ROOTED
ACADEMY

FOUNDATIONS.

COACH GUIDE AGES 6 TO 8

Love the game. Learn to move. A practice playbook for any sport, rec or travel.

DEVELOPMENT CULTURE™
PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

ROOTED-ACADEMY.COM

START HERE

THE GOAL AT 6 TO 8.

Kids who love the game, move well and want to come back next season. Fun is the strategy. Rec and travel should look nearly the same at this age.

1

EVERY KID MOVING

Groups of 3 or 4. No long lines.

2

EVERY KID ENGAGED

One ball per kid. Hundreds of touches.

3

EVERY KID RETURNS

The real scoreboard at this age.

PRACTICE AT A GLANCE

- **45 to 60 minutes**, 1 to 2 times a week
- **Half or more** is game-like
- **1v1 to 4v4**, not full-sided
- **One coaching point** at a time
- **Talks under 30 seconds**
- **Every kid** plays every position

WHAT CAN WAIT

- Fixed positions
- Laps and running as punishment
- Long talks and set plays
- Standings and rankings
- Picking one sport

COACH THE KID IN FRONT OF YOU

Skills and maturity vary a lot from 6 to 8. Every kid gets the same practice. Each player type then gets one small extra focus, so every kid grows at their own pace.

NEWBIE First season in this sport	**Plus:** a few minutes of 1:1 fundamentals with a parent volunteer during skill build. At home, watch the sport and practice one simple drill a week.
ADVANCED A few seasons in, often ahead of the group	**Plus:** leads a demo and partners with other skilled players in drills. A quick 1:1 on leadership jobs. At home, take on an advanced skill challenge.
ATHLETE, NEW TO GAME Fast and coordinated, still learning this sport	**Plus:** leads the agility drills and gets extra reps on sport skills. At home, watch a game and notice where players move, and master one skill drill a week.
DEVELOPING PLAYER Loves the game, still building coordination and strength	**Plus:** 1:1 time with a parent volunteer on agility and coordination, in small, simple steps. At home, karaoke, slides and squats, plus a few push-ups and sit-ups.

THE FRAMEWORK

FIVE PILLARS.

Every practice touches all five. Let one or two lead each session.

1	**PHYSICAL & BODY HEALTH** Run, jump, land, throw, catch, kick. Both sides of the body. Water, snacks and sleep count.	**Your move:** form first, then repetition and speed.
2	**SPORT SKILLS** Your sport's basics plus skills from others. Short reps, each player has equipment.	**Your move:** drills, 3 to 5 minutes at a time. Corrections, one at a time.
3	**GAME IQ** Game rules, decision making, listening to the coach, understanding why.	**Your move:** pop-up quizzes. Let players guess, then affirm or correct.
4	**MENTAL + EMOTIONAL** Mistakes are part of the game. Focus on the next play. Feel anything. Act intentionally.	**Your move:** praise effort, give space for frustration, ask for a reset after big emotions.
5	**CHARACTER + TEAM** Follow directions, always shake hands, don't blame the refs, lift the team up, high-fives, leadership.	**Your move:** name it when you see it. Character awards given by a teammate.

THE PRACTICE ARC.

Same five parts every practice. Pick a **theme of the day**: one skill, one pillar.

MOVE 8	SKILL 10	PURPOSE GAME 12	PLAY 12	3

1. ARRIVE AND MOVE	Moving within a minute. Movement games, water bottles out.
2. SKILL BUILD	Theme skill in short challenges. Change it every 3 to 5 minutes.
3. PLAY WITH A PURPOSE	Small game with one rule that rewards the theme.
4. PLAY THE GAME	3v3 or 4v4. Coach less, watch more.
5. HUDDLE	One question, one shout-out, one thing for home.
6. FUN FINISH OPTIONAL	End with the kids' favorite game. Use it after a weekend game, as a reward for great effort, or when attention is short and they just need to move.

DAY ONE

YOUR FIRST PRACTICE.

Meet the team, learn names, set the promises and see where every kid is starting.

BEFORE DAY ONE

- [ ] Roster with parent contacts and medical notes
- [ ] A welcome note to families: schedule, gear list, water bottle
- [ ] One or two parent volunteers to help run stations
- [ ] Equipment bag: balls, cones, pinnies, a first aid kit

GEAR CHECK

Soccer	Shin guards under socks, cleats, a ball
Basketball	Court shoes, a ball
Football	Cleats, mouthguard, a flag belt or a helmet and pads that fit
Baseball, softball	Glove, batting helmet that fits, bat at the right size, cleats
Lacrosse	Helmet or goggles, mouthguard, gloves and pads, a stick that fits
Volleyball	Knee pads, court shoes

Every sport: a full water bottle, shoes tied, layers for the weather. Helmets snug, straps fastened.

