Warm-up (5 minutes)

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

Skills Drills (15 Minutes)

Game/Play (15 minutes)

Team Circle (10 minutes)
Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Begin each practice with about five minutes of warm-up activities to get players loosened up and ready to go.

- Players dribble in space (one ball per player)
- Players dribble and turn on signal.

You will find a variety of skill levels among your 10-13 year old players. Here are suggestions on how to modify a practice to make it either more or less challenging, according to the needs of your players.

- If players cannot control a ball under pressure, give them a bit more space, which allows them more time. However, to challenge a player's control, restrict the dimensions of the playing area.
- A skill practice or game can be made simpler or more challenging by adjusting the nature of the defense. Tell players to be either a cold (low pressure) warm (moderate pressure) or hot (high pressure) defender, depending on the abilities of opponents. This is particularly important during skill practices because players need the opportunity to be successful when they have the ball. You might have cold defense played against a weak player but warm or hot defense played against a stronger player.
- Some players control the ball better than others and can dominate a game. To challenge these players, restrict them to two or three touches of the ball at a time so they have to control the ball quickly and bring other players into the game. Similarly, you might restrict better players to using just one foot or a particular surface of the foot.
- When players are "feeding" teammates practice balls (such as during goalkeeping practice), they can decrease or increase the difficulty by varying the speed and height of feeds. Low, slower feeds are easier to control than higher, faster feeds.

*Note:* The numbers referred to in games and skill practices - for example, 4v4 - always assume one goalkeeper per team among those numbers, unless otherwise noted. So if a game description says "4v4", there are three field players and one goalkeeper per team.
**Fitness Component (5 Minutes)**

**GENERAL FITNESS**

**Key Idea:** General Fitness

Gather the team into a group between two cones about 20 feet apart. "Do you think there's a difference between physical activity and physical fitness?" Listen to their responses. "Physical *activity* is any body movement you use while performing a skill or task. Physical *fitness* is a condition of the body. The more fit your body is, the better you can perform some skills and tasks. I will give you some activities. Run to this cone if you think it is regular physical activity. Run to the other cone other if you think it is an activity done for fitness." Examples of physical activity are walking to school and walking stairs to bed. Examples of activity done for fitness are walking to school for exercise, jogging to improve sport performance, or walking stairs to strengthen leg muscles. "All season we will talk and learn about the different areas of fitness during our fitness circles. We'll also work on improving your body's fitness for soccer."
WEEK 1

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

**Goal:** Players will practice individual attack and defense skills (i.e. dribbling, shooting, marking, tackling, goalkeeping).

**Description:** Play 1 v 1 games to cones about 20 yards apart.

**Goal:** Through playing a game, players will review (or learn anew) game rules, including start and restart rules, throw-ins, and corner kicks.

**Description:** Play 4 v 4 without goalkeepers, with each team of four trying to score into a goal.

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

**Goal:** Players will learn positional roles and responsibilities. Specifically, players will learn the following positional duties:

**Goalkeeper (GK)**
- Handle the ball
- Save shots
- Distribute ball to teammates

**Defender**
- Defend space in own half
- Mark players
- Support the attack

**Midfielder**
- Receive ball from defense
- Distribute ball to forwards
- Contribute to attack

**Forward**
- Attack goal
- Apply pressure to defense when you lose the ball

**Description:** Play 4 v 4 games.
INTRO TO VALUES

TEAM CIRCLE

**Key Idea:** YMCA Four Core Values

Gather players into a group. Set up four cones about five feet apart. “We’re going to talk about four main values that good players include in their games and practices. What are the four?” Have players stand at a cone when they provide a value. The values are respect, responsibility, honesty, and caring. Have another players provide an example of the value, then have that player join the other player at the cone. Assist players if they cannot think of all five. “We’ll work to improve our soccer skills and physical fitness, but these four values are just as important to learn and practice to help you become good players. We’ll learn more about these values during our team circles after each practice.
WEEK 2

