

Canandaigua Area Soccer League



**Player
Development
Curriculum**

**A Developmental Guideline for U6 to U19
Recreation and Attack Coaches**

CASL Player Development Curriculum

The following curriculum outline is to serve as a guide for all coaches within the CASL program at both the Recreational and Attack levels. This curriculum has been designed for the age groups U6 to U19 in order to improve the individual player in a progressive and comprehensive manner. Coaches are strongly encouraged to follow the guidelines set out for their age group. The curriculum is broken into sub categories for each age group in Fitness Concepts, Technical and Tactical Development, Psychological Factors, Training Recommendations and Game Play.

In order to improve our youth soccer program, we must first understand the principles of youth soccer as well as how each age group learns the best. Keep in mind the four Pillars of Soccer: Physical, Psychological, Technical, Tactical.

Principles of Youth Soccer:

1. **Developmentally Appropriate:** Practice plans must be developmentally appropriate at all levels.
2. **Clear, Concise, and Correct Information:** As coaches and soccer educators, we must clearly understand what we are teaching to our players. The outlined curriculum can serve as a good resource for your practices.
3. **Simple to Complex:** When conducting a practice plan, begin with the basic concepts first, and progress to more difficult tasks towards the later part of your practice.
4. **Safe and Appropriate Training Area:** Providing our players with a safe and non-threatening environment goes a long way towards their ability to learn the Beautiful Game. In addition, the training area must suit the needs of your team. For example a U6 team

should not be practicing on a U16 sized field. Not enough touches on the ball at the U6 age group can hinder development.

5. **Decision Making:** Our players should learn from a very young age that soccer is a sport that has many decisions that need to be made on the field. These decisions are made by the players themselves, so why not practice what the game teaches us! Players need to develop the chance to be creative, imaginative and decisive at all stages of soccer.

U6 to U19 Characteristics (Snow, 2012) and Curriculum Outline:

U6 Characteristics: (p.55-56)

- **Catching skills not yet developed**
- **Constantly in motion – love to run, jump, roll and climb**
- **Eye-hand and/or eye-foot coordination is primitive at best – not ready for bouncing or flighted balls**
- **No sense of pace – go flat out**
- **Physical coordination is immature – can balance on dominate foot**
- **Controlling the ball is a complex task**
- **Prefer large soft balls and foam balls**
- **Only understand simple rules; Limited understanding of time and space**
- **Individually oriented (me, my, mine) – little or no concern for team activities**
- **Believes in Santa Claus, but will not discuss with peers – lofty imagination**
- **Physical and psychological development of boys and girls are quite similar**
- **Psychologically, easily bruised – need generous praise**
- **Short attention span – tends to one task at a time**

Age	U6 (Attack & Recreation)
Fitness Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Running -Jumping -Turning/Spinning -Balance -How to start and stop -Skipping -How to change direction -Bending -Twisting -Reaching
Technique (Technical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dribbling -Receiving (stopping rolling balls with feet) -Ball striking
Tactical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Basic rules of the Game -Orientation of field (which goal to attack, which goal to defend)
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Creativity -Fair Play -Decision making -Imagination
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sessions no longer than 45 minutes -Each player has their own ball -Majority of activities involve use of the ball
Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -3 v.3 to small goals -“New ball” rule. No thrown ins or kick-ins. -GK optional

U8 Characteristics: (p.60)

- Like to show skills – need approval
- Beginning to develop some physical confidence (most can ride a bicycle)
- Lack sense of pace – go flat out, chasing the ball until they drop
- Still in motion – twitching, jerking, scratching and blinking are all second nature physical movements
- Still into running, jumping, climbing and rolling
- Boys and girls are still quite similar in physical and psychological development
- Attention span is a bit longer than the U-6 age group
- Developing playmates
- More into imitation of the big guys (sports heroes becoming important)
- Still very sensitive – Dislikes personal failure in front of peers, making ridicule from the coach in front of the group very destructive
- Still do not believe in the intensity of the team at all costs
- Inclined more toward small group activities

Fitness Concepts

- Agility
- Eye/foot and Eye/Hand coordination
- Introduction of warmup activities
- Balance
- Leaping
- Education on Sports nutrition with both players and parents

Technique (Technical)

- Bounce juggling and ball-lifting (with the feet)
- Change of direction (using pullbacks and basic cuts)
- Receiving ground balls with inside, outside, and sole of the feet
- Push pass
- Block tackle
- Shooting (ground balls, with inside of the foot and with the instep)
- Introduce basic throw-in (two-footed)
- Introduce full volley (from hands)