DAY ONE AGENDA

0 to 8
ARRIVE AND MOVE

GEAR CHECK + NAME GAME

As kids arrive, check gear and fit. Circle up: each kid says their name and a favorite animal. Then Follow the Leader.

Say: "Welcome! We're going to have fun and get better."

8 to 18
SKILL BUILD

SKILL CHECK

Simple stations for the main skills. Note who's brand new, who's played before and who needs extra moves work.

18 to 30
PURPOSE GAME

TEAM PROMISES + RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

Share the promises: every kid moving, every kid engaged, every kid returns. Teach ready position, then play.

Say: "Show me ready!"

30 to 42
PLAY

SMALL-SIDED GAME

Everyone plays. Rotate roles. No sideline coaching.

42 to 45
HUDDLE

GOAL KICKOFF

Each kid picks one "I can" goal. Send home the goal worksheet.

Ask: "What's one thing you want to learn this season?"

AFTER DAY ONE

- [ ] Jot down each kid's player type
- [ ] Send families a short recap, plus a list of any missing gear
- [ ] Plan practice two around what you saw

SAMPLE PRACTICE · 45 MINUTES · 8 TO 12 KIDS

READY POSITION.

Theme: **ready position** + **be a great teammate**

Ready position in any sport: feet shoulder-width apart, knees bent, weight on the balls of the feet, hands ready, eyes up.

0 to 8
MOVE

FOLLOW THE LEADER + RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT

One leader per lap, leader's choice: jog forward, backward, skip, crab walk. Then a ball warm-up with a partner: throwing, kicking or passing. Finish with Red Light, Green Light: move on "green," freeze in ready position on "red."

Say: "Show me ready!"

8 to 18
SKILL

READY, REACT

Partners, each with equipment. From ready position, react to a toss, roll or pass: catch, trap, field or return it. New challenge every 3 to 5 minutes: other side, faster, after a spin.

Say: "Feet set, hands ready, eyes up."

18 to 30
PURPOSE GAME

READY CALL

Any small game from the game bank, 3v3. Anytime the coach calls "Ready!", players freeze in ready position. Every player who's ready earns a point for their team.

Say: "Be ready before the ball comes to you."

30 to 42
PLAY

4V4 WITH YOUR SPORT'S SCORING

Rotate roles. No sideline coaching.

Watch for: ready without being told, a high-five after a mistake.

42 to 45
HUDDLE

QUESTION, SHOUT-OUT, HOME

Clean up equipment, then: "When did being ready help you today?" A teammate shout-out. "Water, carbs, protein and a good sleep tonight."

You need: equipment for each player, 16 cones, pinnies, 4 small goals or targets, two small fields or courts.

GOAL SETTING.

Effort and skill, never scores · Worksheets + tracker: rooted-academy.com/families/#goals

1. SET · WEEK 1

Each kid picks one "I can" goal they control: "I can use my other foot."

2. CHECK · EVERY HUDDLE

Thumbs up, sideways or down. Celebrate the try.

3. CELEBRATE · SEASON END

Name the progress, not the wins. Pick the next goal.

GAME BANK

EIGHT GAMES, ANY SPORT.

Learn them once. Change the skill and the rule all season.

SHARKS AND MINNOWS
1 + 2

Minnows move a ball across; sharks tag. Tagged players become "seaweed" taggers.

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT
1 + 4

Move on green, freeze on red. Add "yellow" for slow, "purple" for switch sides.

ROB THE NEST
1 + 3

Teams race to bring balls to their nest, then steal from others. Most balls wins.

GATES
2 + 3

Move the ball through as many cone gates as you can in 60 seconds. Beat your score.

END ZONE
3

3v3 or 4v4. Score in the end zone; bonus for a pass. Best game for open space.

KEEP AWAY 3V1
3 + 5

Three keep it from one. Count passes. Lose it, you defend.

TARGET CHALLENGE
2 + 4

Hit the target, step back. Miss, try again. Compete with your own best.

RELAY BUILDERS
1 + 5

Skip, crab walk, carry. New teams every round; cheer every runner.

TRANSLATE THE GAMES TO YOUR SPORT

Every game above says "move the ball" and "score." Here's what that means in your sport.

SPORT	MOVE THE BALL MEANS...	SCORE MEANS...
Soccer	Dribble, both feet	Small goal or end zone
Basketball	Dribble, both hands	End zone or low hoop
Baseball, softball	Throw, catch, field	Beat the runner to a target base
Lacrosse	Cradle, scoop	Pass into end zone or target
Hockey	Stickhandle	Small net
Volleyball, tennis	Bump, set, tap	Hoop or target zone

Any game: no one sits out, keep numbers small, change one rule at a time.

