

**RICHMOND HILL SOCCER CLUB INC.**



**MICRO COACHING GUIDE  
U4 – U7**

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## **WELCOME!**

On behalf of the Richmond Hill Soccer Club, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to the Club and thank you for giving generously of your time and giving back to your community.

Being a coach can be a very rewarding experience. You will have 10 players who will look up to you, laugh with you, cry with you and learn from you. You are a role model. Enjoy the time you spend on the field.

These are very young children and as a result, have to be treated appropriately and with respect. We need to do everything we can to ensure that every child enjoys the time they spend at the field. The main goal is for everyone to have fun – the players, parents and you! If the players learn something throughout the season, that is great but we must be realistic in our expectations. This is not the World Cup and we are not coaching the Premiership team we may have seen on TV.

As a coach you will be responsible for:

- communicating with parents
- setting up the field;
- organizing some practice games for the players when they arrive at the field; and
- helping them during the game time.

This guide is intended to provide you with some material that you can use every week to make the summer easier for you, and a terrific experience for your players. The games and exercises are relatively simple – but they are very relevant to developing soccer skills and encouraging the players to enjoy the game.

If you have any questions, don't be afraid to ask Club coaching staff, or your fellow coaches. We are all learning and we are sure that you will get the support and guidance that you need to be successful.

Once again, thank you for volunteering with the Richmond Hill Soccer Club. We look forward to seeing you on the field!

Have fun and enjoy the season!

The Richmond Hill Soccer Club

## **RULES AND GUIDELINES**

The following rules and guidelines are intended to keep both you and your players safe. Please respect and follow them.

### **3.1 The Main Rule**

HAVE FUN!!

### **3.2 Player Equipment**

Every player is provided a uniform at the beginning of the season. The uniform consists of a shirt, shorts and socks. Players are responsible for getting their own soccer shoes and shin guards. These can be purchased at most sports equipment suppliers.

The following rules apply for player equipment:

Shoes	All players must wear proper outdoor soccer shoes. Running shoes or indoor shoes are not permitted.
Shin Guards	All players must wear shin guards under their socks to protect themselves during practices and games.
Jewellery	Under no circumstances are players allowed to wear jewellery. This includes earrings, necklaces, and bracelets. You will find that this may be a problem for little girls who refuse to take off earrings. Ensure that this rule is communicated to parents so the players come to the field without any jewellery.  The only exception is a medic alert bracelet, provided it is not dangerous to other players.
Hats	During the heat of summer, it is advisable for young players to wear a hat. The only permissible hat to be worn while the players are on the field, is a soft cotton bucket hat.  Baseball hats or those with hard brims or peaks are not permitted while playing.

### **3.3 Coaching Guidelines**

The following guidelines are intended to make each session as enjoyable as possible for the players and yourself:

- Choose a team name. Get the children involved and use their suggestions. Stuck for ideas? Try basing the name around your shirt colour i.e. Orange Tigers, Green Giants, White Knights, etc.
- Make a team cheer that can be used at the start of every game and after the snack break. The children will enjoy it and they will begin to develop an understanding of their team.
- Half way through the game, a rest break should be called. This is an ideal time for players to get a drink and possibly have a small snack. Encourage your players to bring fruit or popsicles. Have them avoid dairy products, chocolates, soft drinks (pop) and other food and beverages which can cause them to be ill. Cut pieces of watermelon or oranges are ideal.
- “High five” and cheer the opposing team at the end of the game. With the younger players this can be a challenge getting them to line up. An easy approach is to make a “train” with you as the leader initially. The players will all line up behind you and then you can move forward to shake hands or “high five” the other team.
- Ensure you leave the field clean i.e. don’t leave garbage behind and encourage your players and their families to do the same. We want to keep our fields clean and safe for all to enjoy. Bring a large garbage bag for your team to use or better yet, an extra blue box for all those plastic bottles.

### **3.4 Weather**

Common sense should dictate when a game should or shouldn’t be played. Here are some guidelines that you can follow.

- If it is very hot, reduce the length of playing time and ensure that adequate water breaks are taken (every 5-10 minutes).
- If it is raining lightly, games may be played; however, consult with the other team and parents to ensure the children are comfortable and suitably dressed. While the rain may not bother players, the field may be wet enough to be unsafe.
- If there is heavy rain, do not play.
- If there is any lightning, do not play.

### **3.5 Number of Players**

During the game, the following maximum number of players should be on the field.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Number of Players</b>
U4	Maximum of 3 players per team on the field (no goalkeeper).
U5 – U7	Maximum of 4 players per team on the field (no goalkeeper).

