

1. Setup (15 minutes)

Setup begins with locating the correct session, and ensuring full understanding of the activities, soccer topics and nutrition topics. Coaches should arrive at least 15 minutes in advance to prepare for a productive practice session.

- Before arrival, be prepared for any adjustments that need to be made. This might mean sketching out the field and cone setup on a sheet of paper.
- Upon arrival, walk through and scan the entire field to clear any debris and ensure the area is safe for physical activity before the session or game starts.
- Eliminate tripping hazards.
- Check how the field is maintained and mark any potential obstacles, such as mounds, grates or divots.
- Wear protective gloves and walk the field for debris including glass, metal pieces, needles, large rocks, or uneven ground and holes.
- Lay out cones, goals, pinnies and other supplies as noted in the Equipment Needed section. Setup instructions are provided following this section.
- Try to prepare your practice space so there is little mid-practice setup. Combine Activities 1 and 2 into one cone layout so little/no transition time is needed during practice.
- When you cannot combine cone layouts perfectly, use different colored cones to represent different activities. This will let you transition quicker during practice because you can ask youth to “Please leave the yellow cones and pick up the blue cones.” The remaining yellow cones will constitute the boundaries for the next activity.
- Pre-practice planning during setup minimizes downtime for players during practice. It also maximizes player engagement and time to achieve the physical activity and nutrition education objectives.

2. Welcome and Warmup (5-10 minutes)

Developing and implementing a consistent routine makes arrivals smooth and limits waiting time as youth come to an ALL STARS Soccer session. Plan to do the following.

- Meet youth as they arrive and greet them with a Warm Welcome. For example, call each young person by their name and give them each a high-five.
- As youth arrive, have them engage in games with only a few players. The primary focus of the games should be to have fun. It is important that these pickup-style games are led by the players and facilitated by the coaches.
- During this time, players have the opportunity to experience the game while the coach observes and guides them towards developing their own solutions, rather than being told what to do. Provide balls, cones and guidance as necessary.
- Use an Attention Getter from [Appendix C: Attention Getters](#)

3. Opening Circle (5-10 minutes)

After releasing energy and getting physically ready through the Warmup, the Opening Circle helps ensure players are mentally and emotionally ready for the rest of the session. After all the players have arrived and have warmed up, have the players get into a circle and do the following.

First, do an emotional and/or a Group Agreements check-in. An emotional check-in allows the coach to see how players are doing. Emotional check-ins help coaches understand how youth are feeling and offer support when youth need it. Emotional check-ins may not come naturally for everyone. They require an emotionally safe environment, and a willingness to be vulnerable. Just like soccer, emotional check-ins get easier with practice.

A Group Agreements check-in allows the coach to reinforce the Group Agreements to ensure ALL STARS soccer is an emotionally safe space for all players. Sometimes players won't be honest if everyone can see their responses. Make participants feel more secure by asking them to turn around in the circle and shut their eyes, then do the sign behind their backs.

Below are some fun ways to check in with players.

- Internal Weather Report: Ask, "If your mood were the weather, what would it be?"
- Feelings 1-10: Say, "Rank your mood today on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst mood and 10 being the best."
- Pop Culture: Ask, "If your current mood were a song or movie, what would it be?"
- Highs and Lows: Ask participants to think of their "high and low" of the day. Their high is the best thing that happened to them during the day, and their low is the worst thing that happened to them.
- Rose, Bud, Thorn: Ask participants to think of their "rose, bud and thorn" of the day. The rose is the best thing that happened to them during the day, the bud is something they're looking forward to, and the thorn is the worst thing that happened to them that day.
- Food Moods: Ask, "If your mood was food, what food would it be?"
- Emotional Animals: Ask, "If your mood was an animal, what animal would it be?"
- Moods and Movement: Ask players to think of a movement that demonstrates how they are feeling.
- Thumbs Up or Down: Ask players to show how they are feeling by doing a thumbs up (feeling good), thumbs down (feeling bad), or thumbs sideways (feeling OK).

- **Start the Wave:** Have one player start by waving their arms and shouting, then each subsequent player waves their arms and shouts. The wave should rotate around the circle several times. Participants can give big waves if they have high energy, and little waves if they have low energy.
- **Show Me Your Muscles:** Ask players to pose like body builders. They can pose with their arms up if pumped up, or pose with arms down if feeling less enthusiastic.