MAKE IT FUN!

- **Silly targets:** balloons (water-filled on hot days), cone or bat stacks, buckets
- **Get the coach:** you're the shark or the target
- **Rewards:** a clutch chain or magic move award, a new player each week
- **Power-ups:** a golden ball worth double
- **Team records:** beat the team best each week
- **Kids' choice:** the winner picks the next rule
- **Music on:** freeze when the music stops

CLIPBOARD PAGE

WHAT TO SAY.

TRY THIS	INSTEAD OF
☐ **"Great try. What's next?"**	~~"No, not like that."~~
☐ **"Where's the open space?"**	~~"Spread out!"~~
☐ **"Love how hard you worked."**	~~"Nice goal."~~
☐ **"Who helped a teammate?"**	~~"Who scored?"~~

NEXT-PLAY RESET

Pick a clap or a word like "next." Use it after every mistake, yours included.

HUDDLE QUESTION

"What was the hardest thing you tried today?"

FUEL AND REST.

WATER

Every kid brings a bottle. Breaks every 10 to 15 minutes.

SNACKS

Real food after games: fruit, cheese and crackers, half a sandwich.

SLEEP

9 to 12 hours a night for ages 6 to 12.

REST

1 to 2 days off a week, plus time for other sports. Plan that movie night with a friend!

Slow down if a kid limps, has pain that keeps coming back or starts to dread practice. Tell the parents and suggest they check in with their doctor or the club's PT.

MORALE BOOSTER · CHARACTER BUILDING

THE SUPERPOWER CIRCLE.

A two-minute close where every kid hears something good about themselves from a teammate. It turns a rough day into a team moment.

WHEN TO USE IT After a loss · After a tough practice · When the team feels flat · Before a big game · Any time a team needs a lift

HOW TO RUN IT

1 CIRCLE UP	Everyone sits or kneels in a circle, equipment down, eyes in.
2 COACH FIRST	Name another coach's superpower so players hear how it sounds. **Say:** "Coach Dan's superpower is being patient. He helped me stay calm today."
3 GO AROUND	Go around the circle. Each kid names the teammate on their right, so nobody gets left out. **Starter:** "[Name]'s superpower is ___!"
4 CLOSE IT	Hands in, a team word on three, then home.

WHAT GOOD SOUNDS LIKE

"Ava's superpower is cheering everyone on!"

NAME	STEER AWAY FROM
☐ **Cheering others on**	~~Scoring the most~~
☐ **Never quitting on a play**	~~Being the best~~
☐ **Helping a teammate up**	~~Cool gear~~
☐ **Trying new things**	~~Put-down jokes~~

COACH TIPS

- ☐ Kids this age copy you. Keep your example short and specific.
- ☐ Stuck? Offer two choices: "Was it cheering or trying hard?"
- ☐ Clap for every superpower. The teammate says "Thank you."
- ☐ Keep the score out of the circle.

Why it works: players learn what their teammates notice and value, and every player gets a moment to be seen. In the Practice Plan Builder, check **Superpower close** to add it to any practice.

COPY THIS PAGE

MY PRACTICE PLAN.

DATE _____ SKILL THEME _____ PILLAR THEME _____

PART	MIN	GAME OR ACTIVITY · COACHING POINT
1. ARRIVE AND MOVE		
2. SKILL BUILD		
3. PLAY WITH A PURPOSE		
4. PLAY THE GAME		
5. HUDDLE		

HUDDLE QUESTION _____ WHAT WORKED? _____

PILLARS THIS PRACTICE TOUCHED · TICK EACH ONE

1	2	3	4	5
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PHYSICAL & BODY HEALTH	**SPORT SKILLS**	**GAME IQ**	**MENTAL + EMOTIONAL**	**CHARACTER + TEAM**
Form first, then reps and speed	Drills, 3 to 5 minutes at a time	Pop-up quizzes	Praise effort, ask for resets	Name it when you see it

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BUILD THE ATHLETE.
PERFORMANCE WILL FOLLOW.

More coach guides and the Development Culture™ self-assessment at **rooted-academy.com**

SOURCES

American Academy of Pediatrics, Overuse Injuries, Overtraining, and Burnout in Young Athletes, Pediatrics 2024 · American Academy of Sleep Medicine, Recommended Amount of Sleep for Pediatric Populations, 2016 · IOC consensus statement on youth athletic development, Br J Sports Med 2015 · USOPC American Development Model · Lloyd et al., Youth resistance training international consensus, Br J Sports Med 2014 · Smith, Smoll and Cumming, mastery climate and young athletes' performance anxiety, 2007 · Jayanthi et al., sports specialization and injury, Am J Sports Med 2015 · Aspen Institute Project Play

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