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players play a 1 v 1 game, using a full goal; they dive to save shots. Attacking player can try to score by throwing or shooting.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

CARDIO

**Key Idea:** Cardiorespiratory Fitness

Gather the team into a group. "Who can tell me what *cardiorespiratory fitness* is? When you have good cardiorespiratory fitness, your heart picks up oxygen from your lungs and takes it all through your body." Ask three players to demonstrate. Have one ball ready. The players should be spread out in a zigzag pattern "down" the field. The ball is passed across to each player, one side then the other side, in the line. "Let's set up our own blood vessels to carry oxygen to the muscles." Set up and perform activity, with player 1 being the heart, player 2 the lungs, player 3 the legs, and then back to player 1. "We need to run more to improve our body's ability to get oxygen to our muscles. That is improving our cardiorespiratory fitness."
Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to roll the ball.
- Practice rolling the ball.
- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to overarm throw the ball.
- Practice throwing the ball.
- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to punt the ball.
- Practice punting the ball.

**Description:** Players pair up and practice the three skills:

- **Roll** - "Step with the opposite foot and roll."
- **Throw** - "Step with the opposite foot." "Use a straight arm overarm throw."
- **Punt** - "Take a long step." "Drop and kick the." "Use the laces." (as the contact surface) "Follow through to the target."

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

**Goal:** Players will learn different ways of distributing the ball when they're playing goalkeeper.

**Description:** Players play 4 v 4. Goalkeepers distribute the ball to teammates by one of three methods: rolling it, overarm throwing it, or punting it. The defense earns a point every time the goalkeeper successfully distributes the ball.
RESPONSIBILITY

Key Idea: Responsibility

Gather players into groups of two partners. “Everyone stand on one foot and balance yourself.” Wait for everyone to get their balance. “Now one of you offer a shoulder to your teammate to lean on. If you’re leaning on your partner’s shoulder, try to balance on one foot again. . . change places. If you were leaning on your partner’s shoulder first, let your partner lean on your shoulder while they’re standing on one foot.” Wait until everyone has balanced with the help of a partner. “Wasn’t it easier to balance on one foot when you had your partner’s shoulder to lean on? It works that way in soccer too. When you help out each other during practices and games, we work better as a team; each of you contribute. Your teammates count on you to contribute to the team. That is being responsible to your team and to yourself as a part of the team.”
WEEK 3

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)
Pass and move in pairs.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)
GENERAL FITNESS

Key Idea: General Fitness
Gather the team into a group. "If you participate in soccer practice every week, do you think that's enough to keep your body fit to play soccer? Do you think you'll improve your body's fitness in the different areas?" Listen to their responses. "You need to be active outside soccer practice to keep your overall fitness at a level that helps your soccer. What are some activities you could do outside of practice?" Listen to their responses. Discuss practicing skills such as catching the ball off the chest and "killing the bounce" alone or with a partner. Ask one player to demonstrate using one ball. Have all players try.

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to provide support for teammates with the ball.
- Practice providing support for teammates with the ball.

Description: Play 3 v 1 games in 10 x 10 yard areas marked by cones. Players should focus on providing good angles of support against cold, warm, and hot defenses as necessary. Players should learn that supporting players should move "off the ball" so the passer always has two passing options.

Game/Play (15 Minutes)
PASSING

Goal: Players will learn to provide support to their teammates with the ball during full game play.

