



U.S. Soccer Curriculum

Director: Claudio Reyna

Author: Dr. Javier Perez





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1. Style and Principles of Play	1
2. Concepts and Coaching Guidelines	5
3. Age Group Organization	37
4. Planning and Training	58



Style and Principles of Play

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STYLE AND PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

Index

Style of Play	1
Principles of Play	3



STYLE OF PLAY: GENERAL

The key elements for coaches and players that define the style of play

MATCH

OFFENSIVE STYLE

All teams will be encouraged to display an offensive style of play based on keeping possession and quick movement of the ball.

QUICK TRANSITIONS AND FINISHING

Speed of play, avoiding over-dribbling, looking for an organized and quick movement of the ball and finishing will be encouraged in all age groups.

POSITION SPECIFIC

A team must be organized defensively, keeping their specific positions in the formation. However, players will look for spaces and movements to support forward when attacking by moving away from their original positions.

FORMATIONS

4-3-3 FORMATION

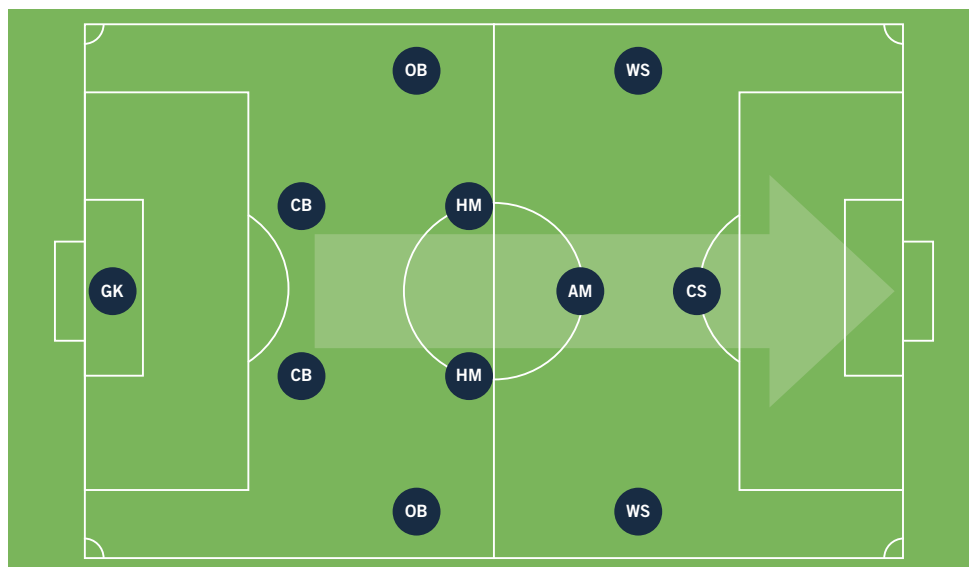
Teams will use the 4-3-3 formation, either in its 4-2-3-1 or 4-1-2-3 variations. Teams in the advanced stage (U15 onwards) can also use a 4-4-2 formation with a diamond in the middle. This system (4-4-2 diamond) provides more space in the wide areas of the field for the outside backs to move forward and join the attack.

BACK 4

All formations used by the teams in 11-a-side games must keep a back 4 line. The back 4 provides consistency in defense and allows space for the outside backs to move forward when attacking.

9v9

Teams playing 9v9 soccer are strongly encouraged to use the 3-2-3 formation. This formation helps players express the principles of play specified in this document. This system allows for better adaptation to a 4-3-3 formation as the players progress to 11v11.



◀ This is the 4-3-3 formation in its 4-2-3-1 variation. This is a well balanced formation in attack and defense with two holding midfielder players and one attacking midfielder.



STYLE OF PLAY: SPECIFIC

Most relevant points of each of the four key components

TECHNICAL

PASSING & RECEIVING:

Passing the ball on the ground with pace from different distances and receiving the ball while keeping it moving will be encouraged in all age groups.

