

ALEXIS'S

SOCCER MENTOR PLAYBOOK

How to coach a 6-year-old beginner

An 8-week, one-on-one plan built around joyful games, simple skills, clear boundaries, and a child-first coaching style.



8 WEEKS

45-MINUTE SESSIONS

SIZE 3 BALL

PARENT PRESENT



THE MISSION: Help her love the ball, trust herself, learn the basics, and leave every session asking when she can play again.

Created July 2026

Research-informed. Parent-supervised. Designed for practical use on the field.

START HERE

What this guide is trying to accomplish

At six, “prep for soccer” means confidence, coordination, ball familiarity, and joy — not tactics, conditioning, or pressure.



THE BEST TEST OF A SESSION: Did she smile? Did she touch the ball a lot? Did she learn one small thing? Does she want to come back?

Realistic outcomes after eight weeks

BALL CONFIDENCE • Dribbles without being afraid of mistakes • Stops the ball on command • Uses both feet naturally, without being forced	BASIC CONTROL • Keeps the ball reasonably close in open space • Changes direction with a simple turn • Looks up for a gate, target, or goal
PASSING + SHOOTING • Uses the inside of the foot for a short pass • Receives a rolling ball with a softer touch • Strikes toward a target with balance	PLAYER HABITS • Tries again after a miss • Understands “ball, goal, space” • Can play a simple 1v1 safely and happily

How to use the plan

- 1

Run one coached session per week — Each session is 45 minutes. An optional second session should repeat favorite games rather than add more instruction.
- 2

Read only the week you need — Bring the field-side page or take a phone screenshot. Alexis should not be reading paragraphs while the child waits.
- 3

Keep one main teaching point — Every week has one “one thing to teach.” If the child remembers that one idea, the session worked.
- 4

Adapt to the child in front of you — A six-year-old may be brave one week and hesitant the next. Make the game easier before giving another correction.
- 5

Let the parent know the win — After each session, share one success, one favorite game, and one simple focus for next time.

Research basis: U.S. Soccer’s 4v4 grassroots guidance emphasizes fun, safety, developmentally appropriate environments, player-centered coaching, and Play-Practice-Play. [1]

NON-NEGOTIABLES

Safety and boundaries

Alexis is the soccer mentor. A responsible adult remains present and responsible for the child, the environment, medical decisions, and emergencies.

SAFETY BEFORE SOCCER

The teen coach teaches; the parent or guardian remains the responsible adult



ADULT PRESENT

In sight and able to step in



PUBLIC SETTING

Observable and interruptible



NO PRIVATE MESSAGES

Communicate through a parent



NO RIDES

Parent handles transportation



NO HEADING

Age 10 and under



CHECK THE FIELD

Holes, glass, wet spots, goals



STOP FOR SYMPTOMS

Headache, dizziness, confusion



30-MINUTE LIGHTNING RULE

Wait after last thunder

Use adult-level safeguards even though the trainer is also a minor

- At least one responsible adult — ideally the six-year-old's parent or guardian — stays on-site, in sight, and able to interrupt the session.
- All scheduling, changes, payments, photos, and messages go through parents or guardians. Alexis should not privately message the six-year-old.
- No rides, private indoor spaces, locker-room situations, changing help, massage, or injury treatment. Get the parent immediately.
- Get written parent permission before the first session. Allow the parent to observe every minute. Follow any club, league, facility, or state rules that are stricter.
- No photos or video unless the parent has clearly approved them. Never post the child publicly without specific parent permission.

Stop play immediately when...

HEAD OR BODY IMPACT

- Headache, dizziness, nausea, confusion, balance trouble, unusual behavior, or "I don't feel right" means stop and get the adult. Do not return that session. [7]

WEATHER TURNS

- At thunder or lightning, leave the field for a safe building or vehicle. Outdoor activity resumes only 30 minutes after the last thunder or flash. [8]

PAIN CHANGES

- Sharp pain, limping, swelling, breathing trouble, chest pain, or a child who suddenly looks unwell means stop. The adult decides next steps.

ATTENTION IS GONE

- A tired, upset, overheated, or overwhelmed six-year-old is finished learning. Shorten the session without guilt.

UNDERSTAND THE PLAYER

What a six-year-old is actually like

The fastest way for a good teenage player to become a bad youth coach is to expect a six-year-old to think, move, or focus like a teenager.



IMPORTANT: At this age the ball is still a toy, attention shifts quickly, movement skills are developing, and the child often thinks “my ball” before “our team.” That is normal.

ATTENTION • Use brief directions • Demonstrate instead of explaining • Change activities every 5–9 minutes • Give only one cue at a time	MOVEMENT • Expect awkward turns and balance changes • Use running, hopping, skipping, and stopping inside games • Build recovery breaks into the session
EMOTIONS • Correct gently • Never embarrass or compare • Celebrate effort and brave attempts • Finish with a success she can feel	SOCCER THINKING • No formation lectures • No position specialization • Dribbling and ball comfort come first • Simple choices: go, stop, turn, pass, shoot

The practical rules for Alexis

- Talk for 20 seconds or less, then get the ball moving.
- Use a story or challenge: puppy ball, treasure, gates, shark, castle, escape.
- Offer two choices instead of asking an open-ended question: “Pink game or blue game?”
- Do not correct every touch. Pick one detail, praise what changed, and move on.
- End an activity while she still likes it. Six joyful minutes beats fifteen forced minutes.
- Never punish with running, push-ups, or taking away the ball.

What not to teach yet

NO HEADING	NO SLIDE TACKLES	NO FITNESS BLOCKS	NO TACTICS LECTURE
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U.S. Youth Soccer prohibits players age 10 and under from heading the ball in matches and organized training. Keep every ball away from the child’s head and do not add “fun” heading games. [6]

U.S. Youth Soccer’s coaching manual advises brief directions, short activities, frequent water breaks, a 45-minute limit, and a ball available to every U-6 player. [2]

BEFORE THE FIRST SESSION

Equipment, field setup, and adult preparation

Keep the setup small. More space and more equipment do not make a better session.

PLAYER GEAR • Size 3 soccer ball [3] • Shin guards — safest default for the whole session • Athletic shoes or properly fitted cleats • Water bottle, weather-appropriate clothing, sunscreen	COACH GEAR • 8–12 disc cones in 3–4 colors • Two pop-up mini goals or four cones for goals • One spare size 3 ball • Phone/timer kept with the adult, not used while coaching
SAFETY GEAR • Adult-held first-aid kit • Emergency contact and medical notes • Any child medication stays with the parent • Anchored goals only — never hang or climb	GOOD TRAINING SPACE • Flat grass or safe turf • Public and visible • No holes, glass, standing water, or hard obstacles • Enough shade or a nearby safe shelter

Simple 1-on-1 field

Use a rectangle about 10 x 15 yards for most games. Make it smaller when the ball runs away too often; make it larger when the child cannot find space. Cone goals should be 3–5 feet wide. This is a training adaptation — not an official match field.

