

SASA Coach Guide: How to Build Your Practice

Introduction: Why Your Practice Matters

Every practice is an opportunity to help players fall in love with soccer, build their skills, and grow as individuals.

SASA recommends the **Play–Practice–Play (PPP)** format, endorsed by U.S. Soccer, because it is player-friendly, fun, and effective.

This approach works because it mirrors how kids naturally learn:

- Begin with play.
- Focus on one specific skill or idea.
- Return to play to apply what they have learned.

PPP keeps players engaged, builds confidence, and helps families see progress.

What is Play–Practice–Play?

Phase	Purpose	What It Looks Like
Play 1: Free Play	Get players moving, observe their habits, and let them experiment	Small-sided games with minimal instruction
Practice: Focused Skill	Work on one skill or idea with a fun, engaging activity	A drill, game, or challenge tied to the skill
Play 2: Guided Play	Allow players to apply the skill in a game setting with light guidance	Small-sided game with occasional reminders or questions

Recommended Session Lengths

Age	Recommended Length	Recommended Frequency
U4	30–40 minutes	1 session per week
U5–6	40–50 minutes	1 session per week
U7–8	50–60 minutes	1–2 sessions per week
U9–10	60–70 minutes	1–2 sessions per week
U11–12	65–75 minutes	2 sessions per week
U13+	75 minutes	2 sessions per week

How to Build Your Practice

1. Choose a Focus Point

Decide on **one specific focus** for the session. Do not try to cover too many topics at once.

Focus points may include:

- A skill (e.g., dribbling, passing, shooting, defending)
- A scenario (e.g., playing out of the back, attacking down the wing)
- A field area (e.g., goal area, midfield, wide spaces)

Use the SASA Age-Group Skills & Competencies List for guidance on appropriate skills and goals for your players.

2. Use NTSSA Coaching Resources

You do not need to create activities from scratch. The **North Texas State Soccer Association (NTSSA)** provides excellent resources for coaches at all age levels.

To access these resources:

- Visit <https://www.ntxsoccer.org/coaching-resources/>
- Select your **age group** from the list.
- Browse the recommended activities and games that match your chosen focus.
- Choose one or two activities to include in the *Practice* phase of your session.

These resources align with SASA's player development goals and are updated regularly.

3. Plan Your PPP Session

Use the PPP structure to organize your time:

Phase	Time Allocation	Example Activity
Play 1: Free Play	5–10 minutes	Small-sided game, observe players
Practice	15–30 minutes	NTSSA activity focused on the skill
Play 2: Guided Play	10–15 minutes	Small-sided game with light guidance

Best Practices for Running a Successful Session

- Keep it fun and simple. Young players learn best when enjoying themselves.
- Make sure every player has plenty of touches on the ball.
- Use small-sided games (e.g., 3v3 or 4v4) to keep everyone involved.
- Adjust the difficulty level to match the players' abilities.
- End each session on a positive note, regardless of how it went.
- Observe and ask players questions instead of always giving answers.

When in Doubt

If you are unsure how to design a session or address a situation:

- Speak with the SASA Coaching Coordinator: coaches@soccersanangelo.org or an experienced coach.
- Revisit the NTSSA resources at <https://www.ntxsoccer.org/coaching-resources/>.
- Remember that your goal is to help players enjoy the game and improve one step at a time.