

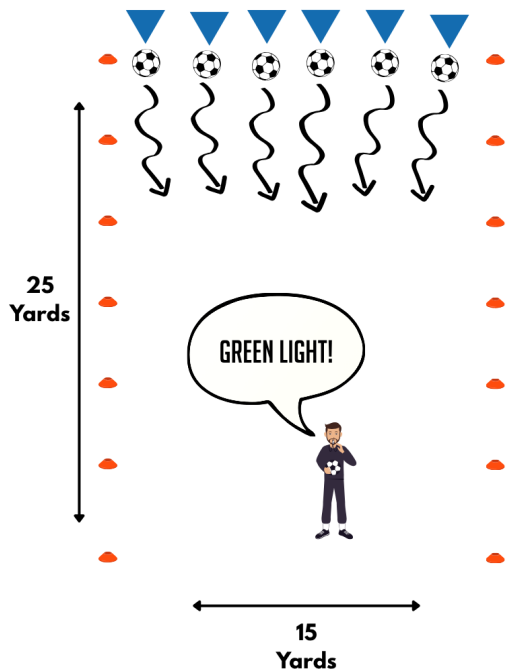
U7–U8 Player Development Overview

Based on U.S. Soccer Player Development Framework

Area	Key Characteristics	How to Develop Through Soccer
Social	- Crave belonging and group identity - Begin to show loyalty and value friendships - Understand team rules and fairness	- Promote team-based games (3v3, 4v4) - Encourage cooperation and sportsmanship - Assign small leadership roles during training
Emotional	- Fragile self-esteem and self-confidence - Highly sensitive to feedback and comparison - Learning how their actions affect others	- Use positive reinforcement and praise effort - Create a safe space for making mistakes - Let players reflect on their choices after play
Language	- More complex vocabulary use (metaphors, multiple meanings) - Able to express emotions and ask questions	- Encourage players to describe what they see and do ("What did you notice?" or "How did that feel?") - Use short, clear instructions with soccer language - Let them name or explain activities
Cognitive	- Developing cause-and-effect thinking - Beginning to problem-solve and plan - Able to hold short-term goals	- Play games that require decisions and problem-solving (1v1, 3v2) - Ask guiding questions: "What could you try next?" - Create challenges that build focus (like "first to 3 goals")
Physical	- Steady growth and increasing coordination - Improve agility, balance, and reaction time - Sensitive to extreme temperatures	- Use movement-rich activities with and without the ball - Include rhythm-based warm-ups or races - Provide water breaks and weather-conscious gear

Week 1 - Dribbling

WARM-UP ACTIVITY: Red Light/Green Light



RED LIGHT/GREEN LIGHT

Activity Objective

Develop dribbling control, ball mastery, and listening skills by responding quickly to coach commands.

of players/Opponent

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Size/Shape of Field

15 x 25

Ways of Scoring

Players "win" by reaching the opposite end line first while keeping control of their ball.

Bonus points for staying in control (not losing the ball or moving on "red light").

Active/Recovery Duration

10-15 seconds/45 seconds

Repetition/Sets

3-5 repetitions / 1-2 sets

Total Activity Duration

10-15 minutes

Rules

Rotations (Substitutions)

All players start at one end and dribble toward the other end together.

The coach can rotate roles by letting one player be the caller ("traffic light").

Coaching Interactions

The coach stands on the opposite sideline facing away from players and calls out light colors.

WHAT (Coaching Points)

Green Light: dribble with speed but under control.

Red Light: stop the ball quickly with the sole or inside of the foot.

Yellow Light: dribble in slow motion

Purple Light: dance party!!

Keep head up to listen and see space.

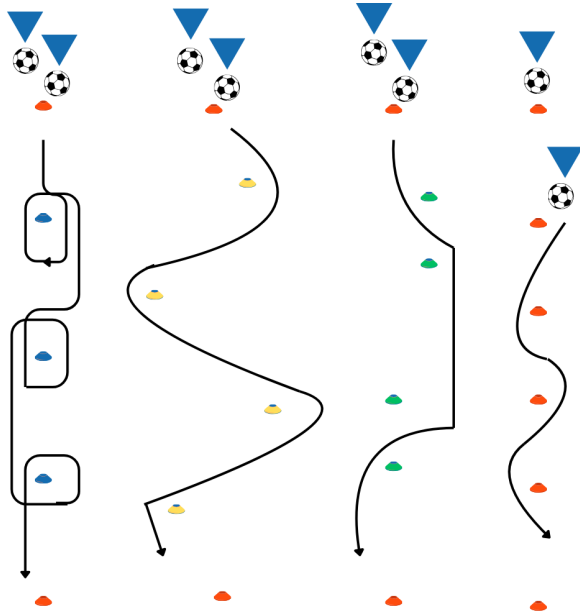
Encourage fun, energy, and competition while reinforcing control.

Use both feet when dribbling and stopping.

WHEN (You will enter the activity)

HOW (You will deliver the information)

ACTIVITY 1: Dribble Maze



Activity Objective

Improve close control, ball mastery, and agility by dribbling through different obstacle paths with speed and accuracy.

of players/Opponent

8 players

Size/Shape of Field

15 x 25 yards

Ways of Scoring

Players complete the maze successfully by dribbling through all cones without losing control.

Add competition: first to finish, or points for clean/no-mistake runs.

Active/Recovery Duration

15-20 seconds / 45-60 seconds

Repetition/Sets

3-5 repetitions / 2-3 sets

Total Activity Duration

10 - 15 minutes

Rules

Players dribble from start to finish through their cone path.

Ball must stay under control (no skipping cones).

After finishing, players return to the back of their line.

Next player starts when path ahead is clear.

