



L.T.P.D.

long term player development



# Active Start "First Kicks"

**For coaches of U4 to U6 year-olds**



# First Kicks

Coach, your role is central to the children's "first steps, first kicks" in the wonderful world of soccer.

The environment that you create and the experience that each child has will determine if they stay in the game or not.

This resource has been created to assist you and provide some basic information that will aid you in organizing your activities for the children that you are working with.

We strongly recommend that a parent gets involved with their children at the earliest stages of Active Start to allow the child to feel more comfortable in an initially strange environment.

## Practice Focus

Coach, the above chart indicates how your practice sessions should be structured for players in the Active Start development stage.

### Small-sided games

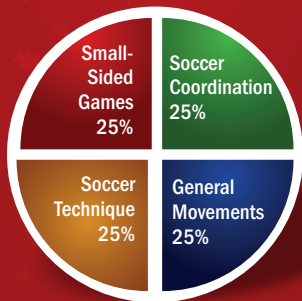
Can be 1v1, e.g. Mom or Dad vs Child....  
Just let them play, lots of movement.

### Soccer Technique

Fun activities and games with a ball each, concentrate on dribbling, all directions.

All done in a fun, safe, interactive environment.

Practice duration should be no more than 30 minutes for the younger players to a maximum of 45 minutes for the 6 year-old players.



### Soccer Coordination

Ball each, lots of touches, left and right foot, different parts of foot and body.

### General Movements

Running, jumping, twisting, rolling, hopping, moving backwards, etc.

## Role of the Active Start Coach

- Provide fun, safe and enjoyable activity.
- Provide well organized practice and games.
- Provide stimulating activities that promote fundamental skills and movement.
- Communicate appropriately with children.



At this introductory level, the objective is to get children moving and to keep them active. No competitive games should be played – the objective is for adults and children to play together informally.

The physical curriculum provides for learning basic fundamental movement skills such as: running- jumping- twisting- throwing- catching

The technical requirements are not about teaching the techniques of soccer and are nothing more than encouraging children to enjoy becoming friends with the ball and experiencing the following through fun and imaginative games; running with the ball, stopping and changing direction with the ball, dribbling, kicking, shooting

At this stage, players should participate in a variety of additional activities. Swimming and well-structured gymnastics programs are recommended to enhance the full range of basic movement skills and physical literacy.

*We want players at this stage to fall in love with the game!*

## Four-Corner Approach

The gradual progressive development of players is fundamental to the enjoyment, technical competency and retention in the game. The “four-corner” approach places the player at the center of the development process with soccer experiences that meet the four key needs of the player.



## Active Start Coaches Tips

- Ensure that you have enough soccer balls for every child.
- Use one soccer ball per child, they don't like sharing their toy.
- Check your playing area, to ensure it's safe. No rocks or holes.
- Remove/reduce distractions, e.g. swings, pools, dogs, etc.
- Organize your practice to have all the children active, all of the time.
- A parent or guardian should join in to supervise and play with their child.
- Keep the activities short, 1 or 2 minute duration, their attention span is short.
- Be enthusiastic, have fun!
- No scores or standings are kept.
- “High fives” for everyone.
- During games everyone should play equal time, in all positions.
- Practice length 30- 45 minutes



## Role of the Parents

### Before practice

- Ensure your child has eaten and has had enough rest.
- Ask your child if they have all their “kit” and a water bottle.

### During your child's practice

- Play with your child, have fun with them.
- Support the coach with praise and encouragement.
- Praise effort don't criticize mistakes.

### After your child's practice

- Praise the effort your child has given
- Ask if they had fun
- Give them food and a drink



## Recommendations

Player success is encouraged. While Mom or Dad should challenge the child player, they should allow the child to “score” goals and “beat” the adult opponent.

If the child loses interest, discontinue the game and do another activity that the child enjoys.

*We want players at this stage to have basic movement skills, be comfortable with a ball, be more confident and try new challenges.*

# Active Start Coaching Clinic

For the players to enjoy their soccer experience the most we recommend that each coach attend an Active Start Coaching Clinic. During the fun, interactive 3.5 hr. course you will be introduced to games and activities that are designed for the Active Start development stage players. Learn how to design and run a safe, age appropriate practice. For more info contact your club, district or OSA.

## Resources

For further information on Coaching clinics, practice sessions, LTPD information game formats, etc. please contact any of the resources listed below.

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

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

Canadian Sport 4 Life - [www.canadiansportforlife.ca](http://www.canadiansportforlife.ca)

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