SHOOTING

Players must develop the ability to shoot from different distances. All players will be encouraged to shoot from any distance during the game.

BALL CONTROL AND TURNING

Players will be encouraged to keep close control of the ball and use different turning techniques to move away from the defender.

TACTICAL

PLAYING OUT FROM THE BACK

All teams must feel comfortable playing the ball from the back through the midfield and from there to the final quarter of the field.

POSSESSION & TRANSITION

All teams must try to keep possession of the ball playing a one-two touch game. Players will be encouraged to support and move, thus creating passing options. Once the possession game is consolidated the team must learn how to transfer the ball in the most efficient way from one area of the field to another.

OFFENSE-DEFENSE QUICK TRANSITION & VICE VERSA

When possession is lost, players must react quickly and apply pressure to regain the ball. Once possession is regained, players will be positioned immediately to counter-attack.

PHYSICAL

SPEED & AGILITY

These qualities will be evident in the game from the early ages.

ENDURANCE

Individual players and teams will train to be resilient to high-intensity action .

STRENGTH & POWER

Strong players develop their speed more quickly, prevent injuries and are more competitive in games.

PSYCHOSOCIAL

RESPECT & DISCIPLINE

Players will adapt to a role on the team and respect teammates, coaches, referees and opponents.

COOPERATION

Each player will be part of a unit, and will cooperate with teammates to achieve the objectives for a given task, session or game, as well as for the entire season.

COMPETITIVENESS

Competitive players will be rewarded for their effort and focus.



PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

For the coach, for the player and for the team

COACHES

1. Possession games are s means to improve both the technique and tactical understanding of the players.
2. Opposition will be encouraged to increase the competitiveness of the players.
3. High-intensity games based on speed and agility. Short but intense working-periods.

PLAYERS

1. **1, 2 or 3 touch maximum:** Minimizing the number of touches improves the speed of play.
2. **Keep the game simple:** Do not force situations, over-dribble or be careless with the ball.
3. **Keep the ball on the ground:** A ball on the ground is easier to control and can be moved more efficiently by the team.
4. **Accuracy and quality of the pass:** Passing must be firm and accurate, with the proper weight.
5. **First touch:** Make a clean, controlled first touch without stopping the ball. Take the touch away from pressure and into free space.
6. **Perception and awareness:** All players with or without the ball should constantly scan the field.
7. **1v1 situations:** Encourage determination to regain control of the ball in defense and keep it simple in attack by taking a touch to the side, at speed, to beat the defender.
8. **Individual transition:** Players must react quickly when possession change from offense to defense and vice-versa.
9. **Shooting:** Always keep an eye on the goal. All players are encouraged to shoot.
10. **Take risks:** Soccer is an error prone sport and mistakes are part of the game and learning process. Players are encouraged to take risks in training session to increase the speed of play.



PRINCIPLES OF PLAY

For the coach, for the player and for the team

TEAM

1. **All players attack and all players defend:** All players must be involved in the game as a unit.
2. **Numerical advantage:** Soccer is a game of numbers where we try to create a numerical advantage in attack and avoid being in a numerical disadvantage in defense.
3. **Flow of the ball:** The ball should flow from inside (of the space) to outside and outside to inside. Balls out wide are more secure and the ball in the middle increases the options of play.
4. **Triangle principle and passing options:** The player in possession of the ball must receive constant support and have at least two passing options.
5. **Speed of play:** Quick movement of the ball creates 2v1 situations.
6. **Movement off the ball:** Find the best available space to create passing options for the player in possession of the ball.
7. **Pressure as a unit:** Organized pressure forces the opponents to commit errors.
8. **Transition:** Improve transition by reducing the number of passes needed to arrive at the target area or the opponent's goal.
9. **Direction of the game:** The game flows in two directions. Keep the essence of the game in the majority of your practices.
10. **Take initiative during the game:** Team breakdowns will occur. The team must be capable of adapting to new situations and imposing its own style of play during the game.

