

Dear Coach:

Thanks for volunteering to be a Munchkin Soccer Coach. The North Royalton Soccer Club (NRSC) depends on the dedicated effort of people like you to help sustain and enrich our program. If you enjoy what you're doing, please tell a friend. We are always looking for more volunteers. And if you need help in any area, please ask. Ask an NRSC board member, as your Munchkin League Commissioner, ask your fellow coaches, or visit the NRSC website at www.nrsc.net. We have books, videos, pamphlets and a talented group of commissioners, coaches, and other club members that are always willing to support the Munchkin program. Good luck, and thanks again for your time and commitment.

The North Royalton Soccer Club

First Things First

Now that you're a coach, where do you start? At the Coaches' meeting, of course. The Coaches' meeting is usually the first Monday in August. At the meeting you'll receive your team roster and possibly your equipment (cones and size 3 soccer balls), uniforms, and game schedules. Sometimes these items are handed out at a later date announced at this meeting. The meeting is a good place to ask questions and meet the coaches you'll see on the field this year. Your fellow coaches are a great source for little games and drills you can use during your team practices.

Once you have the team roster, you can call the parents of your players. But you may want to wait a week or so if you don't have all the information in the list below. That will save you a second set of calls. Here's the information you want to provide:

- Your name and phone number
- The required equipment for players. Players are required to wear shin guards and the shin guards must be covered. Recommend black shorts and black soccer socks for all players. Soccer socks are typically black and the black shorts will match any uniform color. Soccer shoes are strongly advised to keep the players from slipping, but not required. It doesn't hurt to ask that the players bring a size 3 ball each week.
- The time and date of the first game plus any other schedule information you have. It helps to be able to tell the parents what field you'll be on for the first game and what color uniform you have. This reduces the first week chaos.

Here's the information you want from the parents:

- If you don't have an assistant coach designated on your team roster, ask your parents if they can help. You will absolutely need an assistant so don't be afraid to ask.
- Does the player have a nickname they preferred to be called?
- Do they plan on missing any weeks? This will help you when you make the all-important snack and drink schedule.
- An email address. You can save yourself a lot of trouble if you can email schedules and rosters instead of dealing with paper copies.

The Season Starts Today??!!

Yes, it's opening week. Here are a few things you'll want to take to the first game:

- The equipment
- The all-important snack and drink schedule. Typically, the coach provides the snack and drinks for the first game and then your schedule will take care of the rest **(use email if you can)**.
- Copies of the game schedule **(use email if you can)**
- Name tags. If you're not good with names, this will help. Of course, you can always resort to the uniform number but remember that the kids have no idea what number is on their back.
- The uniforms, if you have them at home.
- A copy of the team roster with phone numbers. The parents appreciate this so they can call each other for rides **(use email if you can)**.

Here's an Easy Game to Play...

It's game time! Well, not yet. The one-hour time period for Munchkins is divided into a 30-minute practice session followed by a 30-minute game. This handbook contains a number of drills and games you can use to make that half hour fun and educational. You'll quickly start making up your own. You should use games or drills where every player is doing something, not just standing in line. If you do use lines, keep them short by using your assistant coach. Here are some other ideas:

Foot skill ideas (you need everyone to have their own ball for most of these):

- Start with something easy. Have them put one foot on the ball and one on the ground. Then have them switch, hopping back and forth from left foot to right. Let them go as fast as they want. This drill and the next one are a great warm-up.
- Have them pass the ball back and forth between their feet. Again, let them go at whatever pace works best.
- Red light, green light – Line all the kids up at one end of the field, each with a ball, spaced a few feet apart. When you say green light they start dribbling toward the other end. When you say red light they stop. Add a yellow light or “reverse” for even more fun.
- The snake line (or the train) – Have the kids line up single file and give the first player the ball. Tell them they can dribble wherever they want on their field on the rest of the team will follow. After 30-45 seconds, they give the ball to the next player in line and go to the end. Keep it going until every player has a chance to dribble. Kids love this for some reason.
- Relay races – Use your imagination. Instead of dribbling around cones, have them dribble around their older brothers/sisters. Or dribbling through their legs. Or crawling through their legs.

Set up a box using cones, about 20 feet long and 15 feet wide. This box has many uses, such as:

- Crab soccer – Put two players (or use the older brothers/sisters again) in the box as crabs. They need to be in crab walk position. Everyone else gets a ball and spreads out at one end of the box. When you say ‘Go’ they try to dribble to the other end without going outside the box or having one of the crabs kick their ball out of the box. Everyone that’s knocked out becomes a crab for the next run. Keep going back and forth until everyone is knocked out.
- Tag – Everyone has a ball but the tagger. They have to dribble inside the box while the tagger chases them down. If you want to make it harder for the tagger, play Freeze Tag. Players who are tagged are frozen. They can be unfrozen if another player tags them (or dribbles through their legs or any other crazy idea you have). The tagger is done when everyone is frozen. Or have the tagger try to kick all the other balls out of the box (this game has many names).
- Dribble and shoot – Give every player a number, say, their uniform number. Every player gets a ball and dribbles in the box. When you call out a number that player passes you the ball, you pass it back to them, and they shoot. If you have an assistant you can both call out numbers, one at each end, using two goals. It sounds complex but four year olds can do this.
- Here's a guaranteed winner with the kids. Give each player a ball. Have them dribble the ball in the box. Every 20 seconds or so, tell them to stop and put a body part on the ball. See how many know their left foot from their right. The kids really have fun when you ask them to put their stomach, nose, or chin on the ball. But for some reason the all-time favorite is the ear. You'd be surprised how many can hear the ocean!

The goal of all of the above games is to get the kids to control the ball. Change speed, change direction, start and stop.

Passing and shooting:

- Surprisingly, passing back and forth isn't a bad idea. Just don't do it for more than a couple minutes. The players should use the big flat surface on the inside of the foot. It's hard for young kids to turn that foot to trap and kick so don't be discouraged when they struggle.
- The Super "W" – Have the kids line up in a "W" formation. Put one player about 15 feet from the goal and zigzag the rest toward the opposite goal. Put all the balls at the far end. Have the players work the ball from the farthest player to the closest, back and forth down the field. The player closest to the goal shoots. Encourage them to track down missed shots and keep working until it's in the net. Keep the balls coming until they're all in the goal.
- Pass and shoot – The easiest and most popular drill ever. Use your assistant coach and two goals to keep the lines short. The player will pass you a ball, you pass it back, and they shoot. Again, if they miss encourage them to keep shooting until the ball is in the goal. Liven it up by having them dribble around a cone first before they pass it to you.

The idea behind these drills is simple passing and persistent shooting. Don't stop until the ball is in the goal.

Finally, Game On

You do know the rules, right? Actually, there are no rules, just suggestions. If you and your opponent both have more than six players you should split your teams in half. Play two games at the same time using your field and your opponents' field. Two 3 v. 3 games are better than one 6 v. 6 game. More players get to touch the ball and you avoid the 12-player pileup that almost always occurs with a larger game. Try to keep the games equal in talent by putting the better players from each team on the same field. If your team has an odd number of players, split your team so the smaller team has the better players. And avoid using substitutes, 4 v. 3 is just as good as 3 v. 3. The extra player won't make a big difference.

Don't worry about the rules. Just let the kids play. Your coaching instincts will take over from here. Remember, LET THE KIDS HAVE FUN!

It's Juice Box Time

After the game, enjoy a super sweet snack and a powdery juice box. You've earned it. Without you this wouldn't be possible.

Thanks again!