Next, review the nutrition teaching points.

Finally, perform a dynamic stretching routine to transition into the next portion of the session. Allow players to lead this session to encourage leadership development. A suggested dynamic stretching routine is provided below. Adapt it to suit your group, space and timing.

Dynamic Stretching Routine

Dynamic stretching is active stretching. It allows participants to loosen their joints while slowly raising their heart rate and core body temperature to prepare for physical activity. The muscles are stretched through movement and are not held in a stretched position for more than one to two seconds.

To begin, have three to five players line up behind a cone, with a second cone 10 yards in front of the first cone. Duplicate as many lines as needed. The first player begins and does the prescribed movement on the way out to the second cone. That player goes around the second cone clockwise and jogs back to their first cone. The second player in the line goes after the first player has reached the second cone. Following are some prescribed movements.

- Jog at 50%.
- **Arm circles:** While jogging, swing arms forward and backward, using both small and large circular motions.
- **High knees:** While jogging, drive alternating knees to hip height.
- **Heel to rear:** While jogging, kick alternating heels to the rear.
- **Trunk twist:** While walking, rotate at the trunk, looking over the shoulder in the direction you are stretching.
- **High skips:** Skip with an explosive stride.
- **Alternate toe touches (Frankensteins):** While walking, kick alternating foot forward to opposite hand (no bent knees).
- **Hand walks (bear crawl):** Starting in a push-up position, walk on hands and feet.
- Run at 75%.
- Sprint at 100%.

4. Activity Option 1 (5-10 minutes)

Activity 1 begins by teaching a specific soccer skill.

- Where possible, create two or more grids of the same activity to run simultaneously, which allows participants to be more engaged.
- Some activities will integrate nutritional messages. Use the progression suggestions to build each activity from simple to complex (see Progressive Instruction below).
- Use groupers, which are quick activities to divide large groups into smaller groups or teams. Groupers allow everyone to work with different people. A list of groupers can be found in [Appendix D: Groupers](#).

5. Activity Option 2 (10-15 minutes)

- Activity 2 is typically a progression from Activity 1. Activity 2 gives participants an opportunity to test the skill(s) from Activity 1 in a more game-like setting.
- As with Activity 1, use the progression suggestions to build each activity from simple to complex, by layering in alterations to the activity (see Progressive Instruction below).

A Note on Activities

These activities are designed to give youth the opportunity to develop their soccer skills in a targeted way. The goal of these activities is to create an environment filled with opportunities for players to experience and learn about the objectives of training sessions through repetition.

Two activities are provided to allow you to customize each session to best fit your group. Less experienced groups may benefit from focusing on a single activity. More experienced or efficient groups may progress through the first activity quickly and need a second activity to stay engaged.

Choose activities that appropriately challenge (striking a balance between success and failure) your group. Activities should resemble the game, involve the players, and allow them to solve problems creatively. The role of the coach during this phase is to guide players while using teaching actions. While this is where targeted learning takes place, there should always be an emphasis on keeping the atmosphere fun and enjoyable for the players.

Progressive Instruction

Progressions elevate practice from simple actions to more challenging actions. Activities 1 and 2 should feature a progression within each activity. The coach

should begin each activity with as few initial instructions as possible. Then, layer in new rules every few minutes to make the activity increasingly challenging.

Each rule should encourage the player to focus on building the necessary skill for that day's soccer topic by asking them to problem solve within the activity. Suggested progressions are provided for each activity. Feel free to follow these or make up your own.

Activities can be modified and adjusted for intensity and difficulty based on the acronym REST:

- **R**ules (e.g., goals made off of non-dominant foot are two points)
- **E**quipment (e.g., use a smaller than usual ball)
- **S**pace (e.g., size of field)
- **T**ime (e.g., length of activity)

6. Scrimmage (5-10 minutes)

During the scrimmage, players are able to demonstrate what they learned in the activities, play and enjoy themselves. Coaches shouldn't interrupt the game with too much coaching. By observing the application of the soccer skills practiced in the activities, the coach is able to check each player's understanding and ability to execute the session objectives. During scrimmages, keep the following in mind.