Description: Players play 4 v 2, 5 v 3, 6 v 4, or 6 v 6 games, depending on their skill proficiency. Rotate goalkeepers. Give extra points for four consecutive passes.
RESPECT

TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Respect

Gather players into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. “What are some of the official’s duties during a game?” Discuss their responses. “Who makes the calls during the game? Can you disagree if you think an official’s call is not right, or do you accept the official’s call even if you think it’s wrong? If you think you can discuss the call with the official, stand at this cone. If you think the official makes the call and you accept it, stand at this cone/” All players should vote. “You need to have respect for the officials at all times. They are in charge on the field during the game. Don’t argue with them; accept their calls and decisions. But if you have a question, ask the official or me during a break.”
Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players play a 6 v 2 game (without a goalkeeper) in which their goal is to make six passes. Instruct players to move to support positions so that the passer can split (i.e., pass between) two defenders. Any pass that splits the defenders counts double.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)
MUSCLE STRENGTH & ENDURANCE

Key Idea: Muscle Strength & Endurance
Gather players into a group in a small area. "I want everyone to find a partner and balance back to back while sitting like a chair. I'll time you for one minute." Model action for the group. "What muscles did you use to hold yourselves up?" touch the different areas with your hand to show players the muscle groups of their legs, front and back. "You use different muscles to perform different activities. Practicing using specific muscles improves your muscular strength and endurance -- that is, how hard you can kick the ball and how long you can keep going before your muscles get tired."

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to shoot from a target player feed.
- Practice shooting from a target player feed.

Description: Players shoot from the target player feed. They pass to the target player, provide support for the return pass, and receive and shoot the return pass.

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

Goal: Players use the target player to create shooting opportunities during game play.

Description: Players play 4 v 2, 4 v 3, or 4 v 4 games, depending on their skill proficiency. Give extra points for four consecutive passes. They play with the target player in the attacking half. Goals from the target player feed count double.
HONESTY

TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Honesty

Get the players into a group. “Give me some examples of being dishonest in practices and games.” Listen to their responses. After each response, have the players change the examples into acts of honesty. Take three examples. “Honesty is an important value that all players should be practicing every practice and game, especially if a coach isn’t there to help you make the right decision or if an official doesn’t see the play.”
Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players pass and move in pairs. Increase distances and encourage players to get the ball off the ground.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)
FLEXIBILITY

Key Idea: Flexibility
Gather the team into a circle. "Is there such a thing as stretching your muscles too far, or should you stretch as far as you can to improve your flexibility?" Listen to their responses. "Muscles should stretch only until you feel a slight pulling. You should never feel pain stretching. If you do, you're stretching too far." Choose a stretch for the team to try. "I want you to stretch until you feel the slight pulling. Everyone will have different levels of flexibility, but all of you need to stretch properly to stay flexible and prevent injuries." Remind players to avoid bouncing when stretching.
Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

Skill Practice 1:
- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to make long passes.
- Practice long passes.

Description: Players practice long passing in pairs.

Skill Practice 2:
- Introduce, demonstrate and explain how to receive the ball with the thigh and the chest.
- Practice receiving the ball with the thigh and chest.

Description: Partners feed each other long balls, varying the distance and pace of the feeds to simplify or challenge as needed.

Coach’s Cue:
- Long step to the ball!
- Strike your foot under the ball.
- Use the laces. (as the contact surface).

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

Goal: Players will learn to spread out ahead of the ball.

Description: Players play 4 v 2, 4 v 3, or 4 v 4 games (without GKS), depending on their skill proficiency. The target player is in the attacking half. Get the ball forward as quickly as possible and support the target player. The offense scores a point for successful passes of 10 yards or longer to the target player.
Gather the players into a circle near two cones about 10 feet apart. Discuss examples of good play during a game. Have them assist in providing examples. “We talked about some examples of good plays. Raise your hand if you think it’s a good idea to tell other players they made a good play. It is a good idea. Do you think it’s a good idea to tell opponents they have made a good play? If you think it is, stand at this cone. If you think you should tell just your teammates they made a good play, stand at this cone.” All players should vote. Ask why players voted the way they did. “Telling other players, both teammates and opponents, that they have made a good play shows you care. It’s an important value to show others.”
WEEK 6

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Play 2 v 2 games (without GKs), marking off 20 x 20 yard playing areas.

