



Vancouver United FC  
House League (U9 & U10)  
Coaches Manual

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**VANCOUVER UNITED FC**

Game. Club. Community.

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## **1. Preface**

Vancouver United FC has over 3200 players making it one of the biggest clubs in the province.

In keeping with the club's motto of "Game. Club. Community." we look to ensure these age groups are community-based both in terms of locations and spirit.

Prior to the merger though, the three clubs worked co-operatively on a House League forging common rules, game formats, policies and perhaps most importantly, a common philosophy on what we expect the House league playing experience to look like and how coaches, coordinators and parents can facilitate a really positive experience.

The primary goal of everyone involved in the running of our House League should be to keep kids playing. If your entire team is disappointed that the season is over and immediately start badgering their parents to sign them up for next season then everyone from the Board that sets the policies, the Age Group Coordinators (AGC) that forms the teams, the coaches that run the team, the managers that communicate the info to the parents, the parents that get their kids to practices and games and provide positive support all the way through, the Club Administrators that manage the registrations and field permits and Technical Staff that run training sessions...have all done their job.

By the time players have gone through House league soccer, they should have experienced the whole gamut of team results and experiences. They should have won some games and lost some games. They should have scored some goals and they should have been the goalie that let a few in. They should experience being part of a team and also have the opportunity to be a leader on a team. They should learn to respect their teammates and to earn the respect of those teammates. They should learn that they can trust their coaches and their coaches will show that they care for the physical, technical, and mental development of them as a player.

While it's a cliché, the key, above all, is for us all to make House League fun. A fun environment engages kids and makes them want to come and participate. It makes them open to the ideas of the coach and open to trying new things on the field. It lets nervous kids play with less fear and stronger kids feel like they don't have to do it all.

House League is the first step to learning that sport is fun and can be a part of the rest of your life regardless of how good you may be at it. Let's make sure that we do all we can to make House League a positive environment that kids want to come back to year after year. Attrition tends to be a one-way street. Once a player stops playing for a year, the odds of getting them back are quite low so let's give all our players an environment to thrive in and to learn the game in a way that they also end up loving it.

## **2. General Goals and Guidelines of VUFC House League Soccer**

All VUFC house games are played in a competitive atmosphere where the result is not the overriding consideration. Coaches, club officials, parents, and players contribute to fostering a playing environment where the players' individual needs and development are more important than the result of the games. In all House League programming the emphasis is on development, fun, sportsmanship, education, and respect for teammates, the opponents and officials. Scores or game results will be tracked for future scheduling purposes and to avoid future unfavourable game match ups. Scores are not to be compiled for the sake of standings or league tables and are not published.

### **Goals**

- To promote soccer as an enjoyable sport and fitness activity
- To develop age appropriate skills and techniques applicable to soccer
- To foster a spirit of good sportsmanship, fair play and respect for others

### **Coaching Guidelines**

- Equal playing time for all players regardless of skill levels
- Rotation of positions\* for skill development and maximum touches on the ball
- Emphasis on skill development and understanding the rules of the game
- Encourage team cooperation and support
- Teach and display good sportsmanship
- Exercise positive reinforcement
- Focus on fun, activity and improvement
- Recognize and respect injury, exhaustion and self-esteem issues
- Positive parents/volunteers on the sidelines and supportive of coach
- Winning games should be an outcome, not a priority

*\* Players should experience all positions. This does not mean they need to play all positions every game or that they need to play each position the same amount of time. All players should take a turn as goalie. Again, this does not mean they all have to play in goal every game. If playing in goal induces fear to the point of panic in some players, exercise common sense and choose an opportunity to put the player in goal after they've experienced it in training and when he or she is not likely to face much action and promise to keep the time in goal to five minutes the first time. Keep that promise.*

### 3. Game Preparation

Commit to phoning your opponent on Fridays by 6pm to confirm where and when your game is so teams always end up at the right field and the right time.

Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with you. This should include all parent phone numbers, a list of your players' allergies and medical conditions and a cell phone to make any necessary phone calls should a player get injured.

### 4. Game Management

Do not allow games to turn into blowouts. A blowout should be defined as a six goal difference or more. Here is how you can avoid having games turn into blowouts.

1. Talk to the opposing coach before hand to find out if they are short players or missing some of their stronger players. Communicate the same info for your team to your opponents.
2. Get an early read on the game and have a plan in mind that can be implemented quickly and early on if seems necessary.
3. Explain to your players that no one benefits from blowouts. The team losing does not enjoy it and the winning team is not challenged to play good soccer.
4. Be prepared to put strong goal scorers in goal and move less skilled or slower players into attacking roles.
5. Tell your team that you are now not counting goals scored in the nets but rather when they complete five (or more) passes to teammates.
6. Make your team pass and shoot with their weak foot only.
7. Drop off when your opponents win the ball in their half rather than pressuring them high up the field.
8. Regardless of the method, employ tact and subtlety. *Yelling to your team, "OK, no more goals. We've scored a ton already. Just pass the ball around." is counter-productive to the intention.*

Taking a player off the field and playing with one fewer than your opponents usually is not enough to mitigate a blowout. It also becomes obvious very quickly to the opponent and can come across as insulting or condescending, according to past feedback from parents and coaches.

When your game is over please report the score from your game using the method preferred by your age group coordinator.

## 5. Coach Conduct at Games

Be aware of the tone and volume of your voice when talking or shouting during games. Be aware of negative body language. These are eight and nine year old kids. Some will be very intimidated by what they perceive as loud, aggressive instructions from adults.

There is virtually nothing a child this age can do in a soccer game that should be met with loud anger.

## 6. How to ensure successful training sessions

Some of you have coached teams before and are very comfortable with the role but many of you are taking on a team for the first time. This handbook is just one of many resources the club provides for coaches and teams.

While it is true that having a background as a soccer player can help you as a coach, it is not automatically the case. Transferring knowledge to young players takes more than just knowing how to play the game and the club has many very good coaches who have little or no playing background but have committed to learning how to coach.

Here's a simple diagram that shows the steps necessary to running an effective practice. Then each level is looked at in more detail beneath.

### Layers of a Successful Training Session



Looking a bit more closely at each level in the pyramid:

**Preparation:** what you do before you arrive for a practice

- Ensure training time and location are well communicated
- Know how many players you will have to work with
- Know if you will have assistant coaches, how many and what you want their role to be at the practice
- Have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) with you. This should include all parent phone numbers, a list of your players' allergies and medical conditions and a cell phone to make any necessary phone calls should a player get injured.
- Always make sure you are not alone when running a practice. If assistant coaches are unable to make a training session, plan in advance to have a parent attend (and help). At the very least you will avoid a situation where a player needs emergency attention and you still have the rest of the team to care for
- Check that you have all the equipment you need and that your balls are pumped up (surprising how many teams use semi-flat balls in training)
- Know what your team needs to work on and have a written practice plan in hand. The VUFC Technical Staff coaches have put together a set of practice plans for each age group. These are available to download on the website.

**On site organization:** what you do when you arrive for a practice

- If there is any doubt about how to divide the field up between the teams that are scheduled for when you are there, quickly discuss this with the other coaches and reach agreement about who is training where
- Quickly scan the field for safety issue. Most gravel fields have fences that come close to the playing. Make players aware of these.
- Note any concerns with the playing surface and lights and report them to your Age Group Coordinator (AGC)
- Mark the perimeter of the space you have been allocated with cones so both the coaches and players can visualize the entirety of the space you have at your disposal. Far too many coaches end up squeezing their drills and games into spaces that are much smaller than necessary
- Use the space effectively.
  - You will likely finish with a scrimmage that involves using all or most of your space. Mark this space before practice starts with cones including the goals so it's ready for you
  - If you have two drills or games that can both fit within your space simultaneously set both of them up ahead of time so you can quickly flow from one to the next to avoid downtime.