SMALL BOX 10 x 15 yards Most dribbling + 1v1 games	CONE GOALS 3–5 feet wide Two goals create choices	WATER EDGE Bottles outside play Adult stays in view
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Five-minute adult check before play

- Parent confirms allergies, asthma, recent injuries, medical limitations, emergency contact, and whether the child has played before.
- Adult checks weather, field hazards, goal stability, footwear, shin guards, jewelry, and ball pressure.
- Alexis explains the session in one sentence: “We will play games with the ball for about 45 minutes, and you can take a break anytime.”
- Child chooses a cone color or game name. That tiny choice helps create ownership.

U.S. Soccer’s 4v4 standards use a size 3 ball, require shin guards for games, remove goalkeepers, and prioritize a fun and safe environment. [3]

HOW ALEXIS SHOULD COACH

Play first. Teach one thing. Play again.

This is a one-player adaptation of U.S. Soccer’s Play-Practice-Play idea: let the child experience the game, add a small teaching point, then return to a game where she can use it. [1]

The five-part coaching loop

1	SHOW — Demonstrate once at child speed. Stand beside her, not ten yards away.
2	SAY ONE CUE — Use a short phrase: “tiny touches,” “freeze it,” “plant beside it,” or “body between.”
3	LET HER TRY — Give several attempts before talking again. Do not narrate every touch.
4	PRAISE SOMETHING TRUE — Name the behavior: “You looked up before the gate,” not just “good job.”
5	PLAY ON — Turn the skill into a race, story, target, or 1v1. Soccer is the teacher.

Language that works

SAY THIS	AVOID THIS
“Try it your way first.”	“No, that’s wrong.”
“Can you keep the ball close like a puppy?”	“Control the ball better.”
“I saw you try again.”	“You should know this.”
“One change: plant beside the ball.”	A list of four corrections.
“Water, then pink game or blue game?”	“Why aren’t you listening?”
“What was your favorite part?”	A post-session lecture.
 WHEN SHE MISSES: Do not perform a technical autopsy. Say “brave try,” give one cue only if needed, and restart quickly.	

SESSION ZERO

The first meeting and no-pressure baseline

The goal is not to test or rank her. Alexis is quietly learning what the child enjoys, what feels hard, and how much instruction she can handle.

15-minute parent conversation

- What does the parent mean by “prep for soccer” — confidence, first team experience, tryout readiness, fitness, or basic skills?
- Has she played before? What does she love or avoid? Is she afraid of the ball or of making mistakes?
- Any allergies, asthma, recent injuries, sensory needs, attention needs, medications, or restrictions?
- Who will be the adult present every session? Where will sessions happen? What is the lightning/heat backup plan?
- Agree that success is participation and progress — not turning a six-year-old into a travel player in eight weeks.

Quiet baseline games

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Free ball play	Say: “Show me what you like to do with the ball.” Watch comfort, dominant foot, and imagination. Do not correct.
4 min	Dribble + stop	Place two cone gates. Ask her to dribble to a gate and freeze the ball. Watch touch size and balance.
3 min	Roll + pass	Roll the ball from 5–7 feet. Ask her to stop it and pass it back. Watch whether she uses the toe or inside.
3 min	Shoot at a cone goal	Let her choose the distance. Watch balance, target awareness, and whether she enjoys scoring.
2 min	Favorite replay	Ask which game she wants one more time. Her choice tells you what motivates her.

Record observations without labeling the child

WRITE • “Ball often gets 5–8 feet away” • “Smiles during shooting” • “Needs a demo more than words” • “Stops with sole after two tries”	DO NOT WRITE • “Bad dribbler” • “Not athletic” • “Doesn’t listen” • “Weak left foot”
 PARENT UPDATE EXAMPLE: “She loved shooting and was comfortable trying things. Next week we’ll work on smaller dribbling touches and stopping the ball. Her favorite game was the two-goal race.”	

EVERY WEEK

The repeatable 45-minute structure

Predictability helps the child feel safe. The games change; the rhythm stays familiar.

THE 45-MINUTE SESSION

A familiar rhythm: connect, teach one thing, repeat it in play, finish positive

0-10 MIN

CONNECT + PLAY

Check in, let her choose, start with an easy game.

10-20 MIN

TEACH ONE THING

One short cue inside a skill game. Let her try.

20-32 MIN

RESET + REPEAT

Water, a choice, then the same idea in a new game.

32-45 MIN

PLAY + FINISH

1v1 or shooting, one true win, and a home quest.

3 MIN
HELLO7 MIN
PLAY 18 MIN
SKILL A2 MIN
WATER9 MIN
SKILL B3 MIN
CHOICE9 MIN
PLAY 24 MIN
RECAP

FIELD-SIDE RULE

Stop an activity while she is still enjoying it. Six joyful minutes teaches more than fifteen forced minutes.

Why this structure works

- It begins with play instead of a lecture.
- It alternates active blocks with two short water/choice resets.
- It repeats the weekly skill in different games instead of drilling one exercise too long.
- It ends with a game and a positive memory, not conditioning.
- It keeps the coached session within the 45-minute U-6 guidance in the U.S. Youth Soccer manual. [2]

2

OPTIONAL SECOND SESSION: Repeat the two favorite games and the final 1v1. Do not race ahead to next week's skill. Repetition is learning.

THE PLAN

Eight weeks at a glance

The sequence moves from comfort to control, then adds passing, shooting, defending, and simple decisions.

THE 8-WEEK ADVENTURE

One coached session per week; repeat favorite games for an optional second session

1

BALL FRIEND

Comfort + stop

**Smile + explore**

No pressure

2

GATE EXPLORER

Dribble close

**Tiny touches**

Stop on command

3

ESCAPE ARTIST

Turn away

**Pullback turn**

Three fast steps

4

PASSING PARTNER

Pass + receive

**Inside foot**

Soft first touch

5

GOAL HUNTER

Shoot accurately

**Look + finish**

Accuracy first

6

TREASURE GUARD

Shield + defend

**Body between**

No body battles

7

SMART PLAYER

Look + choose

**Choose a gate**

Head up

8

SOCCER FESTIVAL

Review + celebrate

**Favorite game**

Certificate

The rule for progression

Move forward when the child can play the game with confidence — not when the technique is perfect. If a week feels hard, repeat it. If she already has the skill, make the game more interesting before making it more technical.

MAKE IT EASIER

- Wider gates
- Shorter distance
- Coach walks instead of defends
- More time and fewer rules
- Let the child score first

MAKE IT HARDER

- Narrower gates
- Add a color or direction choice
- Use the non-preferred foot naturally
- Coach adds light pressure
- Ask for a turn before scoring



DO NOT SKIP TO ADVANCED WORK: A six-year-old who can dribble, stop, turn, look up, and enjoy 1v1 has a better foundation than one who memorizes positions or performs cone tricks without understanding the game.

WEEK 1

BALL FRIEND

Comfort with the ball, stopping on command, and enjoying the first session.



1

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Tiny touches when moving; sole of the foot to freeze the ball.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She moves with the ball willingly, can stop it on “red,” and finishes feeling successful.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + choice	Check shoes, shin guards, water, and mood. Let her choose the first cone color.
5 min	Free Ball Explorer	“Show me three ways to move the ball.” Copy one of her ideas. No corrections.
7 min	Traffic Lights	Green = dribble, yellow = tiny slow touches, red = stop with sole and look at Alexis.
7 min	Body-Part Freeze	Dribble; on “freeze,” stop the ball. Then touch it with knee, elbow, or one foot before restarting.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask: “Treasure game or goal game first?”
8 min	Treasure Island	Scatter cones. Dribble to a cone, stop the ball, pick up one treasure, and bring it home.
10 min	1v1 to Two Gates	Alexis walks and gives space. The child scores by dribbling through either gate. Restart quickly.
3 min	High-five recap	Ask her favorite game. Name one true win. Give the home quest.