Constraints/Restrictions

Left or Right foot only

Rotations (Substitutions)

Players start at the top of a lane, dribble through the maze, then return to the back of their line. Rotate so each player tries every lane variation.

Coaching Interactions

Keep players engaged and encourage patience and quality over speed.
More challenging: Have them use their right foot only then left foot only.

WHAT (Coaching Points)

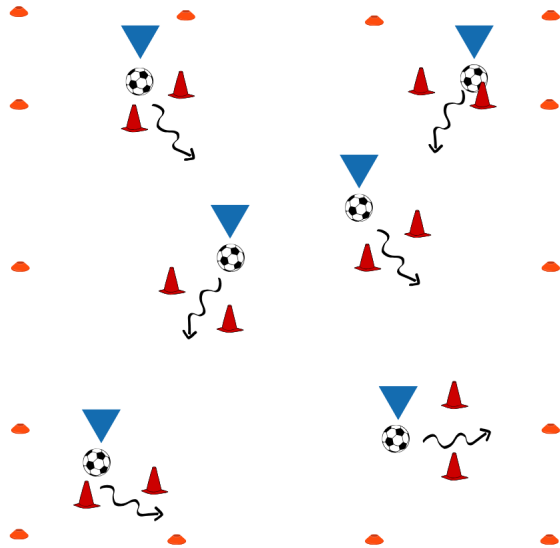
Keep the ball close with small touches.

Use inside, outside, and sole of the foot to maneuver.

WHEN (You will enter the activity)

HOW (You will deliver the information)

ACTIVITY 2: Body Ball



BODY BALL

Activity Objective

Teach players to dribble with close control while using their body to maneuver the ball around obstacles.

of players/Opponent

8 players

Size/Shape of Field

15 x 25 yards

Ways of Scoring

Players score by successfully navigating through the cone gates with the ball under control. Add a challenge: keep count of how many gates completed in 30–60 seconds.

Active/Recovery Duration

60-90 seconds / 90 seconds

Repetition/Sets

15 - 30 seconds 8 sets

Total Activity Duration

10 minutes

Rules

Place several gates inside the grid, about 1 yard wide. Players start with the ball and dribble around the grid avoiding teammates. The coach will call out a body part ("knee"), players will dribble with that body part through the gates. After time is up, ask players how many goals they scored.

Constraints/Restrictions

Left or Right foot only. Skill at the gate

Rotations (Substitutions)

All players work at the same time in their own grids. After each round, rotate directions or change gates to keep variety.

Coaching Interactions

Encourage players to look up while dribbling. Remind them to make small, quick touches on the ball so that they can change direction as needed. Praise players when they stop quickly with the ball.

WHAT (Coaching Points)

Use different parts of the foot (inside, outside, sole) to move the ball.

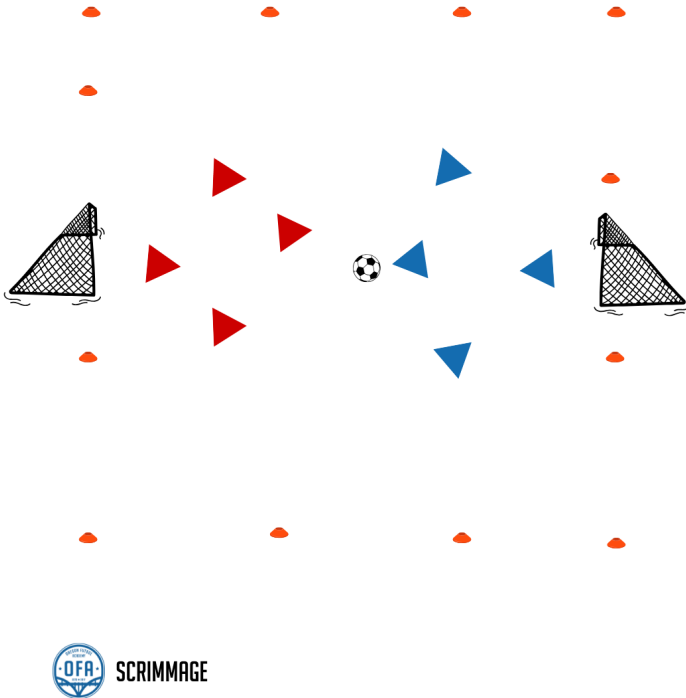
Stay low and balanced with knees bent.

Keep head up as much as possible while dribbling.

WHEN (You will enter the activity)

HOW (You will deliver the information)

ACTIVITY 3: Scrimmage

	Activity Objective	Give players the opportunity to apply skills learned in practice in a realistic game environment, encouraging decision-making, teamwork, and fun.
	# of players/Opponent	4 v 4
	Size/Shape of Field	15 x25 yards
	Ways of Scoring	Teams score by putting the ball in the opponent's goal. Bonus coaching focus: reward teams for stringing passes together, dribbling past defenders, or spreading out.
	Active/Recovery Duration	10 minutes/5 minutes
	Repetition/Sets	
	Total Activity Duration	20 minutes Two 10 minute halves -5 minute half time
	Rules	-Normal small-sided game rules: dribble, pass, shoot, and score. -Kick-ins or dribble-ins instead of throw-ins to keep flow simple. -No goalkeepers at U7/8 -Have fun and emphasize fair play, effort, and teamwork.
	Rotations (Substitutions)	Encourage spacing—don't all bunch around the ball. Remind players to look up, dribble with control, and pass when needed. Support teammates (move into open space). Defend by staying between the ball and the goal.

Coaching Interactions

Let them play. Give small ques and reminders that were used in previous activities.

WHAT (Coaching Points) Encourage spacing—don't all bunch around the ball. Remind players to look up, dribble with control, and pass when needed.	WHEN (You will enter the activity)	HOW (You will deliver the information)
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Use key words used throughout practice to help them make decisions.