**Command of group:** your tone and expectations along with the example you set go a long way to ensuring a successful practice.

- All teams benefit from a team meeting right at the start of the season with players and coaches. Let parents see who you are and learn what your expectations of them and the players are.
- At the first practice, create a positive, enthusiastic first impression with the players so they are excited about being on your team. Remind them they are there to play soccer and your job is to help them learn the game and enjoy it but you need their help to do that. They help by listening and being good teammates to each other.
- When problems arise with behaviour, start with a calm but firm response. Jumping immediately to obvious anger and frustration will not just alienate many of the players (including those who are not behaving poorly) but leave you fewer options to move to if calm and firm is not enough
- Keep breaks to a minimum. *Five minutes for a water break is an eternity.* Allow one minute for water breaks and if you've been able to set up your practice so you can flow from one element to another it will work. You will reduce the amount of time available for players to goof off and maximize their time on the ball.
- Encourage players to take chances in learning new skills and allow them to make mistakes in a safe, blame free environment. This is important.
- Teach your players that being part of a team means accepting the strengths and weaknesses of their teammates and supporting them when they do well and when they make mistakes.
- Accept you will likely have at least one player who presents behavioural problems and identify the approach you will need to take to mitigate the disruptive effect this could have on your practice. One approach is this:
  - Warn player one on one that behaviour must improve
  - Give a non-specific warning to whole team that they all have to be good teammates and focus on what the team is working on in practice. Give a lingering look at player who is causing problems while talking to team.
  - If problems persist, warn player that you may need to talk to his/her parents
  - Give early warning to parent that problem is emerging but you're working on it. Deliver this message calmly and in a supportive manner
  - If problems still persist, sit player during the scrimmage so that player sees consequence to behaviour and parent sees child sitting out when they arrive to pick up. Don't engage parent but make yourself available if they engage you. Best if parent and player now have a talk on the way home about why they weren't involved in scrimmage without your involvement.
  - Engage parent at next practice and agree on steps that can be taken if behaviour does not improve. Get buy in from parent.



**Instructional content:** age appropriate, dynamic, fun

- Keep training sessions active and fun. Avoid drills that involve lineups especially in colder weather.
- Rather than have 12 players in a drill that involves two lines, split it so you six players working in four lines. Maximize touches on the ball per player
- Utilize the practice plans provided on the club website. They will go here once the club's new website is complete: <http://vancouverunitedfc.com/academy/coach-referee/coaching/coach-resources>
- Utilize the advice of staff coaches who will work with your teams through the season. Ask questions, get advice.
- BC Soccer has made coach education mandatory now and all our coaches have until the end of the season to be certified for the ages they are coaching. We will be offering courses like "Learn to Train", intended for U9 to U12's, this fall at no cost to VUFC coaches.
- Know that you will have at most 20 practices per season in House. You do not need 20 separate practice plans. Five or six good practice plans, provided at the URL above, repeated 3-4 times each with some 'Mini World Cup' days thrown in benefits the players by giving them the repetition they need along with the chance to get familiar with the drills and games. It also benefits you as a coach as you can start to focus less on the mechanics of the drills and games as you get used to running them and concentrate more on the coaching points.
- In general, small sided games with conditions that offer direction (either towards goals, end zones or specified targets) and opposition will give you the best return given the overall time you have with your teams.

We have a very good staff of professional coaches at the club and the Board has approved a Player Development Plan that puts a strong emphasis on coach education. Please take advantage of the resources available and contact us if you need additional help.

