

# THE MLU YOUTH DEVELOPMENT CURRICULUM

U10

# INTRODUCTION

The mission of the MLU Development Curriculum is to enhance the soccer experience of young players and coaches within our club. The game is the best teacher and learning revolves around both playing the game itself and watching top class players.

The following curriculum has been designed using qualified coaches and teachers from the United States and Europe. We have created a progression for the soccer player based on the four pillars of the game: technical, tactical, psychological and physical.

The MLU development team is dedicated to providing the absolute best personal service to all our players and coaches with whom we work.

## GOALS

There are four main pillars of soccer, which are evident at every level of the game – technical, tactical, psychological and physical.

Clearly there will be different emphasis placed on each one depending on the age and ability of the player in question.

The MLU Development series of curriculums for coaches will show a clear progression in each of those areas and define clear parameters on what coaches should be looking for in a particular age group.

**It is also important that a coach has clear goals for himself / herself and for his / her team prior to working with any age group.**

# Technical

## **Dribbling:**

- Ability to use all parts of the foot
- Creativity – ability to change speed and direction
- Turning – ability to perform the 4 basic turns, inside & outside hook, drag back and stop turn

## **Running with the ball:**

- Push the ball away from the body and under control
- Acceleration
- Keep your head up

## **Passing:**

- Ankle locked
- Outside of the foot pass
- Look up when passing

## **Control / receiving:**

- Get your body in line of the ball
- Control the ball away from pressure
- Use of different surfaces – foot, thigh, chest

## **Shooting:**

- Instep shooting
- Locked ankle
- Follow through

## **Defending:**

- Introduction to the 3 P's
- Pressure – Position – Patience

## **Goal Keeping:**

- Basic handling techniques
- Distribution from the hands and feet

## **Tactical**

At the U10 level, players begin to understand the basic roles of attack and defense. Training sessions should start to have players making some simple 1v1 decisions, both offensively and defensively. Do not focus on positions or systems of play, but rather encourage players to think for themselves more during games. Players can be introduced to the notions of support and cover.

## **Psychological**

The U10 player starts to become more interested in competition and is much more able to relate to small-sided games. Their attention span is longer but clarity and brevity of instruction is still important. Skill factor, or lack of it, becomes more obvious and peer pressure begins to rear its ugly head. Coaches need to remember that these players are still young and developing and they will require as much positive reinforcement as possible. Training sessions should still be hugely enjoyable and perceived as a fun time by all players.

## **Physical**

There will be a noticeable difference in the physical maturity of players. The emphasis is still focused on all physical conditioning being received within the context of the training session's activities. There is absolutely no need to have specific conditioning activities set up.

# Note to Coaches

Coaches at this level will still concentrate mainly on the technical development of the young player but some simple decision-making will now be appropriate. Players will exhibit a greater desire to compete and win and coaches will have to be prepared to deal with issues arising from this greater intensity. We still need to remember that these are young, developing players who need a lot of encouragement and protection.

Make sure that you have a clear set of expectations for yourself as the coach, for the players and also for the parents.

Here are some simple steps to run a fun and successful practice for the U10 age group.

**Planning** – a successful training session will require good organization and time management. Make sure that you have sufficient equipment. Keep all players motivated and challenged by having sufficient, logical progression. Have a clear theme to your session.

**Explanation** – have the complete attention of all players when you are talking. Keep explanations as brief and simple as possible and ask questions to make sure that all players have understood.

**Demonstration** – keep demo slow, simple and technically correct at the beginning. Progress to game speed. Stress key points of technique being demonstrated and do not be afraid to use a player from the group in the demo.

**Play** – the game is undoubtedly the best teacher and playing should take up the lion's share of your session. This should not be down time for the coach but rather an opportunity to intervene and correct when it is necessary. Look for coachable moments (concentrate on the main teaching point of your session), freeze play, correct what went wrong and have the players practice the situation again. This need only be done 3 or 4 times during a game.

**Set High Standards** – you should be the role model to your players and lead by example. Keep your expectations clear and simple (punctuality, appropriate dress – shin guards, behavior, language, sportsmanship, teamwork) and reinforce them regularly. Be enthusiastic and always create a positive learning environment for your players. If you are having fun, they will too.

