

# U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



(Framework- a basic structure underlying a system)

## U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PHILOSOPHY

At the grassroots level, children learn and develop to their full potential through game-like experiences in an enjoyable environment that supports individual growth.

## U.S. SOCCER COACHING EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

**Reality Based:** The game is what drives changes in behavior, reflection and decision making for the player/the team and the coach

**Holistic Approach:** Input and consideration for all interconnected aspects of the game, the athlete and the desired outcome

**Experiential Learning:** The evaluation, analysis and reflection of experiences to develop competencies and improve behavior

## KEY QUALITIES OF A U.S. SOCCER PLAYER

1. Read and understand the game and make decisions
2. Take initiative, be pro-active
3. Demonstrate focus
4. Execute with optimal technical abilities
5. Execute with optimal physical abilities
6. Take responsibility and accountability for their own development and performance

The U.S. Soccer Grassroots Player Development Framework is a simplified overview of the development pathway of U6 to U13+ grassroots players related to the four game models and player ages, based on goals, needs, key qualities, and player/coach behavior.

We define player development as a series of progressive changes leading to a higher level of differentiation and functioning. Two characteristics of development are change and progress. Differentiation is the developmental process when the qualities of a player are getting more advanced and refined. The combination of growth, maturation and learning lead to a higher level of functioning. When maturing, it is about physical growth. Learning is the process by which experience results in a change in behavior. Children of different ages will process and reason information in different ways.

The stages of player development see development as a regular succession of stages, in a process of continuous progress. This development is a combination of cognitive, psychosocial and motor development.

- Cognitive development is the development of intelligence, conscious thought, and problem-solving ability.
- Motor development refers to the development of a child's bones, muscles and ability to move around and manipulate his or her environment.
- Psychosocial development is the development of the personality, including the acquisition of social attitudes and skills.

There will be a holistic approach when looking at these different aspects of development. This means, input and consideration for all interconnected aspects of the game, the player and the desired outcome.

# U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



GAME MODEL: 4v4

## 4v4

AGES: 6 - 8

	DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS	KEY QUALITIES	ATTACKING PLAYER ACTIONS	DEFENDING PLAYER ACTIONS	PLAYER BEHAVIORS	COACH BEHAVIORS
AGE 6	<p><b>“The ball is playing with me... I am playing with the ball.”</b></p> <p>Learning the fundamentals of the game in game-like situations. Understanding the purpose and structure of the game, direction of play, and basic rules.</p>	<p>Activity based games that emphasize exploration and experimentation.</p> <p>Ball experiences in game-like situations.</p> <p>Exploring physical abilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reads and analyzes situations regarding the structure of soccer attacking/defending/transition</li> <li>Takes initiative-creates opportunities instead of reacting</li> <li>Wants to score</li> <li>Shows comfort with the ball</li> <li>Is involved and engaged throughout every game/training session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> </ul>	<p>Small, incidental things are important</p> <p>Always in motion</p>	<p>Appreciate the things they take seriously, even if you don't</p> <p>Use routines to manage them during practice and games</p>
AGES 7 - 8	<p><b>“Playing with my friends.”</b></p> <p>Learning the basic understanding of attacking, defending, and transition by playing together..</p>	<p>Activities focused on the goals of attacking and defending and how to accomplish them</p> <p>Ball experiences in game-like situations with attention for the key qualities of a player</p> <p>Experiences of attacking and defending together (reading &amp; decision making)</p>	<p><b>In addition to the KQs listed above:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Applies (basic) knowledge of the cues</li> <li>Understands where and when to move themselves and the ball</li> <li>Confronts situations</li> <li>Demonstrates bravery</li> <li>Delivers on agreements and promises</li> <li>Evaluates and reflects on their own performance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> <li>Plus all player actions above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> <li>Plus all player actions above</li> </ul>	<p>Short attention span</p> <p>Live in the moment</p> <p>Focus is on self</p>	<p>Exercises are short and to the point, reminders are necessary</p> <p>Talk about what happens, not what happened</p> <p>Accept their behavior and praise when they share</p>

**A>D** Defend as quickly as possible (transition is always a part of attacking and defending but is not a focus for the Grassroots Coach).

**D>A** Attack as quickly as possible (transition is always a part of attacking and defending but is not a focus for the Grassroots Coach).