### **3.6 Game Duration**

Each “session” starts with a 30 minute practice before the start of the game.

The duration of outdoor games is as follows:

1. U4 to U6: 2 X 15 minute halves.
2. U7: 2 X 20 minute halves.

## A TYPICAL SESSION

The following is a schedule of a typical session for U4 – U6. U7 will be playing longer games. You can adjust the starting time based on when your team is slated to play their games:

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activity</b>
8:45 a.m.	Arrive at the field.  Check to make sure the field is safe for the players and clear any debris, broken bottles or garbage.  Set up field marking lines with discs provided and set up the goal.
9:00 a.m.	Welcome players. As they begin to arrive you can encourage participation with parents until enough players arrive.
9:05 a.m.	As soon as enough players arrive, begin playing some of the practice sessions described.
9:15 a.m.	Depending on how hot the day is, you may want to have a water break.
9:25 a.m.	Finish practice sessions and have a final water break before the game starts.
9:30 a.m.	Game starts. Do a cheer with your team!  Change all the players every couple of minutes or sooner if they seem tired.
9:45 a.m.	Break for water or fruit.
9:55 a.m.	Finish up. “High 5” with the opposing team.  Collect all cones and put away nets.  Check the field to make sure garbage is picked up and all players have taken their soccer balls and other items home.

During hot summer days, the schedule can be shortened appropriately as required. Ensure that all players drink adequate water.

During the practice:

- **Be enthusiastic!** The children will catch on and want to be there.
  
- **HAVE FUN !!!!**
  - There are so many ways to have fun.
  - Bring music for the children to play during the practice.
  - Bring beach balls or other relevant toys for a change.
  - Wear a smile!
  
- **Make sure each player gets lots of touches on the ball.**
  - Each player should have their own ball that is distributed by the club. Make sure each player writes their name on the ball.
  - During practice all children should be involved and get lots of touches.
  
- **Change activities.**
  - If the session is becoming tedious or the players are restless, move on to another activity.
  - If things aren't working, give it a minute, then try something else.
  
- **Avoid the evil "L's"**
  - **Laps.** Time is precious. Do fun game activities with a ball!
  - **Lectures.** Their attention span is very short. If you speak more than 30 seconds, you've lost them. Show them what you want them to do and let them do it.
  - **Lines.** Don't have the players standing waiting to take a turn. Use activities where they can all participate at the same.
  - **Language.** You are now a role model. Never use profane or inappropriate language around children. Ensure that other adults don't either.



## **PRACTICE GAMES TO PLAY – NOT DRILLS!**

This section describes some simple games that can be used to encourage the children to improve their skills. They are intended to be fun and entertaining while helping learn.

Do not treat these sessions as drills that must be repeated until the players perform correctly. Players should be encouraged to experiment, try different things and have FUN!

Change activity every 5-10 minutes or even more frequently if required. Children at this age have a very short attention span and need the change. If you notice that several children seem to be losing focus, it is time to move on to something else.

You may want to develop your own games that the children are familiar with – just use a ball. For example, common games like “What Time Is It Mr. Wolf?”, “Red Rover” and others can all be used if you add a ball.

### 5.1 Follow The Leader Dribbling

<p>Description</p>	<p>This is the most basic exercise that players should do – dribbling the ball. Most players will struggle with this basic concept at the start, but improve with practice.</p> <p>Give each player a ball. Have them follow you around the field.</p> <p>They should use their feet, dribble and keep the ball close.</p> <p>You don't have to use a big area. Keep the players within 10 yards of each other.</p>
<p>Variations</p>	<p>After a minute, change the exercise using some of the following variations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stop.</b> The players must stop the ball and put their foot on the ball.</li> <li>• <b>Go.</b> They start to follow you again.</li> <li>• <b>Body parts.</b> Call out the name of a body part i.e. knee, elbow, arm, nose, ear. The player must stop the ball, touch the ball with the body part you've called, and then continue.</li> <li>• <b>Sit On The Ball.</b> The players must stop the ball. Sit on the ball and then continue.</li> <li>• <b>Airplane.</b> Have the players spread their arms out and pretend as if they're an airplane. This exercise is quite difficult for some young players as their body coordination and balance need to improve.</li> <li>• <b>Come To Coach.</b> Have all the players come to you as quickly as they can in preparation for the next game.</li> </ul>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>This activity begins to develop ball control and keeping the ball close.</p> <p>By following you, the players need to keep their head up which is a key skill as they get older – you have to be able to see the field, see where players are, etc.</p> <p>They will also develop different skills on their own like turning, and using both feet.</p> <p>Some young players will lose balance and fall over when they first begin to dribble. That's ok. Encourage them to get up and keep moving.</p>