# How to Organize a Training Session

Training sessions should be between 1.25 and 1.5 hours in length. Playing the game itself becomes more important to players at this age. Let them know the training session routine and they will eagerly look forward to playing at the end without pestering you with questions.

## **Equipment:**

Players should now be responsible for bringing their own water bottles. Have a first aid kit available and always check that the playing surface is safe.

**Balls** - All players should play with size 4 balls and there should be one ball per player.

**Cones** - Try to have plenty of colored cones at your disposal and use them. Clearly mark out the areas you want to use.

**Bibs** - Try to have several different colored bibs at your disposal. Differentiate teams clearly to avoid confusion.

**Field size** – will depend on the numbers playing in your small-sided games. A larger field will involve more conditioning but a smaller field will improve control and playing under pressure. The following is a rough outline of what to use:

|     |   |          |
|-----|---|----------|
| 4v4 | - | 40x30yds |
| 5v5 | - | 50x40yds |
| 6v6 | - | 60x40yds |

# Training Session Breakdown

## **1.) WARM-UP**

**15mins**

A warm-up should be a fun and enjoyable start to your training, which gets your players in the right frame of mind, mentally and physically, for the session ahead. Players should break the “sweat barrier” and perform some simple stretching techniques. Your training should now have a clear progression and the warm-up should lead into the theme for the session.

## **2.) SKILL BUILDING**

**15-20mins**

The warm-up should be followed with coaching the basic techniques required to play soccer. This will involve individual or group activity and players will get a lot of repetition to practice and improve on the technical theme for the session.

## **3.) SKILL BUILDING GAMES**

**15-20mins**

These games are designed to be high energy, fun activities that reinforce the basic techniques practiced above.

## **4.) SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

**30-35mins**

Teams can vary from 4v4 to 6v6. These games are perceived as real by the players and are used to improve skills, develop skill concepts and introduce basic tactical awareness in a fun and challenging environment. Keep things exciting for the players by giving them team names and play mini competitions. Make sure players experience different roles on the field and try to ensure a measure of success for all players.

Stretching and warm-down should be encouraged for players at this age. Use this time to review the training session and make sure that they have enjoyed themselves and learned something new.

# Small-sided Games – 4v4 to 6v6

Every session should conclude with a small-sided game. Remember that the game is the best teacher of all. These games should be a positive experience for all with the emphasis placed on having fun. Your main aim is to create a low-stress, fun-filled environment in which your players can develop. This should be the largest portion of your practice – about one half hour in length. At the U10 level, you should still focus on the technical aspects by reinforcing the main theme of the session. Reward players for trying the skill of the practice by giving points for executing the skill as well as for goals. Often, rewarding the skill with more points than that of a goal produces the desired results. The competition – and score - means more to the players at this age. Continue to stress sportsmanship and teamwork. Keep your expectations high with regard to behavior, attitude and effort.

## ORGANIZATION

- 1.) Field Size: 40x30yds to 60x40yds
- 2.) Equipment: Use cones to clearly mark out the area of the field.
- 3.) Use upright cones or flags as goals and place them about 10 feet apart.
- 4.) Use colored bibs to avoid confusion amongst players.
- 5.) Play with a size 4 ball.
- 6.) Play 12-15 minute periods and then allow time for substitutions, water breaks, etc.
- 7.) Teams have a goalkeeper. Try to create the notion of a “keeper sweeper” to prevent the goalkeeper from remaining static on the line all the time. Every player should have the opportunity to be goalkeeper. You can use this time to briefly explain the role of the goalkeeper in the game.

Keep instructions clear and to a minimum and use your enthusiasm to keep all players motivated. Always stress the importance of fair play and sportsmanship.

There are different formations that can be used in a 6v6 game. Coaches should not lose sight of their players’ development by over-teaching the tactical aspects of the game. When the players become comfortable with their techniques, they will then open their minds to tactical considerations.

Also, do not impose rigid guidelines on the players, particularly when it comes to positioning. Defenders **CAN** cross the half line and join the attack. All players need to learn to attack and defend. Allow, indeed encourage, the players to solve problems on the field by themselves. Choose the players’ development over winning.