## 7. VUFC Rules for Small Sided Games – U9 - U10

### Contents

- A) House League Formats
- B) Age Specific Field Markings
- C) Length of Games/Substitution Guidelines
- D) Age Specific Rules

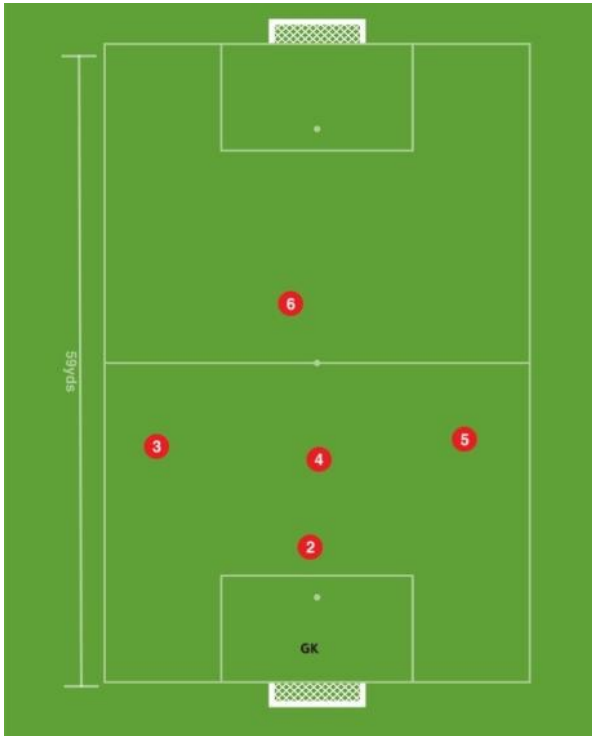
### A) House League Rules and Game Formats by Age Group

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Format: # of fields and # of players on field at once in ( )</b>	<b>Approximate Field Sizes</b>	<b>Ideal # Of Players/ Team</b>	<b>League/ Scheduling</b>	<b>Refs</b>
U9 Boys*	2 x 6 aside (total 12)	50-55 X 36-38 yds	15-17	Turf & grass in Fall; Stadium turf in Winter	yes
U10Boys*	2 x 6 aside (total 12)	50-55 X 36-38 yds	15-17	Turf & grass in Fall; Stadium turf in Winter	yes
U9 Girls*	2 x 6 aside (total 12)	50-55 X 36-38 yds	15-17	UBC Woods Turf	yes
U10Girls*	2 x 6 aside (total 12)	50-55 X 36-38 yds	15-17	UBC Woods Turf	yes
All numbers above include goalkeeper					

\*Format and team sizes based on double team format.

## B) Age Specific Field Markings

For Under 9 and Under 10 Programming the field marking shall consist of:



*Field\* showing positions for 6 a side (above)*

### Field Markings:

The field of play is divided into two halves by a centre dot at the mid point of the field.

### The Goal Area:

A goal area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, ten (12) yards from each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of ten (12) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the goal area.

## **C) Length of Games/Substitution Guidelines**

*The duration of the games are as set out below:*

Under 9/10: 2 x 25 Minutes                      Half Time 5 minutes

*Number of players: Goalkeeper plus five (ie. 6 v 6)*

### *Substitution Guidelines:*

Substitutions are unlimited with equal playing time per player.  
All players on each team must learn and play all positions.

## **D) U9 and U10 Small Sided Games Rules**

### ***Organization and Rules***

- Field size is: 36-38yards X 50 to 55yards
- 12 yd “boxes” marked, within which designated goalkeeper may handle the ball centre marked with center dot
- 6 players on field (5 plus a goalkeeper)
- When ball goes out of play, game is restarted by:
  - Sideline: Throw ins
  - Endline: Goal kicks or corner kicks depending on who kicked it out
- After a goal, restart at centre with a kick, defending team to start 10 yards away.
- Defending team must stand 10 yards away from ball for all kick offs, corner kicks, and free kicks and behind the retreat line (halfway line) on all goal kicks.
- There are no offsides called at U9 and U10, however, coaches should not abuse this rule and are discouraged to have their player(s) “goal suck” or just stand in front of the opposing net when the play is in their defensive end.

