

Coaches VSA Handbook

First of all, let me say THANK YOU for volunteering to coach in the Valley Soccer Association! Without volunteers like you who are actually willing to get up and help us, we wouldn't be able to offer a soccer program for all the kids in the Valley. Secondly, let me reassure you that you have done the most difficult part, by stepping up and volunteering. This handbook is designed to help you with the rest of the job, in order to make your season as easy, stress-free, and enjoyable as possible.

If at anytime you have an questions, problems, issues, or stress, please don't hesitate to reach out to your Technical Team:

Technical.Director@ValleySoccer.ca

306-381-9518

Cam Houle
VSA Technical Director

In this handbook:

~You will find age appropriate session plans, drills, activities, and games that you can build your season's practice plans around. You will even find a complete generic Season Plan that you can simply follow step-by-step, week-by-week, in order to take all the pressure off of you and ensure your players are developing appropriately throughout the season.

~You will find age appropriate Player Expectations and Objectives that will help you easily and conveniently develop your players and your team. These will be science-based recommendations that you can choose to implement based on your assessments.

~You will find some all encompassing coaching tips and pointers that will help you deliver the best season ever to your players.

Now, before we begin, here are some key thoughts and terms that are used by coaches to help them plan and organize their players, teams, and seasons to get the most development out of their allotted time.

Overview of periodization terms

Periodization: Division of the training year or training time into periods to meet these training Objectives.

Macrocycle: For a yearly training plan, the macrocycle is 1 year. In a seasonal plan, the macrocycle is 1 season.

Microcycle: A week of training (7 days)

Mesocycle: A series of microcycles linked together by a training theme. Phases are mesocycles.

Period: Divisions of a seasonal plan into training themes. The periods of a sport program are preparation, competition and transition.

Coaching Philosophy and Player Development Philosophy in the VSA

The Valley Soccer Association uses a Player-centric Developmental Philosophy in line with the Canadian Soccer Association's recommended Long Term Player Development (LTPD) model, rather than a Results-based Philosophy. The following policies and procedures are designed to promote compliance with LTPD philosophy.

Responsibility for Implementation

Implementation of the LTPD philosophy is the responsibility of the Technical Director, Head Coaches, coordinators, other team coaches, and parents. All individuals that interact with the players have a role in ensuring the club philosophy is carried out.

General

- We follow the recommendations of LTPD
- Mistake-based learning is an essential part of player development.
- Tournament play and travel is limited according to age group and carefully monitored to ensure that best practices are followed in any competitions in which our players participate.
- Parents are expected to focus on and praise development rather than results.

Players

- Individual ball possession is a fundamental requirement for any successful player.
- A possession-based game is at the heart of player development.
- The emphasis is on individual development rather than team-building.
- Players are developed as much as possible in single year age groups.
- Pre-pubescent, and players going through puberty are exposed mainly to technical training.
- Players experiencing a growth spurt are carefully monitored and load is adjusted appropriately.
- Players who have not yet reached their potential are worked with, and not discarded in favour of younger players who may be more skilled.
- Players who periodically play in older age groups are monitored and do so under the guidance of the Director of Coaching and Player Development.
- Players need permission from the Director of Coaching and Player Development to play for other teams/clubs.
- The principles of youth periodization are followed, meaning that players must get sufficient rest periods and breaks from the game.

Coaches

- Team tactics are introduced gradually and only after fundamental technique is mastered.
- Coaches are expected to follow our training curricula and to support its philosophy.
- Coach development takes the form of age group specialization. Where practical, coaches remain with one age group, rather than moving with players.

Becoming a U9 Coach in the VSA

This age range is known as Stage 2: FUNdamental (Females 6-8, Males 6-9) and is the next step after U7 on their journey towards a lifelong love of Soccer.