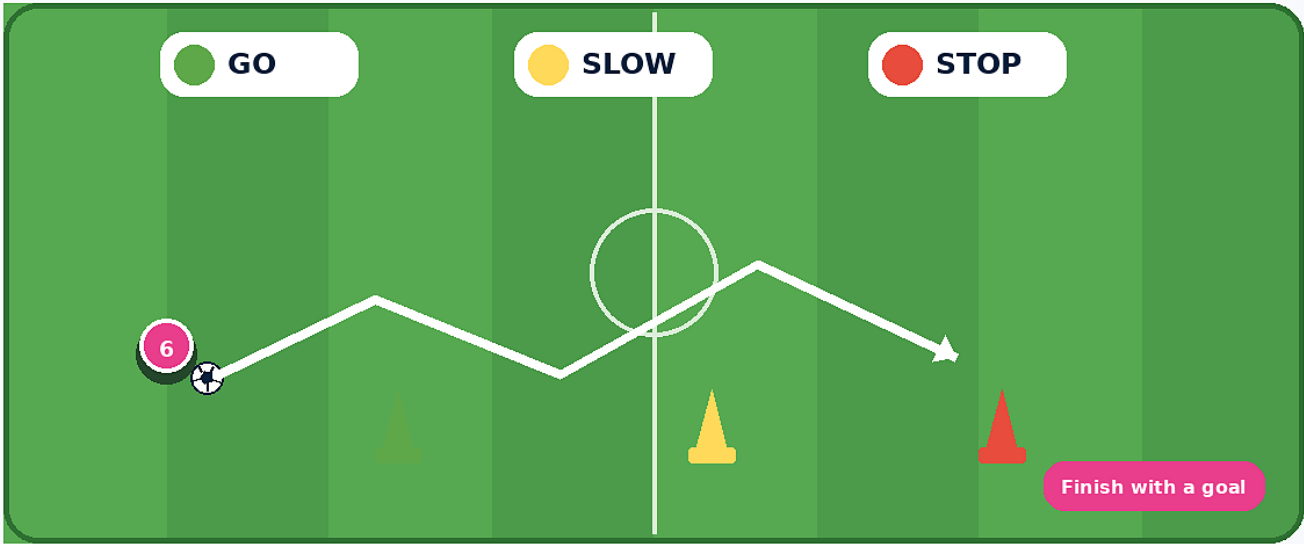
WEEK 1 VISUAL SETUP

BALL FRIEND — field card

Comfort with the ball, stopping on command, and enjoying the first session.

WEEK 1: TRAFFIC LIGHTS

Ball confidence, stopping and listening



● Coach cue: “Tiny touches. Freeze it with your foot. Then look up.”

COACH CUES

- “Tiny touches.”
- “Freeze it with your foot.”
- “Ball close, eyes up.”

MAKE IT EASIER

- Use a larger area
- Call only green and red
- Alexis does not defend

MAKE IT HARDER

- Add yellow speed
- Require a stop before scoring
- Call a cone color after she starts

WATCH FOR

- Do not grab or reposition her foot
- Avoid kicking balls toward her
- Keep the first 1v1 very easy



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: For one favorite song, dribble around five safe objects with a parent nearby. Stop the ball whenever the music pauses.



ALEXIS'S REFLECTION: Did she choose to keep playing? Which word worked best: stop, freeze, or red?

WEEK 2

GATE EXPLORER

Closer dribbling touches, changing speed, and keeping the ball within reach.



2

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Touch the ball softly enough to take the next touch without chasing it.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She dribbles through gates with fewer runaway touches and can speed up or slow down on purpose.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + favorite replay	Repeat 60–90 seconds of her favorite Week 1 game.
7 min	Gate Explorer	Build 5–6 colored cone gates. She earns a point each time she dribbles through a new gate.
7 min	Puppy Ball	The ball is a puppy: close enough to stay with her, not trapped under her feet. Change walking to jogging.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask which gate color is easiest and which is funniest.
8 min	Cone-Weave Adventure	Use only 3–4 cones. Curve around them; do not demand a perfect slalom.
8 min	Race the Coach	Child gets a big head start to a gate. Alexis uses her weak foot or moves at a walk.
7 min	1v1 to Two Gates	Child attacks either goal. Alexis defends only the middle and lets success happen often.
3 min	Recap	Praise one moment where the ball stayed close. Home quest.

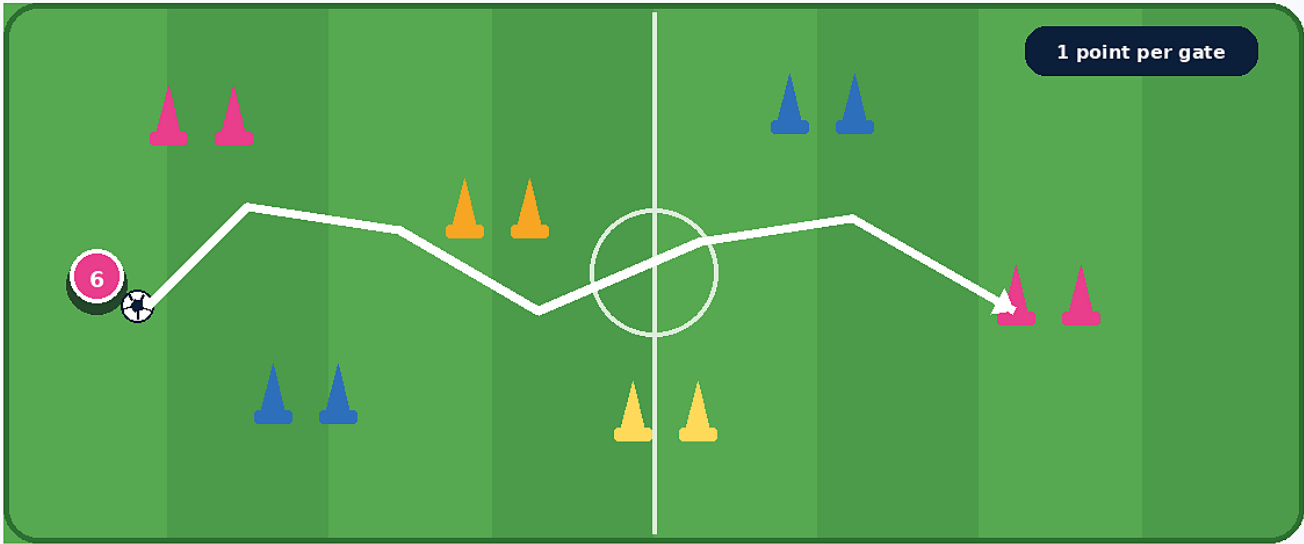
WEEK 2 VISUAL SETUP

GATE EXPLORER — field card

Closer dribbling touches, changing speed, and keeping the ball within reach.

