

SASA U13+ Coaching Guide

Philosophy: Why U13+ Matters

The U13+ age group is when players begin preparing for competitive and potentially high school-level play. Players at this stage have developed strong technical foundations and are ready to refine advanced techniques, adapt to different game situations, and take on leadership roles within the team. Coaches should challenge players to think critically, communicate effectively, and take ownership of their development while still fostering a love for the game.

The primary goals at U13+ are:

- Execute technical skills effectively at game speed and under pressure.
- Apply tactical understanding to read the game, adapt to opponents, and support team strategies.
- Demonstrate leadership, composure, and accountability both on and off the field.

Practice Framework: Play–Practice–Play (PPP)

At U13+, practices should replicate game intensity and complexity, including tactical problem-solving and leadership opportunities. The PPP format remains ideal, with more deliberate emphasis on real-game scenarios and player-led solutions.

Recommended Session Length

- Up to 75 minutes total.
- Two to three sessions per week.

Example Session Outline

Phase	Time	Purpose
Play 1: Free Play	5–10 min	Observe players applying previous lessons without instruction. Identify tactical issues and areas of improvement.
Practice: Focused Activity	50–60 min	Focus on advanced tactical and technical skills (e.g., building out of the back under pressure, coordinated pressing, exploiting numerical advantages) in high-repetition, game-like scenarios.
Play 2: Guided Play	15–20 min	End with a competitive, scenario-driven game that reinforces the session's focus. Provide specific feedback and let players take initiative in solving problems.

Skills & Competencies

At U13+, players should demonstrate mastery of core techniques, tactical adaptability, and maturity under competitive conditions.

Technical Skills

- Consistently clean first touch with awareness of pressure and space.
- Delivering passes of all types (lofted, driven, chipped) with accuracy and intent.
- Shooting decisively with an understanding of shot selection based on situation.
- Defensive organization: managing lines, delaying attacks, anticipating play.

- Using body positioning and shielding to maintain possession under physical pressure.

People Skills

- Taking leadership during play, such as organizing defensive shape or initiating attacks.
- Communicating clearly and confidently with teammates and coaches.
- Staying composed and focused in high-pressure situations.
- Modeling respect and sportsmanship regardless of the outcome.

Coach Prompts

At this level, coaches should use questions that deepen tactical and situational awareness, encouraging players to think several steps ahead and make collective decisions:

- “What adjustments can we make when the opponent changes their formation?”
- “How can you create overloads in wide areas and exploit them effectively?”
- “When we lose the ball, what is your first action and why?”
- “How can you lead your line to maintain compactness while pressing?”
- “When building from the back, what cues help you decide whether to play short or go long?”
- “What communication is needed to keep our defensive line organized and aware of runners?”

These prompts help players anticipate, communicate, and execute effectively as a team.

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