

U6 Soccer Practice Plan: 60 Minutes for First-Time Coaches

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Practice Plans

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The first time I ran a U6 soccer practice, I spent 20 minutes planning a five-drill progression. The kids spent 20 minutes chasing each other around the field, kicking each other's shins, and asking when snack was. I learned something that day: a U6 practice plan is not about the drills — it is about the container that holds the chaos long enough for a few good moments to happen.

The short answer: A well-structured U6 soccer practice runs 45–60 minutes and focuses on one technical theme, two or three games that build the same skill, and a small-sided scrimmage at the end. That is it. At this age, teaching is playing — kids learn by doing, not by listening to instructions at a cone.

Below is the plan we use for our U6 fall season players — a true 60-minute session with timed blocks and station rotation. It follows the same format as our U8 soccer practice plan one developmental rung up, so you can ladder players through the program as they grow.

Who This Plan Is For

This plan is built for players ages 5–6 in a recreational or first-year club environment. At U6, we are not running 4v4 formations or teaching corner-kick runs. We are building three things: comfort with the ball at their feet, the habit of keeping their eyes up, and — most importantly — a reason to want to come back next week.

If you are brand new to coaching this age, start with U6 soccer drills for beginners to understand what skills actually land at this stage before you build a full session around them.

The One-Focus Principle

The single biggest mistake we see first-time U6 coaches make is trying to teach too much in one session — passing, dribbling, shooting, and spacing all in 60 minutes.

Here is the rule we follow: **pick one technical focus per session, and make every drill in the plan practice that same skill.**

For this session, the focus is close-contact dribbling — keeping the ball within two feet of their body while moving. Every activity below builds that one skill from a different angle. By the end of practice, kids have touched close dribbling thirty or forty times, in game-like situations, without sitting through a single lecture.

This is the gap most U6 practice plans miss. They list five unrelated drills and call it a plan. A real plan has a through-line.

The 60-Minute U6 Soccer Practice Plan

Session focus: Close-contact dribbling

Players: 8–14 U6 athletes

Equipment: One ball per player, cones, small goals or cone goals, colored pinnies

Time	Block	Focus
0–8 min	Free Ball / Arrival Activity	Ball comfort, no instruction
8–18 min	Sharks and Minnows	Dribbling with pressure awareness
18–32 min	Station Rotation (2 stations)	Skill building
32–42 min	King of the Ring	Competitive dribbling
42–55 min	3v3 Small-Sided Scrimmage	Applying the skill

Session Walkthrough

0–8 min — Free Ball Set a ball at each player's feet before they arrive. No instructions — just let them explore while the rest of the group shows up. This solves the late-arrival chaos and gets every kid touching a ball the moment they hit the field. Coaching cue: move around and ask individually, "Can you roll it with just your toes?" or "Can you stop it with the bottom of your foot?"

8–18 min — Sharks and Minnows Set up a 20x15 yard grid. One or two coaches (the sharks) move through the grid trying to kick balls out. Players dribble to protect their ball. If a ball gets kicked out, the player retrieves it and re-enters from the edge. Run 3–4 minutes, rest 30 seconds, repeat. This is the most effective U6 dribbling game we run all season — every player is active the entire time, no lines, no waiting. Coaching cue: "Keep the ball close — so close it almost trips you."

18–32 min — Station Rotation (7 minutes per station) Split the group in half. Two assistants or parent volunteers run one station each while you float between them. Station A — Dribble Through the Gates: scatter pairs of cones 2 yards apart across a 15x15 grid; players dribble freely and try to pass through as many "gates" as possible in 60 seconds. Station B — The Freeze Game: players dribble inside a 10x10 grid; when coach calls "freeze," every player stops the ball with the sole of their foot. Coaching cue for both stations: "Ball stays on your foot — like it is your pet."

32–42 min — King of the Ring Set up a 15x15 yard square. All players dribble inside. The goal: kick other players' balls out of the square while protecting your own. If your ball goes out, do 5 toe-taps on the sideline and rejoin. Run 3–4 rounds of 2 minutes each. This is where the one-focus principle pays off — kids are now making dribbling decisions under competitive pressure, something the station drills alone cannot create. Coaching cue: "Eyes up — you need to see where the other balls are."

42–55 min — 3v3 Small-Sided Scrimmage Divide into teams of 3. Play on a 20x15 yard field with small cone goals — no goalkeeper at U6, everyone rotates through. Run 3–4 minutes of play, then rotate teams. Keep score loosely if the kids want it, but do not emphasize it. The scrimmage is where the session's theme appears organically — you will see the close dribbling happen without being asked for it. Coaching cue: silence. Let them play. Step in only for safety.

55–60 min — Cool-Down and Team Cheer Bring the group together. Ask one or two players: "What was your favorite part?" (not "what did you learn" — they are 5). Lead two quick stretches: toe touches and arm circles. End with your team cheer. Coaching cue: keep it brief and positive — the last 60 seconds of practice is what they carry into the car ride home.

Managing the Chaos Moment

Every U6 practice has one. Usually around minute 25, a kid starts crying, two others are wrestling, and someone has decided to lie down in the middle of the field. This is not failure — it is a predictable attention-span threshold.

Our go-to to reset: blow the whistle once, raise your hand, and say "balls on feet, freeze." Then immediately announce the next activity with high energy. You have about a 10-second window where the novelty of what comes next pulls the group back in. The coaches who succeed at U6 are not the most knowledgeable — they are the most adaptable in that 10-second window.

This same adaptability is what makes small-sided games formats so durable across age groups — our small-sided games guide breaks down the format from U6 through U14 if you want to see how the structure evolves.

Running This With Two Coaches and No Assistants

If it is just you and a helper, collapse the station rotation into a single large-group activity and add an extra round of Sharks and Minnows. The 3v3 scrimmage still works with two coaches managing the sidelines. What does not work is trying to run two simultaneous stations alone. Know your constraints before practice starts, not during.

What U6 Players Actually Take Home

Not technique — at least, not consciously. What a well-run U6 session delivers is one rep of genuine effort, one moment where the game clicked, and one reason to want to come back next week. The plan above is built to produce those moments reliably.

When your U6 players grow into U8 athletes, the structure they have learned here — arrival activity, warm-up game, stations, scrimmage — will feel like second nature. That is the real payoff of a consistent practice format: the plan teaches itself over time, and you get to be the coach instead of the chaos manager. See the U8 soccer practice plan for how the format builds at the next level.

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