Tactical

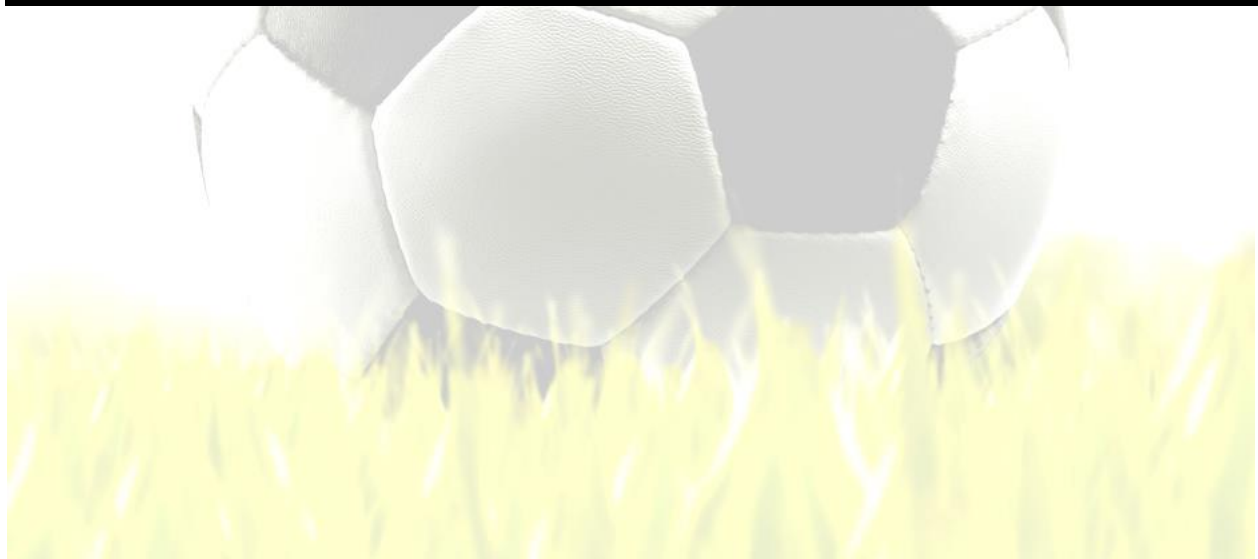
- Back line and Forward line
- 1v1 attacking (courage to dribble toward the goal and at defenders; decision on whether to dribble or pass)
- 1v1 defending (seek to win the ball)
- 2v1 (wall pass)

Psychological

Training

Games

- Recognition of open space
- Always control the ball on the first touch
- Playing the ball with a purpose
- Promote problem solving
- Working in groups of 2
- Sportsmanship
- Creativity
- Individual activities with own ball
- Introduction of partner and small group activities
- Maze type games
- Introduce Target games
- 4 v. 4 to small goals
- Some games with “New ball” rule
- Some games with more defined space and rules



U10 Characteristics: (p.66)

- Lengthened attention span - they are still in motion, but not as busy, only holding still long enough for a short explanation
- More inclined toward wanting to play rather than being told to play
- Psychologically becoming slightly more firm and confident
- Some are becoming serious about their play
- Team oriented – prefer team type balls and equipment. Enjoy the uniforms and team association.
- Boys and girls beginning to develop separately
- Developing the pace factor – thinking ahead
- Gross and small motor skills becoming much more refined

Age	U10 (Attack, some Recreation)
Fitness Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Endurance-Range of motion flexibility-All fitness activities done with the ball-Introduce body resistance exercises-Introduce cool down activities
Technique (Technical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Passing with inside and outside of foot-Instep drive-Experimentation with dealing with a bouncing ball-Running with the ball at feet-Receiving bouncing balls with the instep

Tactical

- Fakes and turning with the ball
- Introduction of heading and crossing
- Practice throw-ins

Goalkeeper Technique:

- Ready stance
- Getting feet set
- How to hold a ball after a save
- Basic footwork
- Diamond grip
- Introduction to punting, throwing and ball distribution to teammates

Psychological

- 1 v. 1 defending
- Roles of 1st attacker and 1st defender (Pressure)
- 2 v.1 Attacking
- What “Goal side” means and what it looks like
- Small group shape in pairs and three’s (Emphasize support on defense and attack)
- Introduction of principles of Attack and set plays
- Working in groups of 3, 4 or 5
- Fair play
- Emotional management
- Communication with teammates
- Increased responsibility
- Good sportsmanship
- Increased focus for entire half
- Parental involvement
- Dynamics stretching

Training

Games

- Should not exceed 1 hour and 15 minutes
- Introduce small group activities
- Add more directional games playing to targets or zones

6 v. 6 small sided game with goalkeepers

- Finish with cool down activity



U12 Characteristics: (p.72)

