

U10 Soccer Practice Plan: A 75-Minute Session Template

10U

Practice Plans

Coach Nick & the YSC Coaching Team

Last Tuesday our U10s showed up to practice and four of them were attempting rainbow flicks before we had cones on the ground. With the World Cup playing in living rooms across North America all summer, every nine-year-old in the country has watched a hundred hours of flair and decided that is what soccer is. We did not shut it down. We channeled it — every one of those failed rainbows is a kid begging for more touches, and touches are exactly what a U10 practice should deliver. The trick is pointing all that World Cup energy at the skill that actually transforms this age group: passing.

A good U10 soccer practice runs 75–90 minutes and follows a simple arc: a dynamic warm-up with a ball at every player's feet, a technical passing and receiving block, a rondo possession game, a 1v1 attacking and defending segment, and a 7v7 scrimmage with one coaching focus. Every kid has a ball or a partner the entire session — no laps, no lines longer than three players. Run that structure every week with a size 4 ball and your team will look like a different group by the end of the season.

Why U10 Is the Passing Age

At U6 and U8, soccer is a swarm. Kids chase the ball in a pack because their brains are not yet wired to see anything but the ball. Somewhere around age nine, that changes. Heads come up. Players start noticing teammates in space before the ball arrives. U10 is the first age where a real passing team is possible — which is why U.S. Soccer moves this age group to 7v7 with build-out lines. The game format is literally designed to teach playing out of the back instead of booting it.

That window is also why we weight our U10 sessions so heavily toward passing and receiving with both feet. The coordination systems that drive clean striking of a ball — balance, rhythm, foot-eye timing — are wide open for development at this age, the same systems we cover in our guide to athletic development for ages 6–10. A kid who learns to pass with a locked ankle and receive with a soft first touch at nine carries that touch forever. A kid who spends U10 kicking long balls and chasing learns nothing that survives to 11v11.

One of our coaches spent several seasons on a Division II college soccer staff before working with our youth program, and the first thing he told our volunteer parent coaches stuck with me: "I can fix almost anything in a college player except a bad first touch. That gets built before age twelve or it doesn't get built." Our whole U10 template flows from that sentence.

The 75-Minute Framework

Here is how we structure 75 minutes for a 12-player roster with one coach. If you have 90 minutes, stretch the rondo and the scrimmage — never the talking.

Time	Segment
0:00–0:10	Dynamic warm-up with the ball
0:10–0:25	Technical block — passing and receiving
0:25–0:37	Rondo possession grids
0:37–0:50	1v1 attacking and defending
0:50–1:10	7v7 scrimmage with one coaching focus
1:10–1:15	Cool-down and team talk

A note on the warm-up before we get to the blocks: do it with a ball. Plain jogging wastes the highest-attention minutes of practice. We mix dribbling movements with the same footwork patterns from our agility ladder drills for kids — fast feet in and out of the ball, lateral shuffles around cones — so players are warming up their bodies and their touch at the same time.

The Session, Block by Block

Warm-Up — Ball Mastery Circuit (10 min) Every player gets a size 4 ball in a 25x25 yard grid. Two minutes of free dribbling in traffic with heads up, then call patterns: toe taps, inside-inside rolls, sole drags, and turns on your whistle. Finish with "traffic lights" — green means dribble fast, yellow means slow with small touches, red means stop the ball dead with the sole. Coaching cue: "Eyes up — feel the ball, see the field."

Block 1 — Passing and Receiving Gates (15 min) Pair the players, one ball per pair, and scatter cone gates two yards wide around the grid. Partners pass through a gate, both move to find a new gate, and repeat — count gates as a team and try to beat the score each round. Round one is right foot only, round two left foot only, round three is receive across your body and pass with the other foot. Coaching cue: "Pass with the inside of the foot, ankle locked — and take your first touch toward where you want to go, not straight back to the passer."