WEEK 2: GATE EXPLORER

Dribble through as many gates as possible



● Coach cue: "Keep the ball close enough that you can change your mind."

COACH CUES

- "Touch, step, touch."
- "Can you change speed?"
- "Keep it close enough to turn."

MAKE IT HARDER

- Gate must be a new color
- Add a stop inside each gate
- Call a second gate late

MAKE IT EASIER

- Make gates 4 feet wide
- Walk instead of jog
- Remove the defender

WATCH FOR

- Do not make cone lines too long
- Do not demand both feet every touch
- If she chases constantly, shrink speed before space



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: Set up two shoe gates 6–8 feet apart. Dribble through one, turn, and return for three minutes.



ALEXIS'S REFLECTION: Was the ball closer because of softer touches or because the area was smaller?

WEEK 3

ESCAPE ARTIST

Pullback turns, inside cuts, and changing direction away from pressure.



3

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Put the sole on top, pull the ball back, turn the body, and take three quick escape steps.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She can use at least one simple turn in a game instead of running straight into pressure.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + free dribble	Let her choose a gate and travel to it in any way.
6 min	Turn Around the Island	Dribble to one cone, go around it, and return. Let her invent the first turn.
7 min	Pullback Demo + Try	Show one slow pullback. Let her try several times without correcting every attempt.
7 min	Inside-Cut Gates	Approach a cone, use inside of foot to push across the body, and escape to a side gate.
2 min	Water + choice	Ask: shark game or turn-and-score first?
8 min	Escape the Shark	Alexis walks behind. Child dribbles to the turn zone, turns, and escapes through a gate.
9 min	Turn-and-Score 1v1	Before scoring, the child must change direction once. Alexis gives obvious space to turn.
3 min	Recap	Ask her to show her favorite turn one more time.

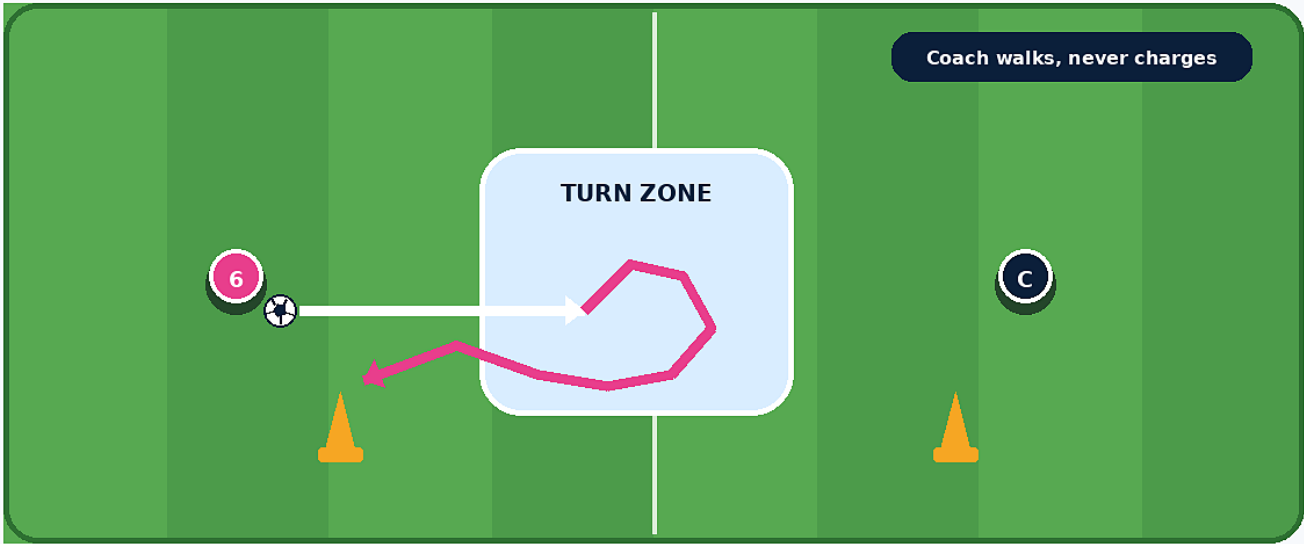
WEEK 3 VISUAL SETUP

ESCAPE ARTIST — field card

Pullback turns, inside cuts, and changing direction away from pressure.

WEEK 3: TURN & ESCAPE

Learn a pullback and an inside cut



● Coach cue: "Show the coach your back, turn away, then explode for three steps."

COACH CUES

- "Foot on top."
- "Pull it back."
- "Turn away — three fast steps."

MAKE IT HARDER

- Alexis approaches slowly
- Choose pullback or inside cut
- Score through the opposite gate

MAKE IT EASIER

- Use no defender
- Make turn zone large
- Allow any turn that works

WATCH FOR

- No sharp pivots on a planted knee
- No body contact
- Do not teach three turns in one day



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: Dribble to a safe marker, pull the ball back, and escape three steps. Repeat five times each direction.



ALEXIS'S REFLECTION: Which turn appeared naturally in the final game? Keep that one as her "go-to."

WEEK 4

PASSING PARTNER

Inside-of-foot passing, receiving a rolling ball, and moving after the pass.



4

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Plant beside the ball, open the passing foot, and send the ball to the partner's feet.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She can exchange short passes with Alexis and take a softer first touch into space.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + ball roll	Roll the ball back and forth with feet at 4–5 feet. Keep it playful.
7 min	Pass Through a Gate	Pass through a cone gate to Alexis. Change gates after three successful passes.
7 min	Soccer Bowling	Place 3–5 cones as pins. Pass the ball to knock them down; reset together.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask her to choose the next gate color.
8 min	First-Touch Treasure	Alexis rolls the ball. Child cushions it toward a colored cone, then dribbles there.
7 min	Pass and Move	Pass to Alexis, move to a new gate, receive the return, and stop the ball.
8 min	Pass-Then-Score	Child passes to Alexis, runs around a cone, receives a return, and shoots into a cone goal.
3 min	Recap	Celebrate a pass that reached feet and a soft first touch.

