

## SASA U11–12 Coaching Guide

### Philosophy: Why U11–12 Matters

The U11–12 age group is a vital stage where players refine their technical skills and begin to apply tactical principles more consistently during games. At this level, players are more self-aware, competitive, and capable of understanding complex situations. Coaches play a key role in helping players shift from executing instructions to making proactive, intelligent decisions under pressure.

The primary goals at U11–12 are:

- Refine technical skills to perform effectively at higher speeds and under more pressure.
- Develop tactical understanding of attacking and defending as a coordinated unit.
- Foster leadership, resilience, and respect for the game and others.

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### Practice Framework: Play–Practice–Play (PPP)

At U11–12, players benefit from structured, high-intensity sessions that closely replicate game conditions. The PPP format remains effective and allows players to connect technical and tactical skills to real situations.

### Recommended Session Length

- Up to 75 minutes total.
- Two sessions per week are recommended.

### Example Session Outline

Phase	Time	Purpose
Play 1: Free Play	5–10 min	Observe how players apply prior learning in a small-sided game. Identify areas to focus on.
Practice: Focused Activity	40–50 min	Teach advanced skills or tactical concepts (e.g., pressing as a team, creating overloads, breaking defensive lines) through challenging, game-like exercises. Encourage decision-making under pressure.
Play 2: Guided Play	15–20 min	Finish with a small-sided or full-field game emphasizing the day's focus. Provide targeted, situation-specific feedback and ask reflective questions to deepen understanding.

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### Skills & Competencies

At U11–12, players should demonstrate consistency in technique and begin anticipating play, not just reacting to it.

### Technical Skills

- Confident dribbling to maintain possession and beat defenders when appropriate.
- Accurate and varied passing (driven, chipped, curved) with purposeful weight and direction.
- First touch that prepares the next action, even under defensive pressure.

- Shooting with composure, placement, and awareness of angles.
- Advanced defending: reading passing lanes, delaying attackers, and organizing the defensive line.
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### **People Skills**

- Taking leadership during transitions, restarts, and defensive organization.
- Communicating clearly and proactively to organize teammates.
- Maintaining emotional control under competitive stress.
- Demonstrating respect and accountability toward everyone involved in the game.

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### **Coach Prompts**

At U11–12, coaches should use more advanced, specific prompts to foster independent, tactical thinking:

- “How can you position yourself before receiving the ball to play forward quickly?”
- “What passing option will help us switch the attack and stretch the defense?”
- “If you see two defenders pressing you, what support should you look for?”
- “When defending as a unit, how do you decide when to step up or hold your line?”
- “How can you create a numerical advantage in this part of the field?”
- “What cues tell you it’s time to press versus drop back?”

These questions help players think beyond their immediate actions and consider how their decisions influence the team’s overall play.

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For additional guidance or support, contact the SASA Coaching Coordinator or visit <https://www.ntxsoccer.org/coaching-resources/>.