## 5.2 Chase

<p>Description</p>	<p>This is a simple progression from Follow The Leader which can get the parents involved (especially for the U4 / U5 ages) or players working together.</p> <p>Put the players into pairs (one parent / player or two players). One player has a ball, the other doesn't. The player without the ball is the leader. The player with the ball is the follower. The follower has to try to keep up with the leader by dribbling the ball.</p> <p>When the coach calls "switch", the follower becomes the leader, and the leader becomes the follower.</p> <p>Players should use their feet, dribble and keep the ball close. You don't have to use a big area. Keep the players within 10 to 15 yards of each other.</p>
<p>Variations</p>	<p>After a few minutes, change the exercise using some of the following variations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Imitate.</b> Both players have a ball and the follower has to imitate the moves and actions of the leader.</li> <li>• <b>Tag.</b> Both players have a ball. If the follower "tags" the leader, they switch on their own.</li> </ul>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>This activity continues to develop ball control and keeping the ball close.</p> <p>The follower in particular has to keep their head up which is a key skill as they get older – you have to be able to see the field, see where players are, etc.</p> <p>They will also develop different skills on their own like turning, and using both feet.</p> <p>Some young players will lose balance and fall over when they first begin to dribble. That's ok. Encourage them to get up and keep moving.</p> <p>It is a simple game to get parents involved and they can continue to play when they go home.</p>

### 5.3 Shooting Practice

<p>Description</p>	<p>This game gets the players to learn to move towards the net and score goals. There are no lineups and they all get lots of chances to put the ball in the net.</p> <p>Each player should have a ball. Gather all the players together about 15-20 yards from the goal. On your signal, the players must get a ball using their feet and dribble to the net to score.</p> <p>You should be waiting at the net. The players will arrive at different speeds. As they score, give each player a “High 5”, grab the ball and throw it about 15 yards away in a different location. The player has to run get the ball, turn around and score again.</p>
<p>Variations</p>	<p>Instead of having the players each start with a ball in a group, place all the balls in a pile about 20 yards away from a goal. The players must run to the pile and get a ball using their feet. They then continue as above, going to the goal to score.</p>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>For young players, this is more effective than having them stand in line, waiting to shoot:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no waiting so all players are active.</li> <li>• They get to dribble through traffic and have a chance on goal so they have to learn to deal with opposition.</li> <li>• They have to learn to turn with the ball to return and score a goal.</li> <li>• They learn to shoot on the net.</li> </ul> <p>Encourage the players to keep their head up as they go for the goal so they can see the goal and other players around them.</p>

### 5.4 Keep Away (*The Tiger / Monster / Sharks & Minnows*)

<p>Description</p>	<p>Although this game goes by many names, the basic principle is that the players have to keep the ball away from the coach or another player.</p> <p>Use some cones to market a 15m x 15m square. All players should start with a ball inside the area.</p> <p>All players should try to keep their balls away from the coach who threatens to take their balls. The coach is the Tiger / Monster / Shark. Say things like “Don’t let me get your ball”, “I’m gonna get you”, but don’t scare them. The idea is just to have them try to get away.</p> <p>As the players improve, knock their balls away so they have to retrieve the ball and get back in the square.</p>
<p>Variations</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have some fun with this. Some ideas are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Tiger:</b> Crawl on all fours, make growling noises or even roar.</li> <li>• <b>Monster:</b> Drag your leg like Frankenstein, make monster noises, make faces.</li> <li>• <b>Pirate:</b> Wear a pirate hat so they know who the pirate is.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. After one or two times, the coach does not need to be in the middle. Let one of the players be in the middle. A hat is a great option here. The player with the hat tries to get the balls from those who don’t. You can then change the player in the middle after a short period of time so a number of players get a chance.</li> <li>3. As the players improve again, if the Tiger (player without a ball) kicks the ball out of the square, the other player joins them in the middle so eventually only a few players will be left with a ball.</li> </ol>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>This game teaches a number of important ball control skills. Players begin to develop ball control, keep the ball close, look up to see where the opponent is, and turn away from pressure.</p> <p>They also develop the concept of a field since they have to stay inside the area and must try to keep the ball in the area.</p>