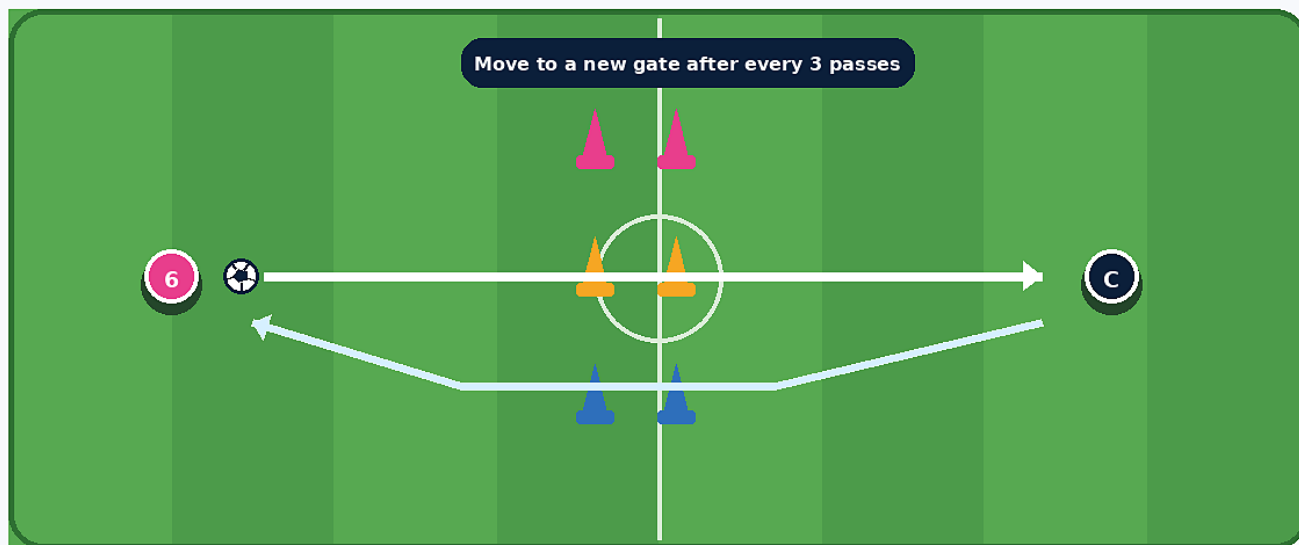
WEEK 4 VISUAL SETUP

PASSING PARTNER — field card

Inside-of-foot passing, receiving a rolling ball, and moving after the pass.

WEEK 4: PASS THROUGH THE GATE

Inside-of-foot passing and a soft first touch



● Coach cue: "Plant beside it. Open your foot. Pass to my feet."

COACH CUES

- "Plant beside it."
- "Open your foot."
- "Pass to my feet."
- "Soft first touch."

MAKE IT EASIER

- Move 4 feet apart
- Use a wider gate
- Roll return passes slowly

MAKE IT HARDER

- Move 7–10 feet apart
- Receive toward a called color
- Pass, move, and shoot

WATCH FOR

- Do not obsess over perfect ankle lock
- Avoid long-distance passing
- Dribbling still matters more than team tactics



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: Pass through a shoe gate to a parent 10 times. Count only passes that stay on the ground — no need for perfect accuracy.



ALEXIS'S REFLECTION: Did she understand "pass to feet," or did a visual gate work better?

WEEK 5

GOAL HUNTER

Balanced shooting, looking at the target, and finishing with accuracy before power.



5 **THE ONE THING TO TEACH:** Look at the goal, plant beside the ball, swing through, and land balanced.

✓ **SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE:** She can dribble into a shot and direct the ball toward a chosen part of the goal.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + free shots	Give three uncoached shots from a comfortable distance.
6 min	Look-Plant-Swing	Demonstrate once. Let her strike a still ball through a wide cone goal.
7 min	Shoot the Corners	Mark two large target zones in the goal. She chooses a color before shooting.
7 min	Dribble + Finish	Start 8–10 yards away, take 3–5 dribble touches, look up, and shoot.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask which target she wants to attack next.
7 min	Knock the Castle	Shoot or firm-pass to knock down cones. Accuracy earns the celebration.
10 min	1v1 to Goal	Child attacks a goal. Alexis shadows at low speed and never blasts a return shot.
3 min	Recap	Name the best balanced finish, not the hardest kick.

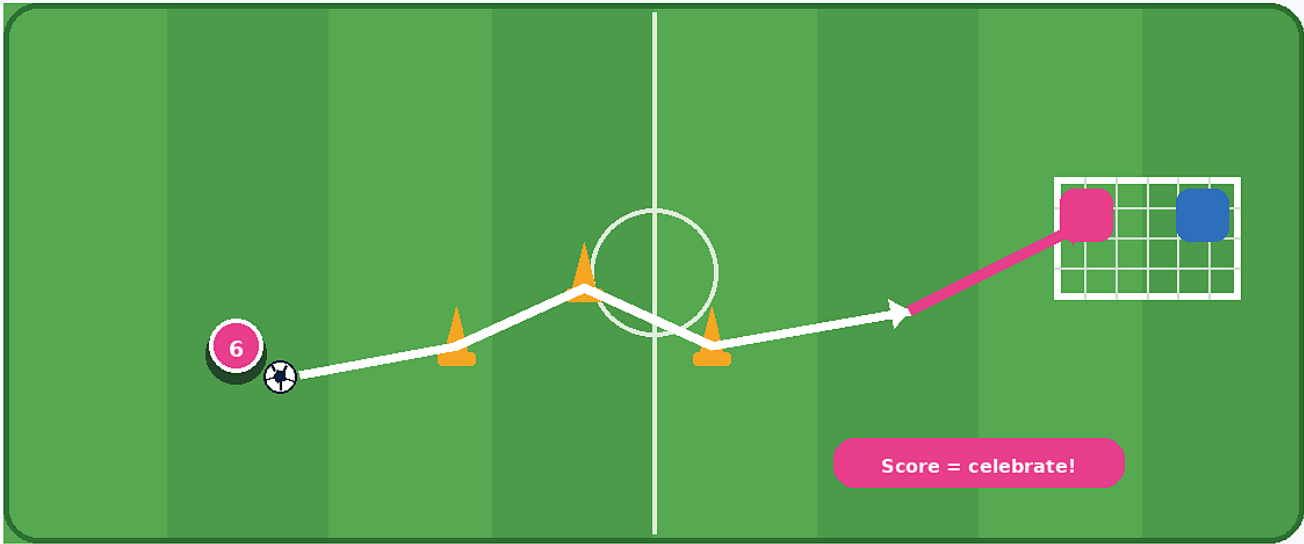
WEEK 5 VISUAL SETUP

GOAL HUNTER — field card

Balanced shooting, looking at the target, and finishing with accuracy before power.

WEEK 5: SHOOT THE CORNERS

Dribble, look up and finish with control



● Coach cue: “Look - plant - swing through. Accuracy before power.”

COACH CUES

- “Look.”
- “Plant beside.”
- “Swing through.”
- “Accuracy first.”

MAKE IT HARDER

- Dribble around one cone first
- Call a target late
- Add a walking defender

MAKE IT EASIER

- Move closer
- Use a 6-foot cone goal
- No defender

WATCH FOR

- Do not yell “kick harder”
- Do not use a full-size goal alone
- Chase balls together to avoid dead time



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: Make a safe cone or shoe goal. Dribble three touches and pass-shoot through it five times.



ALEXIS’S REFLECTION: Was her best strike a laces shot or an inside-foot finish? Let success guide the technique.

WEEK 6

TREASURE GUARD

Shielding the ball, introductory defending, and winning it without reckless contact.



6

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Keep the body between the defender and the ball; turn away from pressure.

✓

SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She can protect the ball briefly and defend by staying between ball and goal instead of diving in.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + favorite dribble	Repeat a gate or turn game for confidence.
6 min	Mirror Feet	Face Alexis without a ball. Copy side steps, small forward/back steps, and balanced stops.
7 min	Protect the Treasure	Child shields a stationary or slowly moving ball. Alexis applies only light toe-poke pressure.
7 min	Body Between	Place ball, child, and cone goal in a line. Show how to put the body between Alexis and ball.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask: defend first or attack first?
7 min	Win and Escape	Alexis dribbles slowly. Child wins or touches the ball, then escapes through a gate.
10 min	1v1 to Two Goals	Switch roles often. Defending cue is “between ball and goal”; attacking cue is “turn away.”
3 min	Recap	Praise safe patience, not just steals or goals.