**Coach's Cue:**
Mark your opponent!

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

**SAFETY**

**Key Idea:** Safety
Gather the team into a group. "Is everyone remembering to wear their shin guards?" Gently tap your head with your fist. "Is my head hard or soft? Right-it's hard because my skull is hard. It's made out of bone. Raise your hand if you think bones can break. Right-we all know that bones can break. If you tap your shin guards, they are hard just like bones. They give extra protection and keep you safe playing soccer."

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to *mark an opponent*.
- Practice marking an opponent.

**Description:**
Players learn the correct goal-side marking position. Play 1 v 1 games with two feeders in a 20 x 10 yard area. A feeder feeds player A, who is marked by player D. Player A has to get the ball to the other feeder.
Marking an Opponent: Marking is guarding offensive players to prevent them from scoring. Defenders should try to mark the offensive player to whom they are assigned, staying near that player and between that player and the goal (this is called being “goal-side”). From this position, defensive players will be able to gain possession of the ball off the dribble and intercept passes. Marking is used to slow down an opponent and to allow teammates to recover to their position.

Get your players to notice opponents’ habits, such as using only one leg to dribble, pass, or shoot. Then they’ll be able to overplay the offensive players to whom they are assigned and perhaps block or gain possessions of the ball frequently.

Teach your players to get close to the player they are making when that player has the ball. The closer a defender is to the player with the ball, the more difficult it is for that player to pass and shoot. Thus, your players will have a better chance of stealing or blocking the ball when the opponent passes or shoots. Remind your players that they must first be between the opponent with the ball and the goal to reduce the shooting angle.

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

Goal: Players will learn to mark opponents during game play.

Description: Play 4 v 4 games. The focus is on marking. The defense earns a point when a defender stays between the ball handler and the goal. The offense earns a point when the ball handler slips past the defender.
Get your players all together and put in circle of no more than 6. You might have more than one circle. Have 5 of the players stand right next to each other, touching shoulders and sealing the circle. Put the last player in the middle of the circle alone. This is called the “Trust Circle.” Have the five players bring their hands up to their chest facing out. Ask the one player in the middle to cross their arms in an X shape over their chest and close their eyes. The one player will then gently fall in any direction and the five other players are there to support him/her and gently push them around the circle. Have each player do this for 1-2 minutes. Ask the players how they felt when they had their eyes closed. Did they have faith in their teammates to guide them in a safe direction and not let them fall? Ask the players how they felt when they were in the circle guiding the player with closed eyes. Faith is very important value to have, especially when you want your team to trust and believe in you to help them.
Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Play 1 v 1 games in about a 20-yard long area in which the defender pressures the opponent, trying to channel him or her toward the weak foot.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

TRAINING & CONDITIONING

Key Idea:  Training & Conditioning
Gather the team into a single file line. Players will run two distances, one longer than the other. Have the team run the shorter distance first and come back to the starting spot. Then have the team run the longer distance. "Do your muscles feel tired? Running farther, especially if you're a little bit tired, is called overloading the muscles. Running a longer distance adds more for the muscles to do. It's training the muscles to make them stronger and able to move longer before getting tired the next time you play. You'll get stronger and have more endurance every time you overload the muscles."

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to tackle.

Tackling
Taking the ball from an offensive player is called tackling. Players should not be afraid to attempt to take the ball when they have a good opportunity, such as when the dribbler pushes the ball too far ahead. Defenders should, however, be prepared to reestablish position if they are unsuccessful in their takeaway attempts.

Teach players to time their tackles; ideally, they should step in when the attacker temporarily loses control of the ball. Lunging at the ball—or “diving in”—is a dangerous tactic to teach. A good dribbler will usually go around a defender who lunges at the ball with no trouble. When positioning to make a tackle, the defender should approach the dribbler in a sideways position. If this technique is followed, the attacker cannot push the ball between the defender’s legs. And remember, tell your players to go for the ball—not the opponent.
Block Tackle
Players should use a block tackle when an opponent is dribbling directly at them. Instruct them to quickly close the distance to the dribbler. As they do so, they should position their feet in a staggered stance, with one foot slightly ahead of the other, and get in a slightly crouched stance. This will help to be in position to react quickly to the dribbler’s move. They should tackle the ball by blocking it with the inside surface of their foot. Tell them to position their foot sideways and keep it firm as they drive it into the ball. Remind them to play the ball, not the opponent, when tackling.

