

# TRAINING AND MATCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Youth soccer organizations should pay close attention to creating a training and game day environment which is suitable to players' age, ability, and commitment level. A well-structured long-term development plan will create a scenario where players will have better success in mastering the environment that has been created for them.

Over-training, playing too many games per season, and competing year-round can have a detrimental effect on a players' long-term development.

The table below provides clubs with recommendations in three training and game areas that will help create an optimal training environment. Some clubs may have external factors, such as field space, that may affect the full implementation of each element.

1. Training recommendations
2. Competition recommendations
3. Game Day recommendations

## VARIABLES

The following factors impact each of the areas:

- Is the team recreation or travel?
- What is the commitment level of the team?
- What is the overall team ability level?

## (1) TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table provides suggestions on training length, number of sessions per week, number of playing seasons, ball size, and if the group should be co-ed.

AREA	U6	U8	U10	U12	U14	U16
<b>TRAINING DURATIONS (MINUTES)</b>	45-60	60-90	60-90	90	90	90
<b>SESSIONS PER WEEK</b>	1	1-2	2	2-3	2-3	2-3
<b>PLAYING SEASONS</b>	1-2	2	2-3	2-3	2-3	2-3
<b>SOCCER BALLS SIZE</b>	3	4	4	4	5	5
<b>CO-ED</b>	Yes	Yes/No	No	No	No	No

Additional considerations:

Ball Size: For travel soccer, ball size should default to the same size used during game play

Coed: For travel soccer, U8 is often the age group where gender is separated. For in-house and clinic style programs, coed groups can be used as needed for older ages.

Playing season: The youth soccer calendar has two main playing seasons, spring and fall. Summer and winter are considered supplemental seasons. The overall goals and commitment levels of the team will impact the number of seasons that a team commits to. It is important that all teams, regardless of ability and commitment level, take a break for at least one of the four main seasons.

## (2) COMPETITION RECOMMENDATIONS

The following table provides recommendations as to when a club should start travel soccer and enter tournaments.

AREA	U6	U8	U10	U12	U14	U16
<b>TRAVEL SOCCER</b>	No	Locally	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>TOURNAMENT ATTENDANCE</b>	No	Festivals	1 per season	1 per season	1 per season	1 per season

## Additional considerations:

Travel Soccer: At the younger ages, it is more beneficial to keep players within an in-house development program so that they can master the technical aspects of the game without the pressures of travel soccer. Even at U8 and above, travel soccer should be done with a fun, player-centered approach in line with the Red Bulls' philosophy prioritizing long-term player development over short-term results.

### (3) GAME DAY RECOMMENDATIONS

For travel programs, game day logistical decisions are driven by the governing league. For this reason, Red Bulls recommends that clubs should follow the guidelines provided by US Soccer and US Youth Soccer. These two organizations provide a number of great resources that cover the following topics:

Field Size

Match Duration

Number of players on the field

Roster size

Goalkeepers

Playing time

Restarts

### US SOCCER LINKS:

[U.S. Soccer Coaching Curriculum - Planning and Training](#)

[U.S. Soccer Coaching Curriculum - Age Group Organization](#)

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