### ***Refereeing***

- At U9 and U10 young refs with limited experience are used. Please respect that these young refs are in training and will make mistakes. Fair play and sportsmanship should be displayed by coaches, parents, players at all times. If a foul occurs, offending team must be 10 yards from the ball during the free kick. At U9/10, “pass back rule” is in effect. Goal keepers **may not** handle ball passed back to them by teammate while in their goal area.

### ***Time/Length***

- Games are allocated 75 minutes on grass and 60 minutes on turf. Please arrive 20-30 minutes early to organize team and warm up. If you are on grass you will have a bit more time to warm up on your field. If you are on turf, you will need to find space not on your playing field to warm up as your game will start very soon after the previous one ends
- All games will end five minutes before the hour at the latest. **No exceptions.**
- 25 minute halves with 5 minute half time, unless game starts late (see below)
- If a game starts late, then that game will play a shorter second half as all games will end on the hour at the latest. **No exceptions.**

- Unlimited substitutions allowed, equal playing time for all players, and players must learn and play all positions

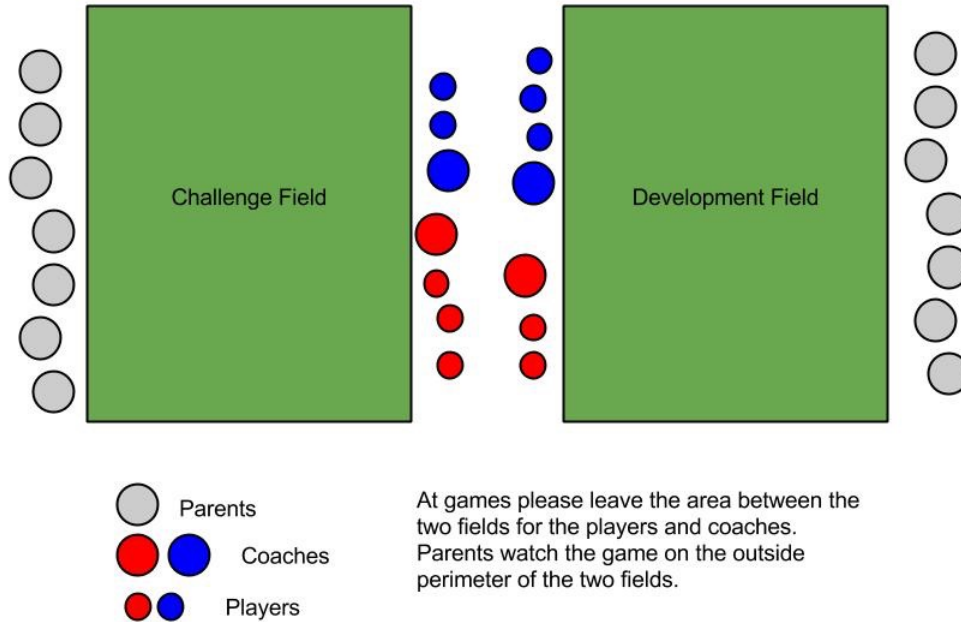
### ***Coaching Points***

- Coaches should be on the sidelines and should not be stepping onto the field to give instructions.
- **Encourage** players to pass, dribble, and communicate with each other
- **Encourage** lots of movement and maintaining proper passing distance (5-15 yards for this age) as opposed to standing and clumping
- Ideally, all teams should be playing in a formation consisting of the following 3 elements: defenders, midfielders, forwards. To that end, it is recommended to play a 1-3-1 formation. This means one defender, three midfielders, and one forward, plus a goalkeeper. This will give your give your team depth and width in their play.