Block 2 — Rondo Grids, 4v1 and 5v2 (12 min) Set up two 10x10 yard grids and split the squad six per grid. Four or five players stand on the outside of the square and keep the ball away from one or two defenders in the middle; if a defender wins it or the ball leaves the grid, the player who lost it swaps into the middle. Start 4v1 so the passers succeed, move to 5v2 when they string six passes together, and award a point for any pass that splits between the two defenders. Coaching cue: "Move two steps away from your defender BEFORE the ball comes — make the easy pass possible."

Block 3 — 1v1 to Two Goals (13 min) Build two 15x10 yard channels, each with two small cone goals at one end, and split players into an attacking line and a defending line of three per channel. Coach plays the ball to the attacker, the defender closes the space, and the attacker tries to beat them and dribble through either goal within ten seconds; players switch lines after every rep. Defenders work on the approach — sprint, then slow into low, sideways-on steps an arm's length away. Coaching cue for attackers: "Change of speed beats the trick — touch past them and GO." Coaching cue for defenders: "Don't dive in — stay big, stay patient, force them to one side."

Block 4 — 7v7 Scrimmage With One Focus (20 min) Full 7v7 on your game-day field size with build-out lines marked by cones if your field lacks them, and pick ONE focus that matches tonight's theme — this week ours is "three passes before anyone shoots." Let the game flow; stop play a maximum of three times to paint a quick picture, fix one thing, and restart within twenty seconds. Goalkeepers start every restart with a throw or a pass on the ground, never a punt. Coaching cue: "Look before you receive — know your next pass before the ball gets to you."

After the scrimmage, walk the group through a two-minute stretch and name one specific thing you saw: "Mia checked away from her defender before every single rondo pass tonight — that is exactly it." One concrete compliment beats five minutes of talking.

The Rondo, Explained for Volunteer Coaches

If you have never heard the term, a rondo is just sophisticated keep-away. Passers on the outside of a small square, defenders in the middle, and the ball moves until somebody loses it. Barcelona's academy built a dynasty on it, but you do not need a badge to run one — you need four cones and a count. The reason it works at U10 is that it compresses everything this age needs into one game: one- and two-touch passing under real pressure, receiving with the back foot, and constant scanning. Kids think it is a game. It is, secretly, two hundred passing reps.

Build-Out Lines in Plain Language

At 7v7, most leagues paint a build-out line across each half. When your goalkeeper has the ball, the other team must drop behind that line until the keeper passes or throws it to a teammate. That is the whole rule, and it exists to give your defenders time and space to receive the ball and play, instead of getting swarmed. Use it. Teach your keeper to roll the ball to a defender every time, even when parents groan for a big kick. One more rule worth knowing: heading is prohibited at this age — U.S. Soccer bans it for

One bad giveaway in the build-out costs a goal in October; ten brave passes out of the back build a soccer player for the next decade.

Keeping 12 Kids Active With One Coach

The math is the whole battle. Twelve kids, one coach, 75 minutes — if your activities involve lines, kids spend the night standing. Every block above is built to avoid that: the warm-up is all twelve at once, the passing gates run six pairs simultaneously, the rondos split into two self-running grids, and the 1v1 channels keep two duels going at all times with lines of three, max. Set up the next activity's cones during water breaks, not during live minutes. On equipment, you genuinely need very little — a bag of pinnies, a stack of cones, and a pair of pop-up goals covers this entire session.

One last bit of perspective. Several of our best U10 players are also playing baseball or running around a basketball court this time of year, and we encourage it — multi-sport kids consistently arrive with better balance, sharper reactions, and more competitive toughness than kids who specialized at eight. Soccer twice a week, done well, is plenty at this age.

Run this template every week, rotate the themes — passing one week, 1v1 the next, finishing after that — and let the rondo and the scrimmage do the heavy lifting. For our full library of session plans and age-group guides, visit our soccer coaching hub. And the next time a kid tries a rainbow flick in warm-up, smile. The World Cup is doing half your recruiting for you; your job is to turn that spark into ten thousand clean passes.