- Keep the number of players on each team small (3 vs. 3 to 5 vs. 5).
- Where possible, coach players in the background while play continues to flow.
- Use scrimmages to teach soccer rules and regulations, and to occasionally highlight moments where the soccer topic of the day is executed by a player (or players) during the flow of the game.
- Use the Continuous Play Model to maintain the flow of the game and increase physical activity. (See Keys to Success, Continuous Play Model.)
- Rotate players through different positions.
- After each Scrimmage, ensure players from each team line up and shake hands.
- For details on Scrimmage options, see the Scrimmage Session and the Scrimmage Session Template.

Continuous Play Model

- Use the Continuous Play Model in the daily scrimmage and on game day.
- Using all available soccer balls, keep one to three additional coaches or teen volunteers stationed around the field(s) with extra balls in hand. When the ball goes out of bounds, say, "New ball!" and roll a new ball onto the field.

- Use the Continuous Play Model to keep players moving and engaged in the scrimmage. This will minimize breaks in the game and increase the physical activity of all players.

7. Cool Down (3-5 minutes)

The Cool Down lets youth to take an emotional break from the competition of the scrimmages, while lowering their heart rate through an exercise of low-to-moderate physical activity.

The Cool Down helps to center the player mentally and physically before practice ends. Some examples of simple Cool Downs are below. You can use these or your favorite Community Builder. Following are some easy Cool Downs.

- Walk the perimeter of the playing area and pick up the cones.
- Play red light, green light.
- Play Simon says (with or without a soccer ball).
- Play follow the leader (with or without a soccer ball).
- Organize any variation of tag.

8. Stretch, Closing Circle and Cheer (5 minutes)

A Closing Circle allows youth to reflect on their practice, build community with their group, and end the session on a positive note. After completing the Cool Down, have players get into a circle and do the following.

- Review the nutrition and soccer topics of the day while conducting your static (stationary) stretches.
- Allow players to lead (or help lead) the static stretching routine to encourage leadership development.
- A suggested static stretching routine is provided below. Feel free to adapt it to suit your group, space and timing.
- After stretching, have the group finish on a positive note with a group cheer.
- Ask youth to assist in cleaning up the space, and give them instructions for departing or transitioning to their next program area or activity.

Static Stretching

Static stretching involves holding a muscle in a stretched position for 10-30 seconds without bouncing. Static stretching aids in post-physical activity recovery and allows participants to reduce their heart rate and core temperature at the end of practice.

- Side bends: While standing with hands resting on hips, bend slowly to the left side, return to vertical position and repeat on the right side.

- Hamstring stretch: While sitting, stretch right leg out and bend left leg inward; bend forward keeping back straight and repeat on the other side.
- Calf stretch: While holding onto a partner's shoulder (both facing forward), place one leg and one foot behind the other, straightened with the heel flat on the ground. Then repeat on the other side.
- Quadriceps stretch: While holding onto a partner's shoulder (both facing forward), bend left leg at knee and hold with left hand (ensure leg is straight from hip to knee), and then repeat on your right side

9. Coach Debrief (5-15 minutes)

As a coach, it is important to take time at the end of the day to reflect on the successes and challenges of the day's practice session. This will serve as a way to address any issues that arose during the session, provide constructive feedback to other coaches, and help you prepare for the next practice session.

The Coach Debrief is done after organizing players for transition or departure, interacting with family members, and cleaning up the field and supplies.

Scrimmage Session

ALL STARS soccer promotes Scrimmage Sessions – also called Game Days – to complement the practice sessions each week. The goals of Scrimmage Sessions are to:

- **Promote** a love of soccer and exercise
- **Allow** players to practice skills they are learning in a challenging environment
- **Infuse** the spirit of healthy competition
- **Reinforce** the concepts of fair play and sportsmanship

Like a Practice Session, Scrimmage Sessions should run for 50-60 minutes from start to finish so that players work toward achieving the recommended 60 minutes of daily moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. The only difference is that Activities 1 and 2 are replaced by Scrimmage time. The seven steps of a Scrimmage Session are:

1. Coach Setup (15 minutes)
2. Welcome and Warmup (5-10 minutes)
3. Opening Circle (5-10 minutes)
4. Scrimmages (25-30 minutes)
5. Cool Down (3-5 minutes)
6. Stretch, Closing Circle and Cheer (5 minutes)
7. Coach Debrief (15 minutes)

Scrimmage Session Options

Scrimmage activity variations are below, with associated diagrams. Use the Continuous Play Model and keep games small-sided to keep players moving and engaged, and reduce downtime. Full 11 vs. 11 games should not be used.

