

# OJFC Coach Guide



A simple guide for coaching U7/  
U8 players in a fun, engaging way!



# Purpose

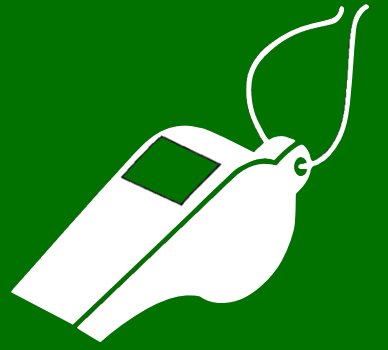
This guide is designed to help all coaches, but especially parents new to coaching, create a fun and engaging football environment for U7 and U8 players. At this stage, children are just beginning their football journey, so the focus is on developing a love for the game, introducing fundamental skills, and ensuring every child gets plenty of opportunities to enjoy playing football.

Success at this age isn't about winning—it's about kids smiling, playing, and touching the ball as much as possible!

**If kids love playing football at this age, they are far more likely to continue playing and improving as they get older!**



# Key Coaching Principles



## Fun

Football should be enjoyable! Young players learn best when they are engaged and having fun. Keep sessions light, positive, and full of energy.

## Touches on the Ball

Every player should have as many interactions with the ball as possible. Avoid long lines or waiting time—maximise movement and involvement.

## Player-Centred Coaching

Encourage kids to explore and make decisions. Let them try things, make mistakes, and learn through experience rather than constant instruction. Drills will feel ‘messy’ — that’s okay!

# What To Expect

## Short Attention Spans

At this age, the players are unable to concentrate for long periods of time. Keeping activities short and engaging is key to success.

## Developing Coordination

Players at this time are just beginning to develop their footballing skills. Praise players efforts, rather than criticising imperfections.

## Teamwork is New

Kids are just beginning to learn to work together. You will often see a lot of dribbling and 'swarming' the ball. Encourage kids to pass and share with their teammates.



**Coach Tip:** Think of teamwork as a long-term goal. We want players to pass and share, but it is important we also allow them the space to dribble and learn these skills!

# What To Encourage

## Spreading Out

Encourage players to create space by moving away from teammates. This helps open passing options and makes attacking easier.

## Passing

Teach players to look up and find teammates before passing. Accurate, quick passes help the team attacking and opportunities to score.

## Creativity

Inspire players to try new moves, dribble with confidence, and take risks. Creativity makes the game exciting and unpredictable.



**Coach Tip:** When players do these things on the pitch, make sure to praise their efforts. This is more effective than using constant instruction.



# Core Skills



## Dribbling

Dribbling is a crucial skill that allows players to move with the ball, evade defenders, and create space. At the U7/U8 age, dribbling should focus on keeping the ball under control rather than speed.

## Passing

Passing is one of the most important skills in football, as it allows players to keep possession and involve their teammates in the game. At the U7/U8 age, the focus should be on short, simple passes rather than long or powerful kicks.

## Receiving

Receiving the ball is just as important as passing. Players must learn how to control the ball quickly and keep it close, so they can make their next move without losing possession.

# Dribbling

Dribbling is a crucial skill that allows players to move with the ball, evade defenders, and create space. At the U7/U8 level, dribbling should focus on keeping the ball under control rather than speed.

## Key Points

- Use **small touches** to keep the ball under control, especially when there are defenders around.
- Keep your **head up** to see space and teammates to pass to.
- Encourage quick **changes of direction** to avoid defenders.
- When in big spaces, start to take **bigger touches to speed up**.



**Coach Tip:** Encourage players to be creative with their dribbling. Allow them to try new skills and learn what works for them.

# Passing

Passing is one of the most important skills in football, as it allows players to keep possession and involve their teammates in the game. At the U7/U8 age, the focus should be on short, simple passes rather than long or powerful kicks.

## Key Points

- Use the **inside of the foot** to ensure accuracy of the pass.
- Place **planted foot directly next to the ball** before passing.
- Look up to **find a teammate before passing** the ball to them.
- Players should **focus on accuracy**, before adding power.
- Players should **lock the ankle of their striking foot** before passing the ball.



**Coach Tip:** Whilst passing is important, expect players will want to dribble. Encourage passing, but don't force it.



# Receiving

Receiving the ball is just as important as passing. Players must learn how to control the ball quickly and keep it close, so they can make their next move without losing possession.

## Key Points

- Use the **inside of the foot** when controlling the ball.
- Try to **cushion the ball** to stop it from bouncing too far away.
- Stay **light on the feet** to adjust body position before the ball arrives.
- **Head up** after you have controlled the ball to decide the next action.



**Coach Tip:** Kids are often very visual learners. Use terms like “control the ball like a pillow, not a brick” to allow them to visualise the skill.