

SASA U9–10 Coaching Guide

Philosophy: Why U9–10 Matters

The U9–10 age group is a key transition where players begin to show significant differences in skill and understanding of the game. Players are capable of learning more advanced techniques and starting to apply tactical concepts in real-game situations. At this stage, coaches help players grow confidence, deepen technical abilities, and learn how to contribute effectively to a team.

The primary goals at U9–10 are:

- Sharpen individual skills with an emphasis on precision and decision-making.
- Build awareness of team tactics: creating and exploiting space, supporting teammates, and defending as a unit.
- Develop resilience, responsibility, and sportsmanship.

Practice Framework: Play–Practice–Play (PPP)

At U9–10, players are ready for longer, more challenging sessions that combine technical drills with tactical scenarios. The PPP format remains the best way to keep players engaged while exposing them to realistic game situations.

Recommended Session Length

- Approximately 60 minutes total.
- One to two sessions per week are recommended.
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Example Session Outline

Phase	Time	Purpose
Play 1: Free Play	5–10 min	Let players play freely in a small-sided game. Observe decision-making, positioning, and teamwork without intervention.
Practice: Focused Activity	30–40 min	Teach a specific skill or tactical concept (e.g., switching the point of attack, defending in pairs) through game-based activities. Challenge players to make decisions under pressure.
Play 2: Guided Play	10–15 min	Finish with a small-sided game. Offer specific, actionable feedback to reinforce the focus of the session.

Skills & Competencies

At U9–10, players are ready to refine technical skills and begin applying team tactics intelligently:

Technical Skills

- Dribbling with head up, under pressure, and changing speed and direction effectively.
- Passing with variety and accuracy (inside/outside foot, driven passes, through balls).
- Receiving and turning under defensive pressure.
- Shooting with power, accuracy, and quicker release.
- Defensive skills: marking tightly, intercepting passes, and tackling cleanly.

People Skills

- Taking ownership of their role and decisions during play.
 - Communicating clearly and constructively with teammates.
 - Resilience: recovering from mistakes and continuing to compete.
 - Respecting referees, opponents, and teammates regardless of score.
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Coach Prompts

At U9–10, coaches can use questions to guide players toward higher-level understanding while keeping prompts simple and actionable. Example prompts:

- “How can you make yourself an option for your teammate when they have the ball?”
- “When the opponent has the ball, where should you position yourself to help defend as a team?”
- “How can we switch play when one side is too crowded?”
- “When you win the ball, what is the first thing you should look for?”
- “If you lose the ball, what can you do right away to help your team recover?”

These prompts encourage players to make decisions about spacing, support, and transitions rather than simply reacting to the ball.

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