

25 Key Messages for Youth Soccer Players.

1. Always play fairly, according to the spirit and letter of the rules.
2. Stay calm under difficult conditions. It's easy to maintain composure when things go right; when they don't real athletes step forward and stand up to the test.
3. Support and encourage your teammates at all times. All of us make mistakes at times and they are not done on purpose. Encourage your teammates to be the best they can be.
4. Play as hard as you can in practice and in games. **Never** be beaten because of lack of effort. Even opponents who are bigger or more skilled than you can be beaten if you **out-hustle** them.
5. Show **respect** to your coaches, referees, and your opponents; win or lose.
6. A good soccer player must have conditioning, skills and tactical knowledge. A player must work on all three to be the best they can be.
7. When your team has the ball, everyone is an attacker; when your opponent has the ball everyone is a defender.
8. No matter what position you are in, **you are first a soccer player** and you will have to be able to receive, shoot, pass, dribble, head, make space, etc., regardless of your position.
9. Do not just "kick" the ball unless it is in a dangerous position in front of your goal. Instead take a "picture "of the situation before you get the ball. In this way you can perceive the situation, determine the best solution, and act accordingly when the ball arrives. **Develop Field Vision**. Always send the ball to someplace or someone.
10. Always maintain your position. Don't run following the movement of the ball. Know where you are on the field in relation to where the other players and positions are on the field.
11. Don't run forward when your team has the ball unless you are willing to run back when the other team has the ball.
12. If you lose the ball, you should be the first person to defend. Giving immediate chase is the first rule of defense.
13. When changing from attack to defense, sprint to get between your opponent and the goal you are defending.
14. When defending close to your goal, the player closest to the ball should attack the ball. The other defenders should "mark" other opponents who could receive and shoot the ball. In "marking up" your opponent, you should position yourself between the ball and your opponent and prevent them from receiving the ball. A common error on defense is to have too many defenders move to the ball leaving opponents open to receive a pass and score an unopposed goal.

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- 15.** On the defensive side of the field, always move the ball toward the touchlines and away from the middle of the field. On the offensive side of the field move the ball toward the centre, where your teammates can take a good shot on goal. This is "centering" the ball.
- 16.** Good ball handlers pass the ball before they get into trouble not after they are in trouble.
- 17.** Make no small strikes on the ball. Whether clearing, passing or shooting **MOVE** the ball. Proper technique on striking the ball will enable even small players to effectively move the ball a good distance.
- 18.** Take your shot! **Don't hesitate to** fire a shot if you feel an opportunity. Shoot into the back of the net. Shoot where the keeper isn't.
- 19.** Don't limit yourself to shots taken only near the goal line. Good opportunities for goals are hard shots taken further out from the goal. Keep your head down, strike and follow through the ball for the goal.
- 20.** Most players are right-footed. At this level, when playing defense against an opponent with the ball especially watch and attack against the right foot.
- 21.** When playing offence with possession of the ball, anticipate your defender attacking your right foot. **Use your left foot.** It is imperative that you develop your passing, dribbling, and shooting skills with both your left and right foot.
- 22.** Always be aware of protecting **possession** of the ball. Resist "kicking" the ball directly into the shin guards of the defender in front of you. Passing or dribbling the ball laterally or even backwards can be a better choice if it maintains possession of the ball.
- 23.** When on offence always "support" your teammate with the ball. Supporting your teammate means being in a position where they can pass the ball to you. Stay far enough away so the pass effectively neutralizes the defender. Stay close enough so they can make a good pass. If you are too far to make a good pass to your teammate, then you are too far for your teammate to make a good pass to you, and you are not supporting.
- 24.** Win, lose or tie; if you have given 100%, when you walk off the field you have nothing to regret and no reason to be ashamed.
- 25.** Don't be afraid to be a hero. **YOU CAN DO IT!**