## 1 V 1 Shooting

**Skill:** Multiple

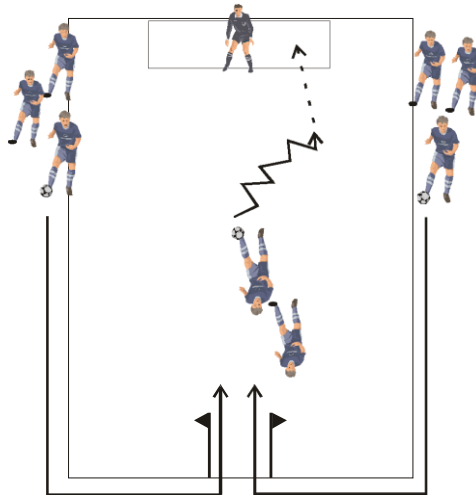
**Number of Players Required:** Full U-10 Team

**Equipment:** 12 or more cones to mark a grid, five or six soccer balls, one soccer goal (full size goal would be great but not necessary), a set of pennies and a pair of corner flags.

**Grid Requirement:** A 45 X 30 yard grid.

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 45 X 30 yards. Divide the team into two equal teams. Place a Keeper in the goal and the two teams about mid-point of the grid one team on each touchline. On the opposite end of the grid from the goal place a 5-yard gate at the mid-point of the grid.

**How the Game Is Played:** This is a simple game of 1 v 1. Coach will call two players names (John and Bill). The two players dribble as fast as they can through the gate. The first player to go through the gate is on the attack, the second player leaves his ball and becomes a defender and tries to gain possession of the ball. The first team to score five goals wins.



**Variations:** Call 4 names so that 2 v 2 is played. The ball can be passed into the first player to go through the gate.

## 3 v 3 with 2 point Zones

**Skill:** Dribbling / Passing

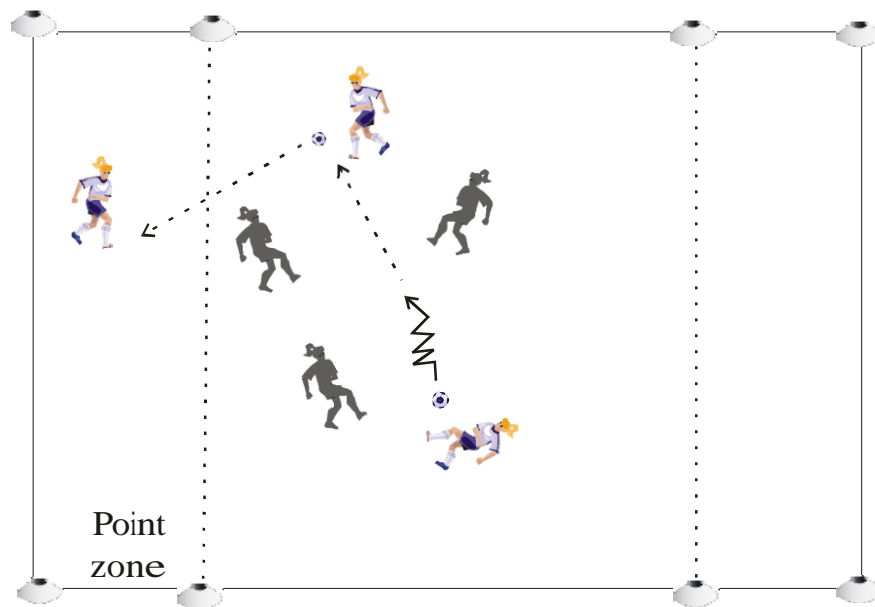
**Number of Players Required:** Full U-10 Team

**Equipment:** 8 or more cones to mark the grid.

**Grid Requirement:** A 20 X 40 yard grid

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 20 X 40 yard grid with a 5-yard “Point Zone” at each end. Place three (3) attackers with 1 soccer ball in one of the point zones and place three defenders in the other point zone.

**How the Game Is Played:** Players in the “Point Zone” try to dribble and pass the length of the grid to the other “Point Zone”. The defenders try to gain possession of the ball. Points can only be scored when a teammate passes a ball to a teammate located in the point zone. First team to 5 points wins.