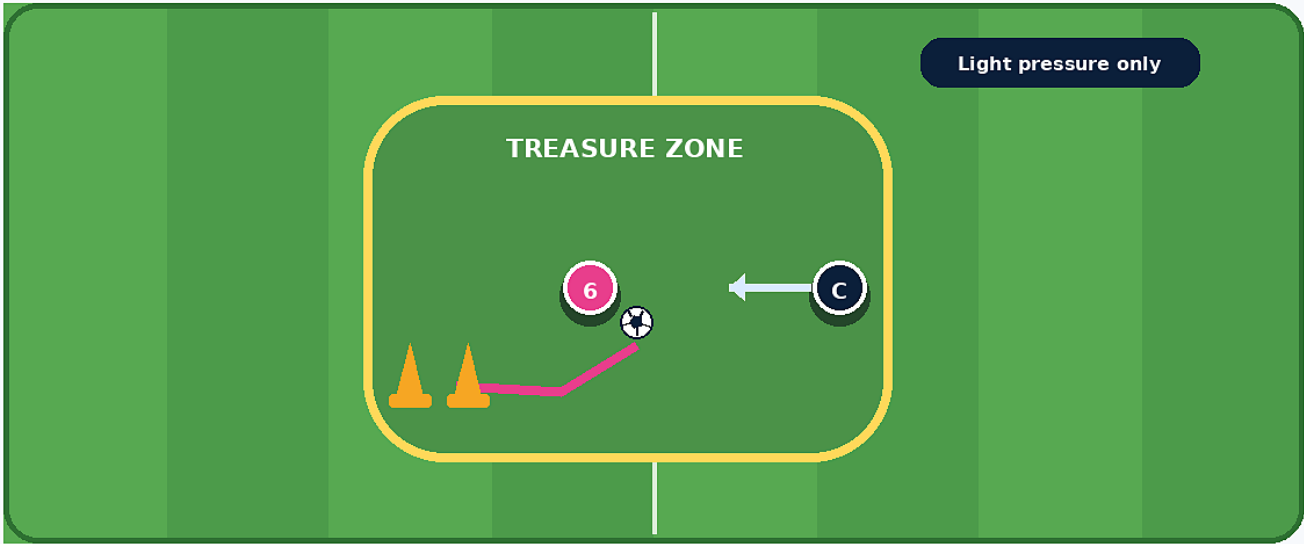
WEEK 6 VISUAL SETUP

TREASURE GUARD — field card

Shielding the ball, introductory defending, and winning it without reckless contact.

WEEK 6: PROTECT THE TREASURE

Intro to shielding and safe defending



● Coach cue: “Ball on the far side. Body between. Turn away from pressure.”

COACH CUES

- “Body between.”
- “Ball on the far side.”
- “Small steps.”
- “Don’t dive in.”

MAKE IT HARDER

- Ball moves slowly
- Add two escape gates
- Switch attack/defend on each turn

MAKE IT EASIER

- Use a stationary ball
- Alexis walks
- Make escape gate close

WATCH FOR

- No shoulder charges
- No slide tackles
- No pulling or body battles
- Alexis must reduce her size and speed advantage



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: With a parent standing still as a cone, dribble around them while keeping the ball on the far side. No contact.



ALEXIS’S REFLECTION: Did she defend by chasing the ball or by protecting the goal? Praise the second behavior.

WEEK 7

SMART PLAYER

Looking up, choosing a direction, and deciding whether to dribble, pass, turn, or shoot.



7

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Look before the next touch and choose the open gate.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She begins to make simple soccer decisions instead of following a memorized cone path.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + player choice	She chooses one favorite game to start.
7 min	Color Choice	Begin in the middle. Alexis calls a color after she starts; she scans and dribbles to that gate.
7 min	Go-Turn-Pass-Shoot	Alexis calls one action. Child performs it, then returns to free dribble.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask: "What helps you see the gates?"
8 min	Two-Gate Decision	Alexis blocks one gate slowly. Child looks up and attacks the open gate.
8 min	Pass or Dribble?	Alexis can be a wall-pass option. Child chooses to pass or dribble around a cone defender.
7 min	Smart-Player 1v1	Two goals. Bonus celebration for changing direction or looking up before scoring.
3 min	Recap	Ask her to explain one choice she made. Keep the answer simple.

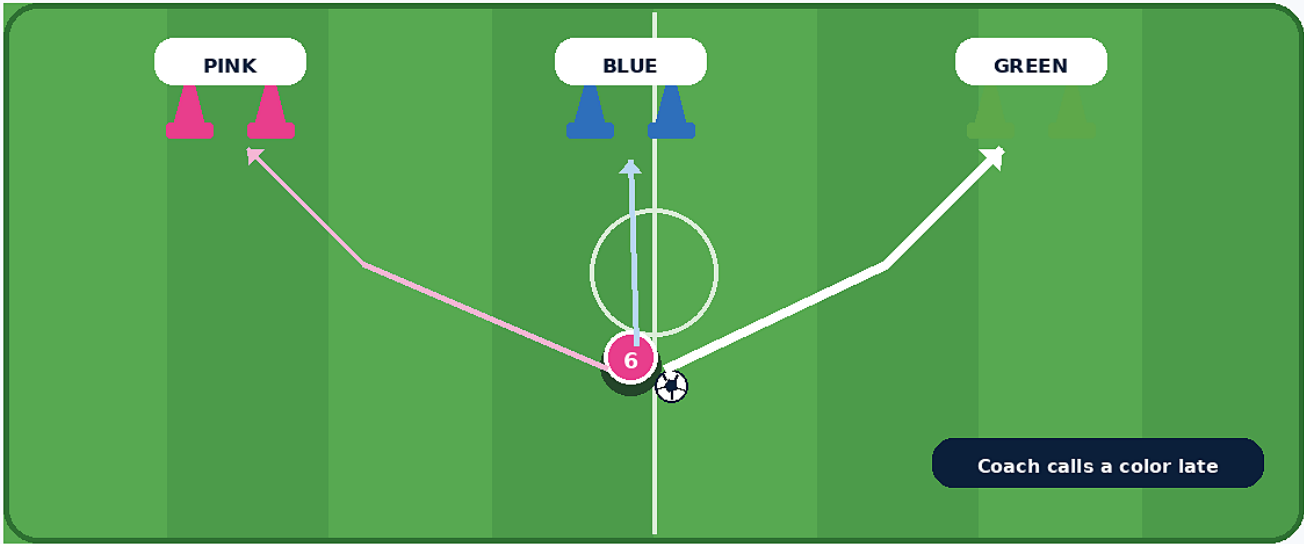
WEEK 7 VISUAL SETUP

SMART PLAYER — field card

Looking up, choosing a direction, and deciding whether to dribble, pass, turn, or shoot.

WEEK 7: COLOR CHOICE

Scan, decide and change direction



● Coach cue: “Eyes up. Which gate is open?”

COACH CUES

- “Eyes up.”
- “Which gate is open?”
- “Can you change your mind?”