### 5.5 Line Tag (The Snake)

<p>Description</p>	<p>This is a version of Keep Away with an added twist.</p> <p>All players start in a 15m square with a ball.</p> <p>As with Keep Away, all players should try to keep their balls away from the coach or a player without the ball who threatens to take their balls. The coach lets them get away for 30 seconds, but then knocks one player's ball out of the square.</p> <p>When a player's ball is knocked out of the square, they must hold hands with the coach and together they try to kick the balls of other players out of the square. As each player's ball is kicked out, they hold hands and join the growing line until there is only one player who has a ball left. This growing line is called the "snake".</p>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>As the snake grows, it is harder to move although it does cover more area. This teaches the players in the line about teamwork since they have to move together.</p> <p>The players with the ball use all their ball control skills like avoiding pressure, keeping their head up, etc.</p> <p>The really smart players with the ball will begin to develop tactical awareness and position themselves behind the line since it is the hardest place for the line to get to i.e. it is hard for the line to turn.</p>

## 5.6 Frozen Tag

Description	<p>This is a version of Keep Away with an added twist.</p> <p>All players start in a 15m square with a ball.</p> <p>Choose one player who is “It”. “It” does not have a ball. The remaining players each have a ball.</p> <p>Players dribble around within the square. The player without the ball, tags players. When players have been tagged, they “freeze”, hold their ball above their head, spread their legs apart and call for help from fellow players.</p> <p>To be unfrozen, players who are still dribbling must dribble to a frozen player and kick their ball through the legs of the frozen player to unfreeze the player. Unfrozen players resume dribbling.</p> <p>Change “It” after a couple of minutes.</p>
Comments	<p>This teaches dribbling skills and also encourages the players to get their head up to see who needs help to be unfrozen.</p> <p>It also encourages kicking accuracy when they have to pass the ball through the legs of the player.</p> <p>Finally, communication skills are developed as it gets them talking to one another and asking for help.</p>

### 5.7 Introduction To Passing And Kicking


<p>Description</p>	<p>This can be used to start to get the kids involved as they arrive at the field. Since they don't arrive at the same time, you need some kind of activity at the beginning to get them going and ease them in.</p> <p>Put the players in groups of 2 (3 if there is an extra one), standing about 5 yards apart. Simply have the players kick the ball back and forth with each other. Older players will require more distance.</p> <p>Initially they will struggle and the balls will go everywhere. That's ok, because they will have to retrieve the balls and come back to their opponent.</p> <p>Don't do this for an extended period of time. A couple of minutes is plenty and then move on to one of the variations or a different activity.</p>
<p>Variations</p>	<p><b>Kicking Relay:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The two players line up together on one side line. One player kicks the ball as far as they can. The other player, chases the ball, brings it back and then they have a turn kicking it. The other player chases.</li> <li>• The players alternative chasing and kicking.</li> </ul>
<p>Comments</p>	<p>Don't worry about teaching appropriate kicking technique. Most players will instinctively kick the ball correctly with the laces. Some will use their toe. At this age let the game be the teacher.</p>



### 5.8 Dribble Across A Square

This game comes from [www.soccerhelp.com](http://www.soccerhelp.com):

<p>Description</p>	<p>Depending on the number of players, make a square 5 or 6 adult steps wide and have the players just dribble across and stop (don't have them turn and dribble back).</p> <p>As soon as they have all dribbled across, have them all face inward and dribble back across to the opposite side and stop.</p> <p>Continue this approach of dribbling across and stopping each time until they have crossed the square 6 to 8 times (each trip across is "one").</p> <p>Don't try to teach turns and don't keep score, just encourage them all and have fun. The benefit of this is learning to dribble in traffic. Tell them to focus on their own ball and to NOT try to kick anyone else's ball.</p>
<p>Comment</p>	<p>This is a good way to teach dribbling and to use the bottom of the foot &amp; the inside &amp; outside of the foot to stop the ball and turn.</p> <p>It is easy to set-up and everyone has a ball. This is a great warm-up.</p> <p>This game helps children's brains to learn to process a lot of activity, to use peripheral vision, and to make correct, instinctive decisions and maintain composure when under pressure and in heavy traffic.</p>
<p>Teaches</p>	<p>Control dribbling, to look up while dribbling &amp; how to do a "Pullback" (aka "Drag Back"), "Stop/Turn", "Cutback" &amp; "Hook Turn".</p> <p>Players learn to use peripheral vision, to shield the ball when in traffic, and that they can speed up if they get in the clear.</p> <p>It is a "self-teaching" game and playing the game really teaches these skills and self-confidence &amp; composure in heavy traffic &amp; under pressure. It also teaches composure in chaotic situations and how to recognize openings in traffic and when it's safe to speed up.</p> <p>You should notice an improvement in "field vision" and "field awareness" (the ability to see opportunities in a crowd and across a field, and to make quick, instinctive, correct decisions).</p>