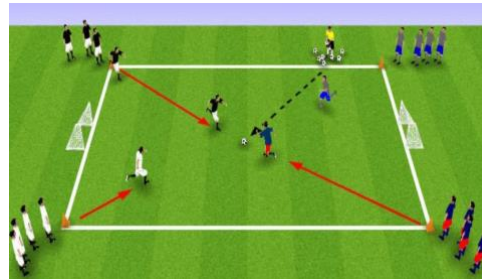
Small-Sided

- **Create** teams of three to seven players.
- **Set up** as many fields/courts as needed to get all players playing.
- **Assign** each team a goal to attack and a goal to defend.
- After a few minutes, **rotate** teams in a round robin format.



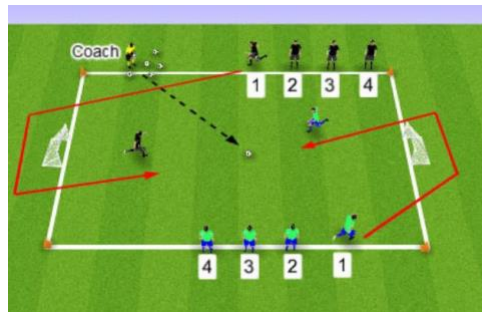
Corner Soccer

- **Create** two teams. Assign each team a goal to attack and a goal to defend.
- **Start** teams from the corners on opposite end lines.
- **Call out** a number indicating the number of players you want to run onto the field to begin play (e.g., 2 vs. 2, 4 vs. 4, 5 vs. 5, etc.).
- **Vary** the game by adding more than one soccer ball, adding additional goals, calling out uneven numbers, etc.



Line Soccer

- **Create** two teams that stand on the opposite sidelines of the field.
- **Assign** each team a goal to attack and a goal to defend.
- **Assign** each player a number (Team A – 1, 2, 3, etc.; and Team B – 1, 2, 3, etc.).
- **Call** out a number and tell the players assigned to that number to run onto the field to play 1 vs. 1.



Preparing

It is recommended that groups are no bigger than 15. More than one coach may be required for certain groups.

Required Equipment for a Group of 15 Players

- 15-20 soccer balls (one for every player, plus extras)
- 15 pairs shin guards (one pair for every player)
- 1 pack disc cones (25)
- 1 pack tall cones (12)
- 10 pinnies
- 4 pop-up goals
- 1 ball pump with needle
- 1 jumbo ball bag
- Water cooler

Optional Equipment for a Group of 15 Players

- 10 pinnies in a second color
- 1 pack disc cones (25) in a second color

Guidelines by Age Group

U.S. Soccer Federation's Player Development Initiatives offer the following guidelines based on age to give players many opportunities to touch the ball with high levels of physical activity. These guideline also provide a fun and engaging atmosphere with minimal resources.

Recommendation	Ages 6-8	Ages 9-11	Ages 12-14
Field size	30 x 20 yards	50 x 30 yards	50 x 30 yards
Ball size	3	4	5
Maximum team size	4 vs. 4	7 vs. 7	7 vs. 7
Player times (qtrs./half x min.)	4 x 8	2 x 25	2 x 30
Goal size	4 x 6 feet	4 x 6 feet	4 x 6 feet
Goalkeepers	No	No	No
Heading	No	No	No
Coed teams	Yes	Either	No

Resources

- U.S. Soccer Foundation Equipment Order Form
tfaforms.com/4658086
- Good Sports (Sports Equipment Grant Opportunity)
goodsports.org
- Girls' Sports Grant Opportunities and Resources
womenssportsfoundation.org/wsf_programs/sports-4-life-community/