Poke Tackle
Tell your players to use a poke tackle when they are approaching an opponent from the side or from slightly behind. As they near the dribbler they should reach in with a leg, extending the foot, and poke the ball away with their toes. Again, remind them to play the ball, not the opponent.

Description:
Players practice block tackling in 1 v 1 games.

Coach's Cue:
- Get close to the ball
- Use the inside of the foot
- Keep your knee bent and leg firm

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

Goal: Players will mark tightly and win the ball in the tackle.

Description: Play 4 v 4 games, or play 6 v 6. The focus is on close marking by midfielders and defenders.

Coach's Cue:
Mark tight and win the ball.
FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Family Involvement

Gather your players and parents together in a big group. Have them all sit in front of you. Start a discussion about family and how important it is for them. “Try to tie your shoe with one hand.” Wait while the players attempt to tie their shoes with one hand. “It cannot be done, right?! Ask your teammate next to you to lend a hand and tie it with you.” Wait while the players help each other tie their shoes. “You’ll see that two working together can do more than one, or even two, working separately. A family works a lot like this example. When families work together they can achieve much more than if every member were to work alone. What does your family do better together than each of you do individually?”
WEEK 8

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players in pairs, 5 to 10 yards apart, practice quick passing, alternating passes with two touches and one touch.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)
FLEXIBILITY

Key Idea: Flexibility
Gather the team into a circle and choose a stretch for them to try. "When we're stretching, should we feel anything?" Listen to their responses. "When I feel the slight pulling, what should I do? Bounce or hold the stretch? Raise your hand if you think bounce. Now raise your hand if you think hold. To get a good stretch, you should hold the stretch for 10 counts, then relax. If you feel the slight pulling go away, you can stretch a bit further. That tells you your muscles are getting more flexible. Be sure to practice proper stretching to improve your flexibility."
Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to use a first touch pass (give and go) to beat a defender. A first touch pass is a pass that is made with the player’s first touch of the ball. Such passes may be called upon when players are tightly marked or when they are about to receive a ball that is in danger of being taken by an opponent. Less-skilled players will have more difficulty with first touch passes because they have less control of the ball and aren’t able to set up their pass better.
- Practice first touch passing.

Description: Players in 2 v 1 games pass to a target player. Conditions of this game are the defender must go to the player with the ball, and two attackers must get the ball to the target player.

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

DEFENSE

Goal: Players will use the first touch pass during game play.

Description: Players play 4 v 2, 5 v 3, 6 v 4, or 6 v 6 games, depending on their skill proficiency. Give a point for successful first touch passes when they’re executed when they should be.

Coach's Cue:
- Give the pass
- Go for the return
- Return pass behind the defender
WEEK 8

SAFETY

TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Safety

Get the players into a group. “Is everyone remembering to wear their shin guards?” Gently tap your head with your fist. “Is my head hard or soft? Right - it’s hard because my skull is hard. It’s made out of bone. Raise your hand if you think bones can break. Right – we all know that bones can break. If you tap your shin guards, they are hard just like bones. They give extra protection and keep you and your legs safe while playing soccer.”
WEEK 9

Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

Players free dribble, changing pace and direction. They try to beat the coach when he or she gets in the way.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)
TRAINING & CONDITIONING

Key Idea: Training & Conditioning
Gather the team into a group. "Do you think you should swim to get ready for soccer season? Raise your hand if you think swimming is a good way to prepare for soccer. Swimming is a good way to keep active in the off season or other times when you don't have soccer practice. To improve your soccer conditioning either before or during soccer season, it's best to participate in skills you use in soccer. That is called specificity training because it is specific to the sport. What are some of the training skills we should be using for soccer?" Listen to their responses. "Running, kicking, and dribbling would be the best."

Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to dribble by a defender under control.
- Practice dribbling.

Description: Play 1 v 3 games in 10 x 30 yard areas. Player A must beat three defenders in succession. Defenders can only move sideways. If a defender wins the ball from player A, he or she gives it back and player A continues.

Coach's Cue: Push and run!

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

Goal: Players will learn how to mark an opponent and how to apply pressure when that opponent gets the ball. Players will learn to run at opponents with the ball.

Description: Play 6 v 6 games. Players attempt to beat their opponents with the dribble. Instruct players not to bunch up; there should be space behind the defenders. The offense earns a point when a dribbler beats an opponent.

Coach's Cue: Mark tight! Beat your opponent with the dribbler!
HEALTHY HABITS

TEAM CIRCLE

Key Idea: Healthy Habits

Get the players into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Show a pyramid shape with your hands and fingers put together. “This is a pyramid. Does anyone know what the food pyramid is? We use the food pyramid to remind us how to eat well. The bottom of the pyramid has foods like carbohydrates (breads, cereals, rice) and fruits and vegetables; these should be eaten in greater amounts. The top of the pyramid has high-fat and sweeter foods such as fried foods, cake and chips; these we should eat in smaller amounts. Tell me a snack and run to this cone if it is a bottom-of-the-pyramid snack or to this cone if it is at the top. It’s important to eat foods that give you energy for playing soccer. Bottom-of-the-pyramid foods give you more energy to play soccer and are much healthier.”
Warm-Up (5 Minutes)

- GK-1, distributes the ball to A-1, who dribbles down field and crosses to A-2. A-2 dribbles and shoots toward cones guarded by GK-2. GK-2 then distributes to A-2, who dribbles and crosses to A-1, who shoots on GK-1. Then A-3, and A-4 take A-1 and A-2's places.

Fitness Component (5 Minutes)

**HEALTHY HABITS**

**Key Idea: Healthy Habits**

Gather the team into a group near two cones about 10 feet apart. Show a pyramid shape with your hands and fingers put together. "This is a pyramid. Does anyone know what the food pyramid is? We use the food pyramid to remind us how to eat well. The bottom of the pyramid has foods like carbohydrates (breads, cereals, rice) and fruits and vegetables; these should be eaten in greater amounts. The top of the pyramid has high fat and sweeter foods such as fried foods, cake, and chips; these we should eat in smaller amounts. Tell me a snack and run to this cone if it is a bottom of the pyramid snack or to the other cone if it is a top of the pyramid snack. It's important to eat foods that give you energy for playing soccer. Bottom of the pyramid foods give you more energy to play soccer and are much healthier."
Skills/Drills (15 Minutes)

- Introduce, demonstrate, and explain how to score from a cross with the foot.
- Practice scoring from a cross, using the feet to shoot.

Description: Pair up players. The striker passes to the winger, the winger crosses, the striker meets the cross to score.

Coach’s Cue:
- Pass to the winger!
- Move forward and meet the ball on the run!

Game/Play (15 Minutes)

DEFENSE

Goal: Players will learn to cross the ball during game play.

Description: Play 6 v 6 games. Use a short and wide field. Play begins with the offense attempting to score from a cross. They earn a point only if they score from a cross.

Coach’s Cue:
- Pass the ball wide!
- Cross the ball
- Score from the cross!
Gather the players around in a group. This is a time for reflection on the soccer season. “What did you most enjoy about this season?” Listen to their responses. Talk about teamwork, building individual soccer skills, and having fun. Ask them what are they made the most improvement and what areas they can still work on. “Did everyone have fun this season?” Have the players tell the coach what made this soccer season fun for each one of them. Talk about the values and how they fit in to the season. Ask each player to give examples of the values that they saw over the duration of the season. “The most important thing in soccer is to have fun playing with friends and to learn new skills. I think you all did that! Next year is another chance to have more fun, increase your soccer skills, and make new friends!”