Stage 2: FUNdamental

- **Aim:** At this time, ball-focused training and teaching your players to CHASE THE BALL, GET THE BALL, and then KEEP THE BALL.
- **Technical:** Introduction to basic soccer skills with a ball.
- **Physical:** General overall development and mobility. Running, jumping, throwing, balance, and speed.
- **Tactical:** Play modified and small sided games. Introduction to positional awareness.
- **Physical:** Continue to develop ABC's - Agility, Balance and coordination. Develop speed, power and endurance through fun games.
- **Mental:** Understanding the role of practice. Perseverance, confidence and concentration.
- **Technical:** Soccer specific skills of dribbling, shooting, passing and controlling. Combination of skills in game related activities.

Session Structure

In the Valley Soccer Association, we highly encourage all coaches to follow the Session Planning structures as set out by SSA and CSA. There are two acceptable names for this theory: either Whole Part Whole, or WGAG (Warm-up, Game, Activity, Game).

Whole Part Whole follows the idea of having a good warm-up, and then a Whole Game with Provisions, followed by a strategically chosen Activity, and then each practice ends with a Whole Game without provisions, just a regular soccer game. This means that some rules of the first Whole Game are slightly different than a normal game. For example, maybe your players can only touch the ball two times each, or maybe they must touch the ball five times each before passing or shooting; or maybe you split the field into zones and make rules about who can go where. Perhaps you have three teams with goals instead of two, the options are limitless. As a coach you must decide what your group of players would benefit from the most, and you then come up with a plan to address that. Then an organized Activity is chosen to address the specific thoughts of the Coach for the needs of that team. After that, the team enjoys a fun Whole Game without any special rules, stoppages, or provisions; just a good scrimmage. An important part of every session, whether it be for training or a game, is a mindful Debrief, or Cool Down. This is your chance to address the team after the session and reflect on what you did during your session. What you liked as coach, what the players liked, and what the players would have liked to see changed for next time. This isn't your time for criticism or "hard coaching" or things like that. This is the time to tell them what you liked and then give them the opportunity to tell you their thoughts.

Length of Practice/Play/Training Sessions.

U5: 45 minutes

U7-11: 60 minutes

U13+: 90 minutes.

Overview and General Advice.

At this age, teams play 5v5 small sided soccer on a smaller field in outdoor and a different format in the winter league. For outdoor soccer, each town creates as many teams as they can and there is a schedule from VSA that has towns traveling to other towns to play. There are no standings and no statistics taken, so the emphasis should be on fun and development over winning and results. In the winter league, all the kids are mixed up and teams are made from a single pool, almost regardless of their hometown.

You can ask more of the players at this age in terms of using both feet, looking for a pass if it's obvious, and paying attention to your instructions and their teammates/others in general. The focal point of this group should still absolutely be fun first, development second.



COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

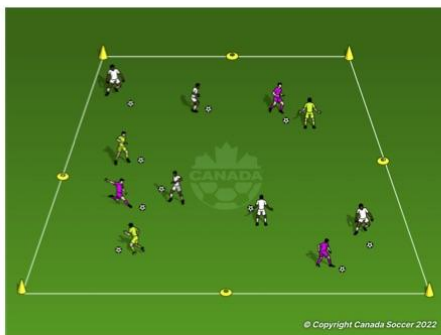
Coach

Age group:

U9s

U9 VSA Session 1

Time



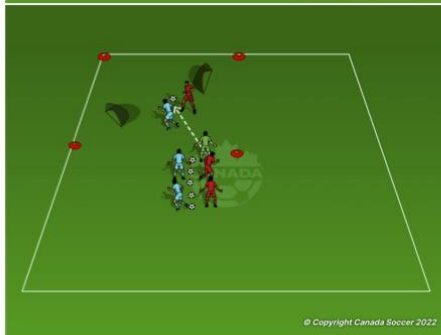
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SQUARE GAMES

Mark off an appropriate size square or rectangle.

Games like Sharks and Minnows, Rob the Nest, What Time is Mr Wolf, Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, Royal Ring, Freeze Tag, Great Wall of China...

The list goes on forever.



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ANKLE BREAKER

Two nets, facing away from the middle. Many balls, two lines of players.

Two players at a time, a coach will roll a ball into the middle of the area and the two players will each try to score on either net they like.

Then they retrieve their ball and go back to the line.



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1v1 WAR

Two teams, two rows, many balls, one keeper each net.