MAKE IT HARDER

- Call color later
- Block one gate
- Add pass-to-coach option

MAKE IT EASIER

- Call color early
- Stand completely out of the way
- Use only two gates

WATCH FOR

- Do not turn decision games into verbal quizzes
- Let her choose wrong and learn
- Avoid constant sideline directions



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: A parent calls left or right while she dribbles toward two safe gates. Call the direction late enough that she must look.



ALEXIS’S REFLECTION: How often did Alexis let the child decide without giving the answer?

WEEK 8

SOCCER FESTIVAL

Reviewing every skill, playing the favorite games, and ending with confidence.



8

THE ONE THING TO TEACH: Use the right simple action for the moment — and enjoy it.



SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: She completes a playful skill course, uses skills in 1v1, and can name what she is proud of.

45-minute session plan

TIME	ACTIVITY	HOW TO RUN IT
3 min	Hello + celebration plan	Tell her today is the soccer festival. She will choose part of the session.
6 min	Favorite Warm-Up	Replay the favorite game from any prior week.
12 min	Adventure Course	Dribble cones, pass through a gate, make a turn, and finish on goal. Keep the course flowing.
2 min	Water + reset	Ask what part she wants to improve or repeat.
7 min	Personal-Best Round	Try the course again with a child-chosen challenge — not necessarily faster.
7 min	Favorite Skill Challenge	She chooses passing, shooting, turning, or gates. Alexis follows her lead.
5 min	Celebration Match	Short 1v1 with easy restarts and plenty of goals. No official score needed.
3 min	Certificate + recap	Ask: "What are you proud of?" Present the certificate and share parent update.

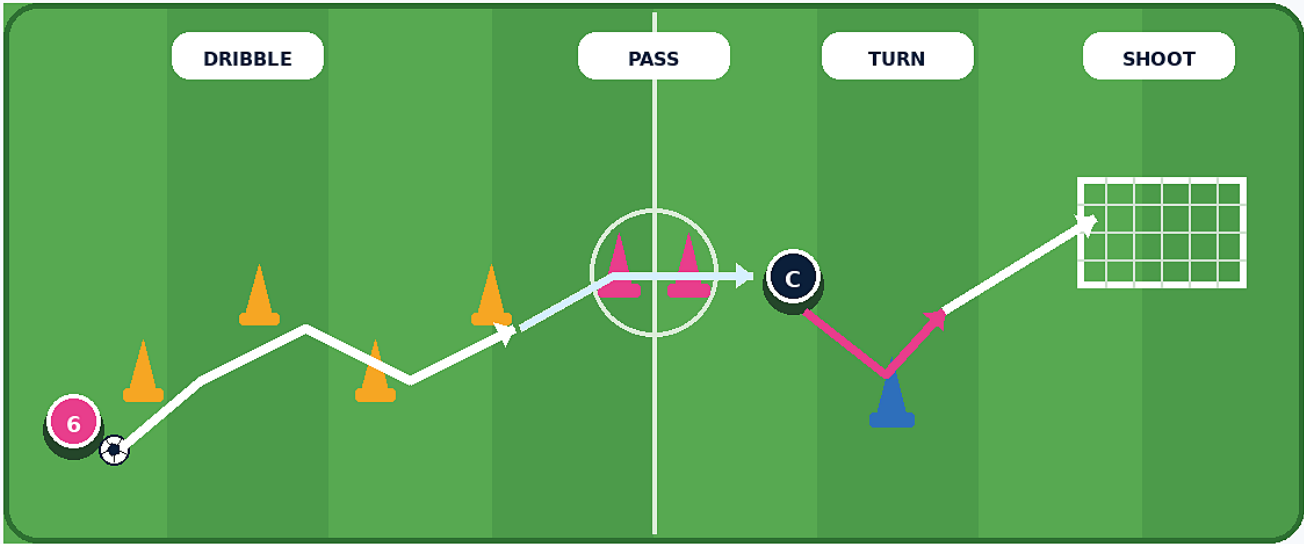
WEEK 8 VISUAL SETUP

SOCCER FESTIVAL — field card

Reviewing every skill, playing the favorite games, and ending with confidence.

WEEK 8: SOCCER ADVENTURE COURSE

Review every skill, then play the favorite game



● Coach cue: “You choose the speed. I want to see your best brave try.”

COACH CUES

- “Show me what you know.”
- “You choose.”
- “Best brave try.”

MAKE IT HARDER

- Add a color decision
- Time only if she requests it
- Coach adds light pressure at one station

MAKE IT EASIER

- Remove one course station
- Walk through first
- Let her choose every target

WATCH FOR

- Do not turn the final session into a test
- Do not compare Week 1 and Week 8 with criticism
- Celebrate confidence and effort



5-MINUTE HOME QUEST: Create a new soccer game and teach it to someone in the family. The rule: everyone should get lots of touches and have fun.



ALEXIS'S REFLECTION: What made her most proud? That answer should shape whatever training comes next.

APPENDIX A

Game library — dribbling, stopping, and turning

Use these to replace an activity that is not working, repeat a favorite, or create an optional second session.

1	RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT — Dribbling + stopping. 10 x 15 yard box. Green = go, yellow = tiny touches, red = stop with sole and look up. Add a goal after three clean stops.
2	GATE EXPLORER — Dribbling + scanning. Scatter 5–8 colored gates. Dribble through a new gate each time. Progress by calling a color late.
3	PUPPY BALL — Close control. The ball is a puppy that stays near the player. Change from walk to jog, then add turns when the puppy “runs away.”
4	TREASURE ISLAND — Stop + start. Scatter cones as treasure. Dribble to one, stop the ball, collect it, and return to home base.
5	ESCAPE THE SHARK — Turning. Coach walks behind as the shark. Player reaches a turn zone, turns away, and escapes through a gate.
6	BODY-PART FREEZE — Balance + fun. Dribble; on freeze, stop with the sole and touch the ball with a called safe body part such as knee, elbow, or foot.
!	RESCUE RULE: If attention drops, do not add more words. Switch to a game with a clear story, a visible target, and an immediate chance to score.

APPENDIX A

Game library — passing, shooting, defending, and 1v1

1	SOCCER BOWLING — Passing accuracy. Pass a rolling ball to knock down 3–5 cones. Move closer after misses; move farther only after success.
2	PASS THROUGH THE GATE — Inside-foot passing. Player and coach pass through colored cone gates. Change the gate after three passes.
3	FIRST-TOUCH TREASURE — Receiving. Coach rolls the ball. Player cushions the first touch toward a called cone, then dribbles there.
4	KNOCK THE CASTLE — Shooting accuracy. Shoot or firm-pass to knock down cone castles. Celebrate accuracy, not power.
5	SHOOT THE CORNERS — Finishing. Create two large target zones in a mini goal. Player chooses the target before the dribble begins.
6	PROTECT THE TREASURE — Shielding. Player keeps body between coach and ball. Coach gives light toe-poke pressure only. Escape through a gate.
7	TWO-GOAL 1v1 — Decision making. Two cone goals give the attacker choices and reduce straight-line collisions. Switch roles often.
8	COLOR CHOICE — Scanning. Player begins centrally. Coach calls or opens a colored gate late. Player looks up and changes direction.

APPENDIX B

Technical cues and troubleshooting

A six-year-old needs a picture and a short phrase, not a biomechanics lecture.