- Better able to deal with flighted balls
- Can sequence thoughts and actions to perform more complex tasks
- Can use abstract thought to meet the demands of the game
- Should be able to simultaneously run, strike the ball and think
- Fertile period to learn – full of eagerness
- Important psychosocial implications for a child entering puberty
- Popularity influences self-esteem
- Improved coordination
- Significant physical differences exist between the genders now
- Strength and power becoming factors in their performance

Age	U12 (Attack)
Fitness Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Fitness done with a ball-Body resistance and aerobic exercises-Agility exercises with use of speed and explosion (at sharp turns)-Proper warm-up and cool down activities
Technique (Technical)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-First touch receiving and turning with the ball

-
- Experimentation of dealing with flighted balls (how to receive, finish, clear)
 - More advanced feints with the ball to be an opponent
 - Heading to score goals or for clearances
 - Passing across long distances (20yds or greater)
 - Outside of foot passing
 - Begin to learn how to bend a ball on goal
 - Introduction of half and full volley shooting
 - Chipping and placement of passes and shots on goal

Goalkeeper Technique:

- W Grip
 - Advanced footwork (Dropback steps, side-to-side, making a save while in motion, field vision/awareness)
 - Reaction training
 - Underarm bowling
 - Side arm throwing to targets
 - Low and forward diving technique
 - Angle near post play
 - Introduce deflecting (punching, boxing, tipping)
 - Dealing with crossed balls
 - Introduce 1 v. 1 breakaway saves
 - Saving penalty kicks
 - Taking own goal kicks
-

Tactical

- 2 v.1 Defending
- 2 v.2 Attacking and Defending
- Roles of 2nd Attacker (Support) and Defender (Cover)
- Combination play
- Field player communication (“turn” and “man on”)
- Basic Goalkeeper communication (“Away” “Keeper” “Step” “Drop”)
- Halftime analysis (Players are able to recognize adjustments needed)
- Tactical concepts on all restarts
- Attacking and Defending Set Plays

Psychological

- Focus should be on:
Teamwork, Confidence, Desire, Mental skills, Competitiveness, How to learn from each match, Fair play, emotional management, parental involvement

Training

- Should not exceed 1 hour and 30 minutes
- Dynamic stretching
- Warm up includes small group activities
- Continue with directional games playing to targets or zones

Games

- Small sided 8 v. 8 with goalkeepers
- Finish with cool down activity and static stretching

U14 Characteristics: (p.82)

- **The more advanced U-14 players are able to execute the range of skills, but most others are still developing previously taught skills and are now being exposed to these additional skills**
- **Important psychosocial implications for a child entering puberty – early or late**
- **Popularity influences self-esteem**
- **Tests limits - a know-it-all attitude**
- **Fertile period to learn – full of eagerness**
- **Tend to be quite self-critical and may need regular positive reinforcement**
- **Bodies are going through physical changes that affect personal appearance**
- **There will be significant differences in physical maturation rates between individuals**
- **Rapid growth spurts of the skeleton leave ligaments, tendons and muscles catching up, so coordination and balance are astray. Temporary gangly movement may result in a loss of touch on the ball. Players do not always make the connection between their growth spurt and the temporary loss of form; they need help realizing that everything will come back into synch in six to 18 months.**

Age	U14 (Attack)
Fitness Concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Acceleration with and without the ball-Speed and Power-Anaerobic exercise-Cardio respiratory and cardiovascular training

Technique (Technical)

- Flexibility
- Lateral movement
- All fitness done with the ball
- Experimentation with the qualities of a flighted ball (spin, swerve, chipping and bending passes, driving crosses to the far post and for placement)
- Half volley and full volley shooting
- Slide tackling technique
- Heading to pass, flick headers, diving headers, headers to win the ball
- “Dummying” the ball
- Clean first touches away from pressure
- Dribbling for speed (outside of foot)
- Outside of foot shot

Goalkeeper Technique:

- Far post play
- Medium and high diving
- Deflecting over the crossbar and around the posts
- Reading crosses (when to come out, when to stay in)
- Throwing to distribute over long distances (30+ yds)
- Setting up a wall (angle and number)
- Switching the point of attack
- Playing out of the back

Tactical

Psychological

- Transition, counterattack and speed-of-play
- Compactness of defense
- Introduce 3rd defender (balance) and the roles and responsibilities
- Checking runs
- Switching positions within the flow of play
- Zonal defending principle

- Overcoming adversity
- Able to stay focused for an entire match
- Sportsmanship
- Assertiveness
- Individual and team discipline

Training

- Should not exceed 1 hour and 30 minutes
- Warm-up, small group activities, dynamic stretching
- Directional games, playing to targets or zones
- Finish with small sided game or 11 v.11
- Cool down activity
- All activities are challenging, motivating and involve transitions