### ***Where to go on a Dual Field Format***

It's important that teams are able to work within the two fields during games. It allows coaches to communicate with each other during the game and to quickly and easily move players between the two fields as necessary. Because space is limited between the fields we ask that it be left solely for players and coaches and that parents view the game from the opposite sideline of the field their child is on. Here's a diagram to illustrate that point.

Note: please do not stand behind the goals



### ***Balancing Time on Dual Field Format***

The U9 and U10's play their games using a dual field format that comprises a "Challenge" field for stronger players and a "Development" field for weaker players. Teams have 16-18 players, on average, in order to facilitate this.

Early in the season virtually every player, except the very strongest and the most inexperienced should spend time on both fields. This helps coaches see where players are properly challenged and also normalizes the idea of two playing environments with the players.

The rationale behind this format is that tiering, or 'soft-tiering' in this case benefits all players. By U9, we have players who are naturally athletic and have been playing soccer since they were four years old with some having trained in Academy environments for years as well as players who are stepping on the field for the first time and have never participated in a team sport before. It is completely unrealistic for adults to assume that that a single playing environment will work for both these player types. To remedy that we offer two playing environments without locking players into one for the entire season.

Coaches will move players between the two fields as per the chart below. They can do this fluidly as a game is going on, at half time or from one game to the next. To help guide player movement between fields, here is a chart showing what a proper, graduated approach to player movement between the Development and Challenge fields should look like.

It is important to note that these games are still one team against another and games should start and end at the same time, including half time, so teams can do one cheer and one handshake at the end of the game.

***It is critical that coaches follow the playing time distribution model below. All players should experience both Development and Challenge fields at least twice in the first four weeks.***

*Chart showing percentage of players who should play on each field week by week*

Date	Challenge Field	Middle group	Development Field	Notes
Week 1	5%	90%	5%	Only your very strongest and weakest players should be playing entirely on either of the respective fields
Week 2	10%	80%	10%	By now all players should have spent at least half a game on each field unless there are developmental issues that make putting some players on the Challenge field
Week 3	10%	80%	10%	
Week 4	15%	70%	15%	
Week 5	15%	70%	15%	
Week 6	20%	60%	20%	More players starting to find comfort levels in the two playing environments
Week 7	20%	60%	20%	
Week 8	25%	50%	25%	Coaches now very aware of their team's strength relative to others and able to take pre-emptive measures in conjunction with other team's coaches to mitigate blowouts
Week 9	25%	50%	25%	
Week 10	30%	40%	30%	Player shifts now more common mid-game to keep games competitive and not let scores get out of hand; coaches putting conditions on teams/players to reduce goals for
Week 11	30%	40%	30%	
Week 12	33%	33%	33%	
Week 13	33%	33%	33%	Games from now on should increasingly see players on the same field each game but coaches should look for opportunities to test players in different environments and not be afraid to move kids if they feel it is best.
Week 14	40%	20%	40%	Players are not to be moved between fields as a punishment.
Week 15	40%	20%	40%	
Week 16	45%	10%	45%	
Week 17	45%	10%	45%	
Week 18	50%	0%	50%	
Week 19	50%	0%	50%	
Week 20	50%	0%	50%	

## **8. VanU Team Support (VTS): Staff coach support at your training sessions**

- U9 to U10 teams will receive the same form and quantity of pro-coach sessions that our divisional teams receive. Last year, we changed the format for all pro coach support so that all teams get at least three, and time permitting, four sessions run by a staff coach. There will also be game support from staff coaches early in the season to help coaches adjust to the game format and what to look for when coaching. After each game where a staff coach is present, he or she will talk to you for five minutes afterwards and provide you with a sheet that has some notes on what went well, what needs work and some suggestions for training. *This program is called VanU Team Support (VTS).*
- To complement VTS, staff coaches have put together *sets of age appropriate practice plans* for each age group. Again, here is the URL: <http://vancouverunitedfc.com/academy/coach-referee/coaching/coach-resources>



## **9. Contact information**

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