## 2 Keepers Shooting

**Skill:** Multiple

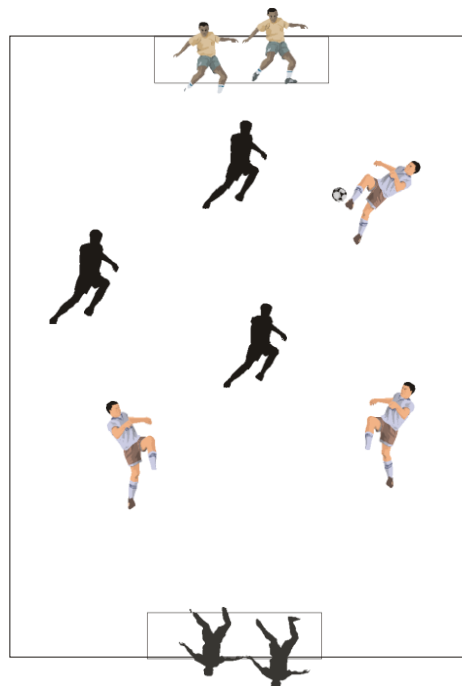
**Number of Players Required:** Full U-10 Team

**Equipment:** 12 or more cones to mark a grid and two goals (two full size goals would be great but not necessary), a set of pennies and three or four soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** A 45 X 35 yard grid

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 45 X 35 yards. Divide the teams so that teams play 3 v 3 or 4 v 4. Place two Keepers in each goal.

**How the Game Is Played:** This is a simple game of 3 v 3 or 4 v 4 depending on the number of players at practice. The twist to the game is in the Goalkeeping. The two Keepers in each goal must link hands. The team in possession must attempt to score past the two linked Keepers. Award 1 point for a goal and one point for a save. First team to gain 5 points wins.



**Variations:** Play one touch. Allow no more than three touches when a player is dribbling.

## 3 v 3 Shooting

**Skill:** Shooting, Dribbling and Passing

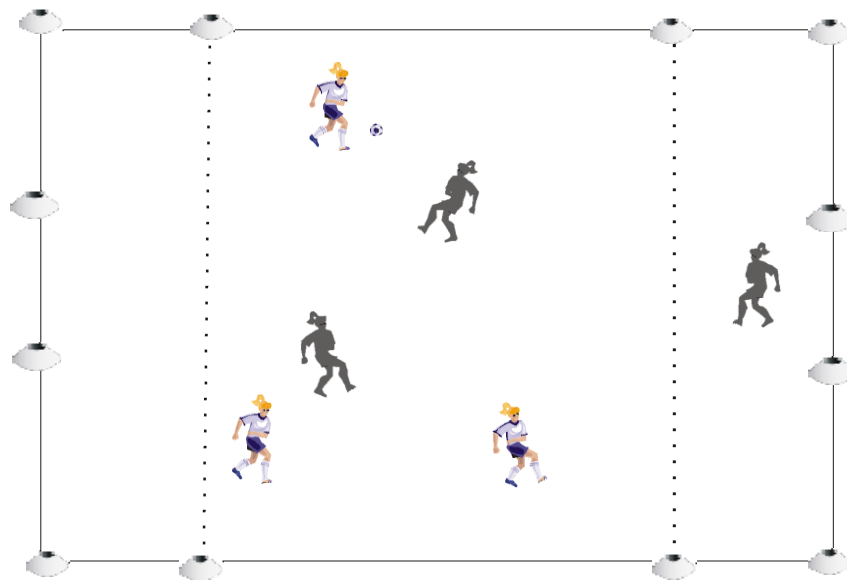
**Number of Players Required:** Full U-10 Team

**Equipment:** 12 or more cones to mark a grid, two goals (full size goals are great but cones can also be used), a set or two of pennies and 5 or 6 soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** A 20 X 40 yard grid

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 20 X 40 yard grid with a 5-yard zone at each end. Center a goal on each end line. Divide the team into teams of three. Place three (3) attackers with 1 soccer ball in one of the zones and place three defenders in the other zone.