Games

- 11 v. 11 Full sided game with goalkeepers

U16 Characteristics: (p.89)

- **May have a lengthened attention span**
- **Able to better understand moral principles**
- **Strong identification with admired adults**
- **Very sensitive to praise and recognition; feelings are easily hurt**
- **Fear of ridicule and being unpopular**
- **Friends set the general rules of behavior**
 - **Strong need to conform exists**
 - **Dress and behave like their peers in order to belong**
- **Experiences physical changes - very concerned with their appearance and very self-conscience about their physical changes**
- **Often a rapid weight gain at the beginning of adolescence poses an enormous appetite**
- **Caught between being a child and being an adult**

Age	U16 (Attack)
Fitness Concepts	-Power -Vertical Jump -Body Composition -Weight Training-Soccer specific -Interval and Sprint recovery training -Speed and Agility training

Technique (Technical)

-Proper nutrition and hydration

- Airborne kicking (scissors volley, overhead volley)**
- Finishing techniques (power vs. Finesse)**
- Execution of previous technical skills under pressure (dribbling 1v1, passing, shooting)**

Goalkeeper Technique:

- Backward diving**
- Narrowing opponents shooting angle**
- Improvement on reaction saves**

Tactical

- Back to goal play**
- Playing with a purpose in mind**
- Movement off the ball with a purpose**
- Defending in the midfield and attacking thirds**
- Switching the point of attack**
- Match analysis**
- Role of the 3rd attacker**

Psychological

- Personal accountability**
- Drive and will to succeed**
- Courage**
- Sacrifice for the benefit of the team**
- Goal orientation**
- Mental imagery**
- Emotional management and communication**
- Sportsmanship**

Training

- Approximately 90 minutes
- Warm-up, small group activities, dynamic stretching
- Large group activities (6-8 players)
- Team activities (8-11 players)
- Directional games to targets and zones
- Separate functional training for goalkeepers
- Conclude with small sided or 11 a side game
- Cool down activity

Games

- 11 v. 11 Full sided game with goalkeepers





U19 Characteristics: (p.96-97)

- **Emotions can still overcome tactical logic**
- **They are likely to solve soccer problems with their legs first and their brains second**
- **May have bad diet and sleep habits, and, as a result, low energy levels**
- **The skeleton is close to full maturation, but peak athleticism is still a few years off**
- **Very concerned with what others say and think about them**
- **Developing a team consciousness – want and need a strong voice in planning their activities/game plans**
- **May try to manipulate others to get what they want**
- **Loud behavior may hide their lack of self-confidence**
- **Look at the world more objectively – look at adults more subjectively and are critical of them, yet they still want adult leadership**
- **Go to extremes – often appear to be unstable emotionally while having a know-it-all attitude**
- **Vulnerable – emotionally insecure, fear of rejection and mood swings**
- **Social needs and desires are high**

- Many will leave the game for employment and many who go to college will not return to the game after graduation
- There is still a strong desire to be part of a team

Age	U19 (Attack)
<p>Fitness Concepts</p> <p>Technique (Technical)</p> <p>Tactical</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fitness testing with and without the ball -Overload Training -Weight training-Soccer specific -Speed of play is technical in relation to game-like settings and conditions -Technical training is functional in relation to position(s) on the field -All previously learned technical work with a soccer ball is working towards a mastery level <p><u>Goalkeeper Technique:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Technical execution of related skills under game-like conditions and pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tactical situations in training can be set to certain conditions (Ex. Winning by 1 goal with 15 minutes remaining)

Psychological

- Players are able to adapt formations and systems of play during the game for the benefit of defeating your opponent.
- Creativity in attack
- Possession, passing, movement off the ball with a purpose in mind
- Tactical concepts are also functionally trained

Goalkeeper Tactics:

- Team organization during the run of play
- Presence in the goal
- Self-confidence and self-motivation within the game
- Playing a specific role(s) and being flexible within that role
- Reduced mental mistakes, higher concentration
- Dedication, commitment and leadership skills
- Selfless (Team first attitude)
- Approximately 90 minutes (plus or minus 30 min.)
- Warm-up, dynamic stretching, small group activities
- Directional games, incorporate functional training for all
- Set conditions for specific tactical or technical practice
- Finish with small sided or full sided game
- Cool down and static stretching

Training

Resources:

Parr, R. (2012, December). *A curriculum for player development*. Retrieved from www.bryantsoccer.org/docs/player_dev_curriculum_100902.pdf

Snow, S. (2012, February 02). *Us youth soccer player development model*. Retrieved from Snow, S. (2012, February 02). Us youth soccer player development model. US Youth Soccer. Retrieved from http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/us_youth_soccer_debuts_player_development_model/