

U14 Soccer Practice Plan: Full 90-Minute Session

14U

Practice Plans

Coach Nick & the YSC Coaching Team

I have a 14-year-old center midfielder on our team — great feet, high soccer IQ, but she had completely checked out by the second drill of every practice. We were running the same rondo warmup we had used since U8. The moment I built our sessions around tactical problems instead of isolated drills and tied what we were working on to real World Cup moments our players had watched that week, attendance jumped and her focus came back. That one shift changed every U14 session we have run since.

A U14 soccer practice should run 85–100 minutes, built around one tactical theme — not a random list of drills. Players this age learn through problem-solving in small-sided games. Give every activity a clear "why" and connect the session to something they have seen in actual soccer. Below is the exact 90-minute plan our coaching team uses for 14U, with coaching cues built in at every step.

Why U14 Is a Different Animal

Fourteen is a hinge age in player development. Athletes are physically stronger and faster than they were at 12, but their bodies are still mid-change — coordination can temporarily lag behind raw athleticism during growth spurts. More importantly, their cognitive and social needs have shifted. At 14, players want to understand *why* they are doing something. "Run the drill because I said so" kills buy-in within two practices.

What works is giving the session a clear tactical identity so every rep connects to a game concept. Every drill below feeds the same theme — **combination play to beat pressure** — so by the time players scrimmage, they are not just running around; they are executing something they rehearsed together.

If you are stepping players up from a younger group, our U12 soccer practice plan covers the technical foundation this session builds on — the concepts here assume players can already pass and receive under light pressure.

The 90-Minute U14 Soccer Practice Plan

Session Theme: Combination play to beat pressure (wall passes and third-man runs)

Setup: Full-size or 3/4 field | 14–18 players | 4 mini-goals + 2 full-size goals | Bibs, cones

Warm-Up and Activation (15 minutes)

Step 1 — Dynamic Movement Circuit (5 min) Players move through cones in a 30x20 yard grid: high knees, lateral shuffle, carioca, and backpedal, one width each direction. On the second pass through, every player dribbles a ball through the same grid and changes direction on a whistle. Keep intensity low but movement quality deliberate. Coaching cue: "Light on your feet — push off your toes, not your heels."

Step 2 — Rondo 4v2 (10 min) Groups of 6: four outside players keep possession against two defenders in a 10x10 yard square. One- or two-touch only. Swap defenders every 5 interceptions or every 2 minutes. This immediately recreates the pressure of time and space that combination play is built to solve — they will feel it before they know how to name it. Coaching cue: "Talk early. If your teammate has to look for you, you are already late."

Step 3 – Wall Pass Through the Gate (10 min) Set up pairs 20 yards apart with a cone acting as a defender between them. Player A passes to Player B (the wall), B returns it first touch, A runs onto the ball behind the cone and finishes on a small goal. After 5 minutes, replace the cone with a passive live defender, then an active one. Players quickly learn that the combination only works if A commits to the run the instant the pass leaves their foot. Coaching cue: "Play it and GO — do not watch the ball, move into space the second your foot leaves it."

Step 4 – Third-Man Combination (10 min) Three players, two touches maximum. A passes to B, B lays it off first touch to C who has made a diagonal run to receive in open space. Work both sides. The third man (C) is the payoff — they arrive in space with time on the ball because the first two actions created the opening. This mirrors how elite midfielders beat compact press lines, a pattern visible across World Cup 2026 group stage matches where teams broke high-pressure defenses through quick triangles rather than going direct. Coaching cue: "C reads B's first touch and moves BEFORE B plays it — not after."

For a dedicated passing session that extends this work, our youth soccer passing drills page has a full combination progression organized by difficulty.

Tactical Block – Small-Sided Games with Theme (25 minutes)

Step 5 – 5v5 Plus 2 Jokers (12 min) Two teams of 5 in a 40x30 yard area with 4 mini-goals, one at each corner of each end line. Add 2 neutral joker players who always play with the team in possession, creating a 7v5 advantage. Teams score by dribbling through any mini-goal on the opponent's end line. Rotate jokers every 4 minutes. The numeric overload rewards teams that use combination play to access the jokers quickly — the team that goes direct constantly loses the advantage. Coaching cue: "Jokers give you the overload — use them fast before the defense adjusts."

Step 6 – Combination Freeze Game (7 min) Same 5v5+2 setup, same field. Any time a team completes a wall pass or a clean third-man sequence, the coach blows a whistle, freezes the game, and awards 1 bonus point. Regular goals still count normally. This forces players to actively hunt for the combination moment rather than defaulting to direct play under pressure. They start reading the game for triggers, not just reacting. Coaching cue: "I want to see you CREATE the moment — recognize the trigger and commit."

Step 7 – Team Debrief (6 min) Gather both teams. Ask one question: "What did the combination unlock that a direct pass could not?" Let them answer first. At 14U, this metacognitive step lands differently than at younger ages — players begin coaching themselves and each other. Resist the urge to lecture. Draw out their analysis, then add the one thing they missed.

Finishing Block (15 minutes)

Step 8 – Combination Finishing (15 min) Build on the wall-pass pattern: A-B-A combination, then A finishes on a full-size goal with a keeper. Start at 25 yards, vary the entry angle — left channel, right channel, and central. Add a passive defender after 5 minutes, then a live one. Track each player's conversion rate out loud; a little internal competition sharpens focus at this age without adding stress. If finishing is a persistent gap on your roster, pair this with our dedicated youth soccer shooting drills session as your next practice.

Full-Field Scrimmage with Theme (15 minutes)

Step 9 – 7v7 or 9v9 Theme Scrimmage (15 min) Full game, normal rules, with one bonus rule: any combination sequence that leads directly to a shot counts double if scored. Let them play without constant stoppages. Watch whether the patterns from earlier drills transfer. If a team plays purely direct for three straight minutes, pause the game, ask one question instead of giving the answer, and restart. Coaching cue: "This is yours now. I want to see the game, not the drill."

Using the 2026 World Cup as a Teaching Tool

One addition our coaching team has made this summer: we open every practice with a 2-minute description of a World Cup moment that mirrors the session theme. For a combination-play session, a third-man run that unlocked a goal is perfect. Players are arriving at practice already talking about matches — lean into that energy. Recent research on engagement during the 2026 World Cup window (North America as co-host through July 19) shows youth soccer interest at historically high levels, and we have seen it translate directly into practice focus. When a 14-year-old hears "that is the exact same pattern — play it like you saw in that match," the drill suddenly has meaning it never had before.

Coaching the 14U Player

The athletes who disengage fastest at this age are the ones who do not see the point of a drill. The antidote is always context. Every step in this plan connects to the next: the rondo creates the pressure that the wall pass is designed to beat, which the small-sided game tests under realistic conditions, which the scrimmage validates in a live environment. When the session has that internal logic, even skeptical players stay present.

We have also found that small internal competitions — tracking conversion rates, awarding combination points, letting players call their own cues — turn a flat Tuesday practice into something athletes talk about on the car ride home. At 14, buy-in is the whole game.

For the full library of age-specific soccer sessions, visit our soccer coaching hub.