**How The Game Is Played:** Play 3 v3. Each team elects a goalkeeper. The goalkeepers can use their hands in their zone. However the goalkeepers must go forward when their team is attacking. The 3 defenders try to gain possession of the ball so that they can attack. One point is awarded for a shot on goal and two points for a goal. First team to 10 points wins.



**Variations:** Play one touch. Increase or decrease the size of the zones. Play 2 v 2 or 4 v 4.

## 4 Cone, 4 Person Passing

**Skill:** Passing

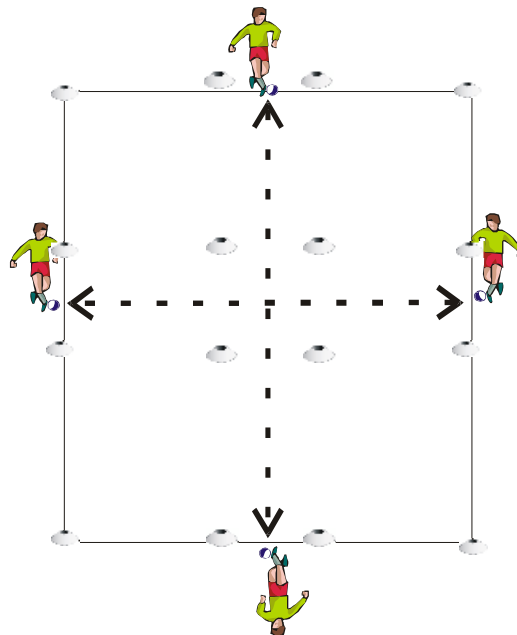
**Number of Players Required:** Full U-10 Team

**Equipment:** 12 cones to mark the grid 4 soccer balls.

**Grid Requirement:** Set up a 15 X 15 yard grid.

**Organization:** Using cones layout a 15 X 15 yard. Divide the team into pairs. Place one player from one of the pairs on the top of the grid between two of the cones (about 5 yards wide) with a soccer ball. The other player is on the opposite end of the grid standing between two cones. Place one player from the other pair on the side of the grid between two cones with a soccer ball and his or her partner on the opposite side of the grid between two cones (as shown in the diagram). Construct a 4 cone square in the center of the grid (no more than five yards square).

**How the Game Is Played:** The two teams attempt to pass their ball between the cones in the middle of the grid for each direction. The first team to complete 5 passes that go between all 8 cones is declared the winner.



**Variations:** Play one touch. Place a time restriction on the length of the game. Have the players pass with the left and right foot. Have the players strike the ball with the outside of the left and right foot.

# **SAMPLE SEASON PLANNER**

| <b>Week</b> | <b>Theme</b>              | <b>Warm-up</b>                 | <b>Skill Builder</b> | <b>Skill Game</b>     | <b>Small Sided Game</b> |
|-------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Week 1      | Dribbling/<br>Turning     | Lose Your Shadow               | Four Corners         | Gate Keeper           | 4v4                     |
| Week 2      | Passing                   | 4 Cone, 4<br>Person<br>Passing | 3 Way<br>Passing     | Team Tackle           | 4v4                     |
| Week 3      | Shooting/<br>Finishing    | Knock Down                     | Accurate Shot        | Shoot or Miss         | 4v4                     |
| Week 4      | Ball Control              | 1 v 1 Shooting                 | 3 V 3<br>Shooting    | Quick off the<br>Mark | 5v5                     |
| Week 5      | Goalkeeping               | 2 Keepers<br>Shooting          | Hand Skills          | Diving<br>Mechanics   | 5v5                     |
| Week 6      | Receiving/<br>First Touch | 3 Way<br>Control               | Square<br>Passing    | 3v1                   | 5v5                     |
| Week 7      | Defending<br>1v1          | Catch Me                       | 1v1 Decision         | 1v1 to Cones          | 6v6                     |
| Week 8      | Attacking 1v1             | Tunnel Tag                     | Going to Goal        | Superman<br>1v1       | 6v6                     |
| Week 9      | Passing/<br>Movement      | Gates                          | Sequence<br>Passing  | End Zone<br>Soccer    | 6v6                     |