



CYA Volunteer Coach Clinic



Welcome, Coaches!

Thank you for volunteering your time and energy to support our young CYA soccer players! This clinic is designed to equip you with the foundational tools, confidence, and simple structures needed to run engaging and effective soccer practices for players ages 4–8.

Whether you're brand new or have some experience, today's session will give you practical takeaways to build your weekly plans that you can apply immediately on the field.

Clinic Goals

- Introduce two session design models: Play-Practice-Play (PPP) and Simple-to-Complex progression
- Demonstrate these models in action using an 8-year-old demo team
- Provide age-appropriate session examples and coaching points
- Build confidence in planning and delivering fun, effective practices

Session Layout

0:00–0:05 | Welcome & Introduction

0:05–0:25 | Model 1: Play-Practice-Play (PPP) – Live Demo with Discussion

0:25–0:45 | Model 2: Simple-to-Complex – Live Demo with Discussion

0:45–0:55 | Guided Comparison & Q&A

0:55–1:00 | Wrap-Up and Distribution of Resources



Overview: Two Coaching Models - Understanding the Two Session Models:

Play-Practice-Play (PPP) Model

What it is:

PPP is a game-centered approach that mimics how players naturally enjoy and learn the game. It starts and ends with **free or guided play**, with a short-focused activity in the middle to sharpen a specific skill or idea.

Structure:

1. **Play 1 (Free Play):** A small-sided game where players just play—no coaching. This gives coaches insight into what players can already do and keeps kids excited from the start.
2. **Practice 1:** A short activity with one clear coaching point, often related to a common theme seen in the first play.
3. **Practice 2:** an additional short activity that builds off the first activity in a fun and semi-progressive way.
4. **Play 2 (Guided Play):** Another game, but this time with light coaching to encourage the skill worked on in practice.

Benefits:

- Feels like real soccer
- Keeps energy high
- Helps players connect the skill to game situations
- Works well for all age groups, especially younger players (ages 4–8)



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Simple-to-Complex Progression

What it is:

This model is a skill development progression that moves from **individual focus** to **game-like complexity**. It gives players a chance to build confidence and technique before being tested in live play.

Structure:

1. **Simple:** Players work on a skill alone or with little pressure (e.g., dribbling in space).
2. **Semi-Complex Activity 1:** A modified activity with limited pressure (e.g., 1v1s, tag games).
3. **Semi-Complex Activity 1:** An additional modified activity with limited pressure (e.g., 1v1s, tag games).
4. **Complex:** A realistic game scenario (e.g., 3v3) where players apply the skill under pressure.

Benefits:

- Gives repetition and clarity
- Builds comfort and confidence before adding defenders
- Great for teaching technique (especially in players ages 6+)
- Easier for new coaches to control and manage

	Play-Practice-Play (PPP)	Simple-to-Complex Progression
Starts with	Free play game (2v2 - 4v4)	Simple, individual activity
Next step	Focused practice activity	Semi-complex challenge
Final step	Return to a guided game	Complex, game-like activity
Purpose	Engagement, game-like learning	Layered skill development
Best for	Energy, enjoyment, decision-making	Skill repetition, confidence build
Coach's role	Guide and support	Progress challenge and instruction
Great for ages	All ages, especially young players	6+ when introducing technique



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PPP Session Example: Ages 5–6 (Dribbling)

- **Play 1 (5 mins):** 2v2-3v3 (depending on field space) Free Play
 - Let them play without coaching.
 - Keep ball in play (continuous play)
- **Practice 1 (5 mins):** Red Light, Green Light with Ball
 - Players dribble and stop on command.
 - Add 'Yellow Light' = dribble slowly.
 - Switch up imaginary games
- **Practice 2 (5 mins):** Construction Game
 - Pick 2-3 players to be “Builders” and fix tall cones to be upright while “Breakers” use the ball to knock the cones over.
 - Focus on good “kicks” when knocking the cones over, and keeping the ball close to get to another cone quickly.
- **Play 2 (10 mins):** 2v2-3v3 (depending on field space) to Goals (can be cones if necessary)
 - Challenge: Can you keep the ball close with small touches?
 - Coach encourages use of inside/outside of foot, small touches and going the right direction!



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Simple-to-Complex Session: Ages 5–6 (Dribbling)

- **Simple (5 mins):** Body Parts Game
 - Each player has a ball, they dribble freely and when directed stop the ball with a body part the coach shouts out.
- **Semi-Complex (5 mins):** Construction Game
 - Pick 2-3 players to be “Builders” and fix tall cones to be upright while “Breakers” use the ball to knock the cones over.
- **Complex (10 mins):** 2v2 with Target Cones/Shapes/Colors
 - Teams score by dribbling through cone gate, a shape made out of cones, or specific color cones.
 - Encourage space finding, and awareness and quickness to get to the goals.