To start, the front player on a team passes the coach a ball and the coach sends it in high towards net. The front player on the other team must run to defend.

Both nets can be used simultaneously, but that requires older kids that can pay attention and be aware of whats happening.



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Let them play a game.



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Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 2

Time



Warm Up Dribble and Pass

Groups of three players per row.

Dribble through the cones and pass to the player in front of the line, then go to the back.

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RONDO

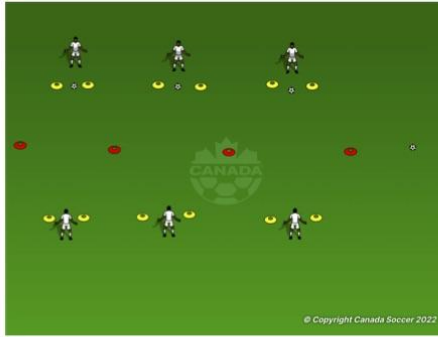
6v2, 5v1, 12v2, whatever works. Pinnies for middle players and lots of balls around, but just hold the pinnies, don't put them on.

Two people in the middle are trying to intercept or steal the ball from the players on the outside.

Any meaningful contact is enough to stop play. If a defender touches the ball or steals it, they leave the middle and become the outside, and the player who lost the ball or caused the mistake is sent inside the circle to chase.

Optional: If the outside players are able to "split" the two middle players, as in pass the ball successfully between the middle players, the next time the middle players intercept or steal the ball it doesn't count. It's like an extra life for the outside players.

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PASSING GRID - STANDARD

Set up the yellow gates five yards apart to start, with a width of 3 yards between the cones.

Put a line of red cones down the middle.

Pass the ball back and forth with various progressions like, around the yellow cones, or through them and then around, or two touch, or left foot only, etc.

Move the yellow gates back as they get more comfortable, by saying "everyone pick up your cones and back up two steps!"

Eventually the cones will be far enough apart that you can have the players dribble the ball to the red centre line before passing, and then back pedal back to their gate while the other does the same.

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Let them play a game.

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COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 3

Time



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SQUARE GAMES

Mark off an appropriate size square or rectangle.

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SHADOW

Two pugs, two teams, many balls, one coach.

Set the Pugs up 10-15 yards apart, facing the middle.

Have the teams line up in one single line, alternating between the teams in line.

At a signal from the coach, the front player charges across the field, and the player behind chases. The coach passes the ball to the front player, and the Shadow must try to intercept or guess which way the front player is going to go. Front player takes a touch and tries to score on one of the pugs.

Then they return the ball to the coach and both return to the line



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RONDO

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Let them play a game.



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Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 4

Time



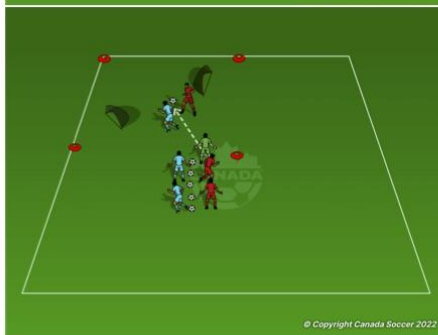
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ANKLE BREAKER

Two nets, facing away from the middle. Many balls, two lines of players.

Two players at a time, a coach will roll a ball into the middle of the area and the two players will each try to score on either net they like.

Then they retrieve their ball and go back to the line.



PASSING GRID - SIMPLE

Players get partners, and each stand on a cone a few feet apart. One ball each partnership.

They pass the ball back and forth. Be sure they're doing the fundamentals properly. Heavy foot, side of the foot contact, step through the ball, pass hard.

You can progress this by making them receive the ball on one side of the cone and move it to the other side before passing it back.

You can also have them move the cones back a few feet at a time to make the distance longer between them.

Finally at the end you can get them to dribble to the halfway mark before passing, then back pedaling to their starting position again.



Let them play a game.



COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



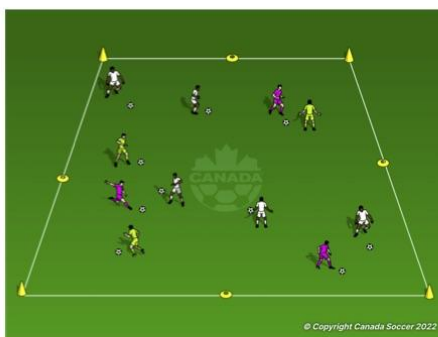
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Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 5

Time



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SQUARE GAMES

Mark off an appropriate size square or rectangle.

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Then they retrieve their ball and go back to the line.



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ONE TOUCH FINISHING

One row of shooters, one keeper, one coach, one ball per shooter.

First player in line passes the ball to the coach, who bounces it out and the player must attack the ball and shoot it one touch. Coach moves around and also moves the passes around.

After shot, shooter retrieves ball and goes to the back of the line. Swap keepers often.



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Let them play a game.



COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

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Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 6

Time



RONDO

6v2, 5v1, 12v2, whatever works. Pinnies for middle players and lots of balls around, but just hold the pinnies, don't put them on.

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Then they return the ball to the coach and both return to the line



BRIDGE GAME

Three teams of 3, 4, or 5 players each.

Three zones marked out with cones that measure around 10 yards wide and 5 yards deep.

One team is on the bridge, and the other two teams must pass the ball 3 times in their own zone first and then pass the ball across the bridge to the other team to score a point.

One player from the middle team can pursue the ball into either of the sides, but it must be a new chaser every time the ball crosses or leaves the bridge.

Completed passes across the bridge is worth points.

If a team on the outside loses possession or has the ball stolen by the chaser, the middle team goes to that side and the side that lost the ball goes into the middle. Teams can only score when they're not in the middle.

Let them play a game.





COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 7

Time



SQUARE GAMES

Mark off an appropriate size square or rectangle.

Games like Sharks and Minnows, Rob the Nest, What Time is Mr Wolf, Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, Royal Ring, Freeze Tag, Great Wall of China...

The list goes on forever.



Passing and Turning

Groups of three players are best.

Two cones making a gate for each group. One player in the middle, and two players each five yards apart. One ball per group.

The outside player plays the ball in to the player in the gate, who must turn with the ball and pass to the other outside player.

Progressions could be, you must go around one side of the gate, or through the middle, or only two touches... etc.

Swap players through the roles.



RELAY RACE - BACKWARDS GOALS

Two Teams, two balls, four cones and one pug net for each team.

One at a time, each time sends a player dribbling the ball around the cones and around the net. The nets are facing backwards. Once they score on the net, they pick the ball up and run it back to their line.

Next player goes.



Let them play a game.



COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



Select a Date

Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 8

Time



RONDO

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HUNGRY HIPPOS

Divide the group into 3-5 even teams, and assign them each a net or small square on the ground with cones.

Place a massive pile of balls in the middle of the field.

At the coaches signal, one at a time, the players leave their line, get a ball with their feet and dribble the ball into the net or the square. Then they high five the next person and they go. Whichever team has the most at end wins.

Then play the game in reverse where the players must take a ball from the net or square and dribble it into the middle zone. First team with an empty nest wins.



Let them play a game.



COACH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Interactive Session Plan™



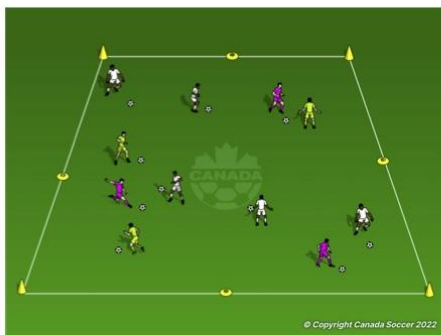
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Coach

Age group:

U9 VSA Session 9

Time



SQUARE GAMES

Mark off an appropriate size square or rectangle.

Games like Sharks and Minnows, Rob the Nest, What Time is Mr Wolf, Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, Royal Ring, Freeze Tag, Great Wall of China...

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RELAY RACE - BACKWARDS GOALS

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Next player goes.



Let them play a game AGAINST THE PARENTS!!!!

Notes...