One-sentence teaching cues

DRIBBLING • “Tiny touches so you can change your mind.” • Use inside, outside, or laces — whichever keeps the ball moving.	STOPPING • “Put your foot on top and freeze it.” • Knee soft; do not stomp.
TURNING • “Pull it back, turn away, three fast steps.” • One useful turn is enough.	PASSING • “Plant beside it, open your foot, pass to my feet.” • Keep the pass on the ground.
RECEIVING • “Soft touch into your space.” • Do not trap it dead every time.	SHOOTING • “Look, plant, swing through.” • Accuracy before power.
DEFENDING • “Between ball and goal. Small steps. Don’t dive in.” • No slide tackles.	SHIELDING • “Body between, ball far side, turn away.” • Use light pressure only.

When something is not working

1	She will not listen — Reduce words, demonstrate, and offer two choices. Check whether the activity is too hard or too long.
2	She keeps chasing the ball — Slow down and shrink the area. Ask for tiny touches for only ten seconds, then play.
3	She is afraid of the ball — Use slow rolling balls, no shots toward her, more distance, and a softer ball if appropriate.
4	She gets frustrated — Make the target bigger, remove the defender, let her score, and praise the next brave attempt.
5	She only wants to shoot — Build a turn, gate, or pass into the path to the goal. Do not remove shooting; use it as the reward.
6	She uses only one foot — Place gates and targets so the other foot becomes convenient. Never shame or force it.
7	Alexis is winning too easily — Walk, use weak foot, count to three before defending, or defend only one gate.
8	The session feels flat — Ask the child to rename the game, choose a color, or invent one new rule.

APPENDIX C

Progress tracker and parent update

Use “E” for emerging, “D” for developing, and “C” for consistent. Do not score the child in front of her.

SKILL / HABIT	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8
Enjoyment / willingness to play								
Listens to one simple cue								
Dribbles with ball in reach								
Stops the ball on command								
Changes direction with a turn								
Passes a rolling ball toward feet								
Receives with a softer first touch								
Shoots toward a target with balance								
Defends safely between ball and goal								
Tries again after a mistake								

30-second parent update template



MESSAGE: “Today we worked on _____. Her biggest win was _____. Her favorite game was _____. Next time we will keep building _____. No safety concerns / Safety note: _____.”

Alexis’s after-session reflection

What made her smile? _____

What was too easy or too hard? _____

What one cue helped? _____

Did I talk too much? _____

What will I repeat next time? _____

APPENDIX D

Parent intake and training agreement template

This is a planning and communication template, not a legal waiver. Club, facility, and local requirements may require additional forms.

Child's name _____

Date of birth / age _____

Parent / guardian name _____

Phone and emergency contact _____

Training location and normal day / time _____

Health and participation notes

Allergies / asthma / medications _____

Recent injuries or medical restrictions _____

Sensory, attention, communication, or learning needs _____

Prior soccer experience _____

What the child enjoys or avoids _____

Agreements

☐ A responsible adult will remain on-site, within sight, and available for the entire session.

☐ All communication with the child will be open and routed through a parent or guardian.

☐ The parent or guardian remains responsible for medical decisions, medication, transportation, and emergencies.

☐ No heading, slide tackling, private spaces, rides, or injury treatment will be part of training.

☐ Photos or video: ☐ Not allowed ☐ Allowed for private skill review only ☐ Other: _____

☐ The session may be shortened or canceled for weather, pain, illness, fatigue, or safety concerns.

Parent / guardian signature and date _____

Alexis signature and date _____

Alexis's parent / guardian acknowledgement _____

TEAR-OUT PAGE

Alexis's field-side quick card

Take a phone photo of this page. This is the only page she should need during a normal session.

ONE CUE	LOTS OF PLAY	TWO CHOICES	END POSITIVE
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Before

CHECK • Adult present • Field and goals safe • Size 3 ball, shin guards, water • Weather plan clear	SAY • “We’ll play soccer games for about 45 minutes.” • “You can ask for water or a break anytime.” • “Pick pink or blue for our first game.”
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During

COACH LOOP • Show once • Say one cue • Let her try • Praise something true • Play on	DEFAULT CUES • Tiny touches • Freeze it • Eyes up • Plant beside it • Body between
WHEN SHE STRUGGLES • Make goal bigger • Remove defender • Move closer • Switch game • Let her score	WHEN ALEXIS IS TOO GOOD • Walk • Use weak foot • Give head start • Defend one gate • Count to three

End

- Replay her favorite game for 1–2 minutes.
- Ask: “What was your favorite part?”
- Name one specific win.
- Give one five-minute home quest.
- Tell the parent one win and one next focus.



THE STANDARD: She should leave feeling more confident than when she arrived.

SOCCER ADVENTURE CERTIFICATE

Presented to

for eight weeks of brave tries, joyful play,
ball mastery, teamwork, and soccer confidence.



Favorite game: _____

Coach Alexis: _____ Date: _____

Keep playing. Keep learning. Keep loving the ball.

RESEARCH AND SOURCES

Reference notes

This guide adapts authoritative youth-soccer, physical-activity, safeguarding, concussion, and weather guidance for a parent-supervised, one-on-one setting.

1	U.S. Soccer. “Five Things to Know About the 4v4 Online Grassroots Course.” Fun, safe, developmentally appropriate environments; player-centered approach; Play-Practice-Play. Open official source
2	U.S. Youth Soccer. Official US Youth Soccer Coaching Manual. U-6 characteristics; brief directions; short activities; water breaks; 45-minute sessions; one ball per player. Open official source
3	U.S. Soccer / U.S. Youth Soccer. Player Development Initiatives — 4v4 Standards of Play. Size 3 ball, no goalkeepers, shin guards, small-sided play, and fun/safe environment. Open official source
4	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Child Activity: An Overview.” Updated Dec. 4, 2025. Children ages 6–17 should get at least 60 minutes of daily activity; activities should be varied and age-appropriate. Open official source
5	U.S. Center for SafeSport. 2025 Minor Athlete Abuse Prevention Policies. Observable and interruptible individual sessions, advance parent consent, and parent observation for covered adult-minor training. Open official source
6	U.S. Youth Soccer. Players and Playing Rules Policy, Rule 305 — Heading. Players age 10 and under shall not head the ball in matches or organized training. Open official source
7	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, HEADS UP. “Signs and Symptoms of Concussion.” Common observed and reported concussion signs and symptoms. Open official source
8	U.S. Soccer Learning Center. “Lightning and Severe Weather.” Outdoor activity may resume 30 minutes after the last thunder or lightning. Open official source
9	American Academy of Pediatrics. “Soccer Injuries in Children and Adolescents.” Pediatrics, 2019. Youth soccer injury prevention and protective-equipment context. Open official source

Important notes

- This document is educational and does not replace medical advice, emergency procedures, a club safeguarding policy, or local rules.
- The U.S. Youth Soccer coaching manual is an older publication still hosted by US Youth Soccer; its U-6 developmental recommendations were cross-checked against current U.S. Soccer grassroots principles.
- The one-on-one drills, field sizes, and 8-week progression are original adaptations for this specific mentoring situation, not official U.S. Soccer session plans.
- Generated illustrations are generic and do not depict Alexis or the child being trained. Original drill diagrams were created specifically for this guide.
- Web sources accessed July 17, 2026.