# U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



GAME MODEL: 7v7

AGES: 9 - 10

## 7v7

DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS	KEY QUALITIES	ATTACKING PLAYER ACTIONS	DEFENDING PLAYER ACTIONS	PLAYER BEHAVIORS	COACH BEHAVIORS
<p><b>"Playing as team."</b></p> <p>Learning the basic understanding of attacking, defending, and transition by playing as a 7v7 team.</p>	<p>Developing relationships with the other players, how decisions and movement affect others (teammates and opponents)</p> <p>Experiences in game-like situations for key qualities related to attacking and defending</p> <p>Experiences of attacking and defending as a team</p>	<p><b>In addition to the KQs of a 4v4 player:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligns own actions with the other players, positions</li> <li>Challenges opponents</li> <li>Deals with adversity</li> <li>Is proficient in 1v1 situations to create or to steal/regain the ball</li> </ul>	<p><b>U6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> </ul>	<p><b>U6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> </ul>	<p>Participate enthusiastically in competitive activities</p>	<p>Encourage them to try to win, but always be fair</p>
			<p><b>U7/U8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> </ul>	<p><b>U7/U8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> </ul>	<p>Practice repeatedly to get better</p>	<p>Recognize their effort, give them things to practice on at home</p>
			<p><b>U9/U10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</i></li> <li><i>Change the point of attack</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>U9/U10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Pressure, cover, balance</i></li> <li><i>Outnumber the opponent</i></li> </ul>	<p>Take losing hard, in practice and games</p>	<p>Focus on how they play and improve, not the results</p>
					<p>Want to know "why"</p>	<p>Guide them toward finding the answers themselves</p>
					<p>Need lots of positive reinforcement</p>	<p>Give plenty of praise</p>
			<p><b>A&gt;D</b> Defend as quickly as possible (transition is always a part of attacking and defending but is not a focus for the Grassroots Coach).</p>	<p><b>D&gt;A</b> Attack as quickly as possible (transition is always a part of attacking and defending but is not a focus for the Grassroots Coach).</p>		

# U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



GAME MODEL: 9v9

AGES: 11 - 12

## 9v9

DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS	KEY QUALITIES	ATTACKING PLAYER ACTIONS	DEFENDING PLAYER ACTIONS	PLAYER BEHAVIORS	COACH BEHAVIORS
<p><b>“Playing my role and position for the team.”</b></p> <p>Learning the fundamentals given his/ her role, position, and tasks in the 9v9 team.</p>	<p>Gaining fundamental understanding of the meaning of role, position and task in a team</p> <p>Experiences in game-like situations for the task specific Key Qualities of attacking and defending</p> <p>Experiences of position specific task execution during defending and attacking</p>	<p><b>In addition to the KQs of a 7v7 player:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remains calm and composed</li> <li>Is technically proficient to be effective</li> <li>Is coordinated in their movement</li> <li>Is adaptable and flexible in dealing with (unexpected) challenges and problems</li> <li>Articulates their own learning needs</li> </ul>	<p><b>U6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shoot</li> <li>Pass or dribble forward</li> </ul> <p><b>U7/U8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spread out</li> <li>Create passing options</li> <li>Support the attack</li> </ul> <p><b>U9/U10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>Change the point of attack</li> </ul> <p><b>U11/U12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Change the pace/ rhythm</i></li> <li><i>Switch positions</i></li> </ul>	<p><b>U6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protect the goal</li> <li>Steal the ball</li> </ul> <p><b>U7/U8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make it compact</li> <li>Keep it compact</li> </ul> <p><b>U9/U10</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>Outnumber the opponent</li> </ul> <p><b>U11/U12</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Stay involved</i></li> <li><i>Mark the player/ mark the area</i></li> </ul>	<p>Ready and eager to learn</p> <p>Will try more complex tasks</p> <p>Notice indifferences and unfair treatment</p> <p>Players will develop at different rates (gender differences in maturation)</p> <p>Like to organize themselves without the coach</p>	<p>Come to training prepared with ideas to guide your players</p> <p>Encourage players to be creative and try new things</p> <p>Be consistent in what you say and how you treat individuals/ the team</p> <p>Organize groups to guarantee fun and challenge for every player</p> <p>Support their being independent and self-responsible</p>

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# U.S. SOCCER GRASSROOTS PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



GAME MODEL: 11v11

AGES: 13+

## 11v11

DEVELOPMENTAL GOALS	DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS	KEY QUALITIES	ATTACKING PLAYER ACTIONS	DEFENDING PLAYER ACTIONS	PLAYER BEHAVIORS	COACH BEHAVIORS
<p><b>“Being the best player that I can be for my role and position in the team.”</b></p> <p>Learning the alignment of the roles, positions, and designated tasks in the 11v11 team.</p>	<p>Gaining understanding of the meaning of role, position and designated task in a team</p> <p>Experiences of the alignment of position specific task execution during defending and attacking</p>	<p><b>All key qualities at U13+</b></p>	<p><b>All Player Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shoot</li> <li>• Pass or dribble forward</li> <li>• Spread out</li> <li>• Create passing options</li> <li>• Support the attack</li> <li>• Create a 2v1 or 1v1</li> <li>• Change the point of attack</li> <li>• Change the pace/ rhythm</li> <li>• Switch positions</li> </ul>	<p><b>All Player Actions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect the goal</li> <li>• Steal the ball</li> <li>• Make it compact</li> <li>• Keep it compact</li> <li>• Pressure, cover, balance</li> <li>• Outnumber the opponent</li> <li>• Stay involved</li> <li>• Mark the player/ mark the area</li> </ul>	<p>Engage in problem solving activities</p> <p>Challenge ideas</p> <p>Demonstrate mood shifts</p> <p>Differences between genders</p> <p>Do not always play fairly</p>	<p>Use guided questions to support their thinking/decision making</p> <p>Listen first and consider their perspective</p> <p>Be patient and consistent in your treatment</p> <p>Give each player individual attention and care</p> <p>Encourage self-regulation, e.g. refereeing own games at training</p>

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