



# US SOCCER METHODOLOGY GRASSROOTS COACHING LICENSE



## PLAY – PRACTICE – PLAY

With the launch of the US Soccer Grassroots Coaching Licenses, offered in the 4v4, 7v7, 9v9 and 11v11 game formats, comes the implementation of a new method of delivering the practice session. This new format is known as the Play-Practice-Play model and will be used in the Grassroots License courses.

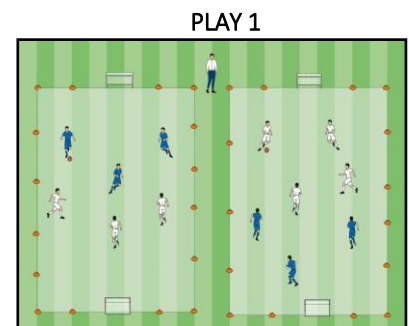
In my opinion, this new format has two objectives (both of which I think are pretty good things!)

1. *Make the job of the grassroots coach easier.*
2. *Make the practice more enjoyable for the players.*

### I. The Play Stage (Initial). 10 – 15 minutes

From the very beginning of practice, as the players start to arrive, organize them into some small, “informal” games. 2 vs 2; 3 vs 3; 4 vs 4 games. Even if its 4 vs 3 – that’s OK. During this time, provide very little coaching to the players. If anything, give a couple of comments over the flow of the game – to begin to introduce the topic you will work on for the day. After a bit, stop the game(s) and call them in for a quick chat. Again, just ‘plant the seed’ of the topic you will focus on in the practice. “In your game, I want you to think about.....”. No longer than 1 minute. Then send them back out to play some more.

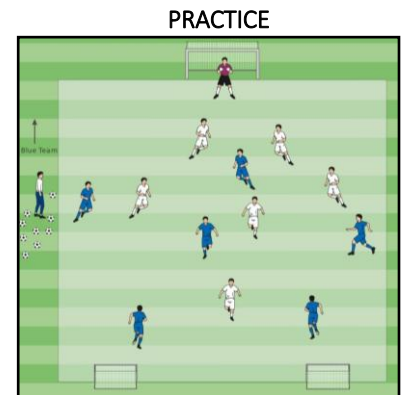
*Research shows that children learn best when they get to experience periods of unstructured play, where they can experiment on their own. It promotes enjoyment, inclusion and development.*



### II. The Practice Stage. 20 – 45 minutes

During this middle part of the practice session, small group activities are organized to focus on the topic of the day. 2-3 activities can be used during this stage. The activities should be game-like and provide the players with problems to solve. The example shown to the right shows a simple “offense vs defense” set up. This replicates a real game and allows the coach to focus on the topic of the day.

*This stage is where some real teaching can occur. The coach can provide thoughtful questions to the players, in an effort to guide them in coming up with solutions. However, it is important that the activities look like soccer, the stoppages are brief, and the players have opportunities to solve the problems presented.*



### III. The Play Stage (Final). 10 – 30 minutes

During the final stage of the practice, the coach should organize 2 teams and play a practice game as close to the numbers they play during real games (4 vs 4; 7 vs 7; etc). In this final scrimmage, the coach can see if the teaching in the practice stage has carried over to the game. Let them play, remind them of the topic, ask questions – and watch how they do.

Using the **Play-Practice-Play** model creates realistic training sessions that the players love. They get to play a lot (the game is a great teacher) and the coach gets to teach (during game-like activities). Give it a try – your players will thank you.

