities where players are more reliant upon the support of team-mates to succeed. Also greater time should be dedicated to recreating game-like situations which players will learn from, to then implement within a game.

Although teams will commence to play in competitive games, it is important that the coaches, players and parents recognize a need to maintain a performance development perspective opposed to outcome (result) based focus. The players are just starting being introduced to the competitive environment and there will again be lots of mistakes as they develop an inter-dependency between the game and each other. Encourage good play through positive feedback and support for successful play. Also remember that the players will not perceive competition in the same manner as adults, they will (and should be encouraged to) embrace the challenge greater than the result if permitted.





THE CHILD'S PERSPECTIVE

As the players enter the 'Golden Age' they will have confidence and perceptions about each other and their own development. They will have formed opinions, and these should be encouraged and not stifled. They will also start to form perceptions on team tactics and strategies, again it is important that coaches guide the players to how they wish the players to play. Although players are forming greater independence and thoughts, they will still have a desire for guidance and roles in which to follow. It is therefore important that the coaches develop and express role clarity and expectations for the players. Players ultimately want to please the significant others (coaches/parents) in their life, they can only do this though if there is an expectancy placed upon what the adult is looking for.

Young players will strive for personal success, whether this is scoring a goal, making a tackle or heading the ball, over a team goal. By encouraging individual success, the team has greater chance of team success. So coaches and parents should still focus on offering positive feedback and encouragement for individual performance outcomes opposed to game result based outcomes.

THE ADULT'S PERSPECTIVE

Although the game looks more like the 'real' game, it is still being played by young children. Adults need to recognize this is a significant transitional period between the individual player and the team game. There will still be mistakes by individual players and also between players. As the game is now evolving the coaches instructions are important in order to clarify, team and player goals, roles and expectations. These are how the coach and players will measure success. It is therefore important that the parents/adults understand what is being asked of the players and support these objectives. So parents should refrain from providing any team or technical encouragement. Instead they should observe the game as a game and encourage good play by all players. Positive support can be infectious and support to one player will encourage similar behavior by another.

Another consideration is the introduction of game rules and officials, many of whom will be young referees who are just stepping onto the field to assume control of the game, players and parents. So again there is a need for leadership and setting an example by the adults for the good of the game. Players and parents should never question or challenge a referee's decision. There will be mistakes made by officials and it is important that adults recognize that their responses will be modeled by the players. The challenge of sport is to overcome adversity and not challenge the authority. The final word is always with the official and it is worth remembering that they rarely change their mind and should not be confronted or unduly pressured to do so.





THE COACH'S PERSPECTIVE

It is at the Learning to Train stage that Soccer loses many coaches, due to the developing and tactical nature of the game. There are many more considerations in coaching within the Golden Age, from technical, tactical and game coaching. It is therefore recommended that coaches seek training and mentorship if they feel they do not possess the required experience of playing or watching the game. Where necessary coaches should seek the support of senior youth players to assist and mentor each other in their coaching, one for their game knowledge and the other for their leadership.

From a game perspective the coach must now define their coaching philosophy and approach to coaching a team. A coaching philosophy will lead what and how they coach the players. A further consideration is to establish and determined goals, roles and expectations to the players. It has been expressed in the earlier stages that often players play to please the significant other (adults), this can only be achieved if the players understand what is required of them.

In terms of coaching the game, expect many mistakes in terms of team play and decisions made in a game. This though is the best place to coach young players, however consider your feedback from a verbal and non-verbal perspective. In the heat of competition emotions can take charge. Rather than correct a player by indicating what was wrong, ask them what other options may have been available? A further choice of questioning could be 'what would you do next time?' Again positive words and gestures go a long way to empowering the players to make choices for themselves and as a result being successful. Remember many players within this stage will judge success by their performance before the game result, so use this and provide feedback to the players following a practice and game. A few simple words of encouragement may go a long way in supporting player/parent satisfaction.

SESSION PLANS

Coaching exercises and games from the LTPD curriculum are in the process of being developed by the Technical Team. Once developed, review these and build them into your session plans. When building a session remember, we learn best through doing and repetition – if the players enjoy a particular drill, there is no shame in repeating this.

A further consideration within this stage of development is to make drills as game like as possible. Consider what aspect of a game you would like to focus upon and re-create this within a practice plan. If you wish to improve shooting, than make the drill as realistic as possible, you may start without opposition, but this is very unlikely within a game. So in order to improve shooting in a game, the drill should include defenders and shooting from a similar distance as would be required in a competitive game. All reference points for session plans should be back to the game or a situation in a game, to solidify the learning. This avoids the question of 'why am I doing this?' A simple answer to this line of questioning is because this is how it happens in a game