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PPP Session Example: Ages 7–8 (Dribbling)

- **Play 1 (5 mins):** 3v3-4v4 Free Play
 - Let them play freely. Observe: Are they trying to take opponents on 1v1?
- **Practice 1 (5 mins):** 1v1 skill moves (unopposed)
 - Players work in pairs about 10 yards apart facing each other
 - Both players dribble towards each other where a set of 3 cones are in the middle where they do moves by
 - Focus on simple moves, i.e. inside and outside of the foot cuts, rolls – this will be based on existing skill level.
- **Practice 2 (5 mins):** 1v1 opposed
 - Players work in pairs about 15-20 yards apart facing each other
 - One player with the ball tries to dribble past their partner to get through a set of gates.
 - Focus on keeping ball close, encourage skill moves from previous activity.
- **Play 2 (10 mins):** 3v3-4v4 to Goals
 - Encourage players to take opponent on 1v1 before scoring.
 - Keep score and rotate teams to keep competition fresh.



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Simple-to-Complex Session: Ages 7–8 (Dribbling)

- **Simple (5 mins): Unopposed Dribbling**
 - Players dribble freely in space, avoiding cones. Use different parts of the foot (inside, outside, sole) to change direction. Make it fun, add an imaginary theme.
 - Focus on ball control, head up, using both feet, imagination.
- **Semi-Complex 1 (5 mins): 1v0 – Skill Moves at Midpoint**
 - In pairs, 10 yards apart, with 3 cones in the middle.
 - Players dribble toward the middle, perform a move at the cones (inside cut, outside cut, roll), then go back.
 - Progression: add more complex moves depending on skill level of group (inside and outside of the foot cuts, etc.)
- **Semi-Complex 2 (5 mins): 1v1**
 - Grid 15x20 yards with gates at the end. One ball per pair.
 - 1v1 to the gate. Dribbler tries to beat the defender using moves from last activity.
 - Focus on Protecting the ball, timing of moves, attacking space.
- **Complex (10 mins): 3v3-4v4 with End Zones**
 - Teams score by dribbling into an end zone.
 - Focus on when to dribble vs when to pass, 1v1 moves, and finding space to dribble into.



Activity Descriptions

This document provides developmentally appropriate session plans for ages 5–8 using both Play-Practice-Play (PPP) and Simple-to-Complex models, focused on dribbling, turning, and passing/movement.

Activities progress in complexity and incorporate imaginative play to keep young players engaged:

- **Ages 5–6 (PPP – Dribbling):** Begins with free play, transitions into dribbling games like *Red Light, Green Light* and the *Construction Game* (knocking cones over), and ends with goal-based small-sided games emphasizing close control and directional dribbling.
- **Ages 5–6 (Simple-to-Complex – Dribbling):** Starts with ball familiarity through the *Body Parts Game*, adds challenge through the *Construction Game*, and builds to 2v2 competition with dribbling to targets that encourage awareness and movement.
- **Ages 7–8 (PPP – Dribbling):** Focuses on 1v1 skill development, combining free play, unopposed and opposed 1v1 practice, and competitive games that promote attacking defenders with confidence and creativity.
- **Ages 7–8 (Simple-to-Complex – Passing & Movement):** Introduces controlled dribbling with imagination, develops skill execution at key moments, and leads into decision-making in 1v1 and 3v3/4v4 situations using end zones to highlight when to dribble or pass.

Each session supports key technical outcomes while ensuring players have fun and grow their love for the game.



Final Coaching Tips

- **Prioritize Player Development Over Winning:** Focus on nurturing skills and fostering a love for the game rather than emphasizing match outcomes. This approach encourages long-term growth and enjoyment.
- **Foster Open Communication:** Build strong relationships with your players by engaging in meaningful conversations, actively listening, and showing genuine care for their well-being both on and off the field.
- **Create an Engaging Environment:** Design practices that are fun and interactive to keep young players motivated and eager to learn. Incorporate games and activities that promote both skill development and enjoyment.
- **Emphasize Fundamental Skills:** Consistently reinforce basic techniques such as dribbling, passing, and ball control. Mastery of these fundamentals provides a solid foundation for advanced skills.
- **Utilize Clear and Concise Instructions:** When introducing new drills or concepts, be straightforward and demonstrate whenever possible to ensure understanding.



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Recommended Coaching Resources

- **U.S. Soccer Learning Center:** Offers comprehensive educational programs for coaching development, including courses and certifications.
- **US Youth Soccer Resources:** Provides a variety of materials, including coaching manuals and grassroots soccer information, to support coaches at all levels.
- **MOJO Sports:** A platform offering coaching instruction, team management tools, and multimedia resources tailored for youth sports coaches.
- **Soccer-Coaches.com:** Features free drills, exercises, and articles from renowned experts to enhance your coaching sessions.
- **The Coaching Manual:** Provides in-depth coaching education, session planning tools, and a vast library of drills and practices.
- **Soccer Coach Weekly:** Offers proven drills, coaching sessions, practice plans, and training tips for grassroots coaches.

By integrating these coaching principles and utilizing the recommended resources, you can create a positive and effective learning environment that promotes both skill development and a lifelong passion for soccer among your players.