<p>Set Up</p>	<p>Use 4 disk cones to make a square about 10 or 12 steps wide (smaller or larger depending on age &amp; number of players)</p> <p>Every player has a ball.</p> <p>Spread players around the square, all facing inward (like below):</p> 
<p>The Game</p>	<p>All players start on "Go" &amp; each player dribbles across the square &amp; back.</p> <p>Encourage different types of turns:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pullback by putting the bottom of the foot on top of ball to stop it &amp; pull it back in the direction you came from.</li> <li>• Hook Turn by pulling the toes up &amp; turning the foot so the outside of the foot can "hook" the ball, stop it &amp; pull it back.</li> <li>• Cutback uses the inside of the foot to turn the ball.</li> </ul> <p>Tell players to look up while they dribble so they don't run into each other (don't worry, there won't be many collisions).</p> <p>As players get older, you can add a competitive element by racing i.e. the first player to cross the square 10 times.</p> <p>This is a good game to play at the start of practice as a warm-up and at the end of practice until dribbling skills improve or your team gets tired of this game. For beginners, let them decide how to turn using the method they are most comfortable with. For advanced or older players, require a Pullback one game, then a Hook, then a Cutback.</p> <p>After your team has played this game in a few practices, make the square larger so it is less crowded. This will let players speed up when they get in open space. Tell them that they can go faster if they kick the ball in front of them, but they <b>MUST</b> still keep control of the ball. If they kick it too far, they won't be able to make their turn. In most games, a player will lose the game if he or she loses control of the ball even once. The game is self-teaching, but it is helpful for the coach to be encouraging and to point out how players can improve their performance.</p>

## OTHER REFERENCE MATERIAL

There are many sources of information available to give you ideas and to help you. Just remember to choose something appropriate for the age group you are working with:

- The RHSC has an assortment of electronic books that they can provide you.
- Local libraries and book stores have books and DVDs with practice ideas.
- Specialty soccer stores have DVDs and other material which can help.

If you are interested in finding other games or ideas, here are some additional web sites that you can explore:

<http://www.bettersoccercoaching.com>

<http://www.footy4kids.co.uk>

<http://www.joesoccer.com/info/games.html>

<http://www.dprsports.com/drills.htm>

<http://www.and-again.com/>

[http://www.soccerhelp.com/U-4\\_U-6\\_U-8\\_Soccer\\_Coaching.shtml](http://www.soccerhelp.com/U-4_U-6_U-8_Soccer_Coaching.shtml)

[http://www.finesoccer.com/finesoccer\\_drills\\_archive.htm](http://www.finesoccer.com/finesoccer_drills_archive.htm)

<http://www.ucs.mun.ca/~dgraham/manual/>

You may also be interested in information about:

Richmond Hill Soccer Club      [www.richmondhillsoccer.com](http://www.richmondhillsoccer.com)

Ontario Soccer Association      [www.soccer.on.ca](http://www.soccer.on.ca)

Canadian Soccer Association      [www.canadasoccer.com](http://www.canadasoccer.com)

Toronto FC      <http://toronto.fc.mlsnet.com>

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. I have some players who don't get involved in the game or are afraid. How can I help them?**

It is easy to make sure that every player gets touches on the ball during the game. Whenever the ball goes out of play, there is an opportunity for the team to kick in the ball. By letting different players start with the ball, it ensures that all players get involved.

It is also OK to hold a players hand and position them on the field so they know where to play and ensure they get a touch on the ball.

If you need to hold a players hand (at the U4 or U5 level) to show them where to go and to help them become involved, make sure you inform the parent so they are aware of your intentions.

### **2. I have a young girl who has small earrings. Can she wear them while playing?**

All jewelry needs to be removed in order for the game to be as safe as possible for all participants.

### **3. It's raining out. Do we still play?**

Use common sense. If it is raining lightly, games may be played; however, consult with the other team and parents to see if they want to continue and to ensure the children are comfortable and suitably dressed. If it has been raining intermittently over a few consecutive days, the field may be too slippery for safe play.

In heavy rain it is best not to play.