

Falcons United

U4 Player Development Curriculum

At U4, soccer is not about winning games or running drills.

It is about developing a love of the game, building confidence with the ball, and creating positive first experiences.

If we get U4 right:

- Kids WANT to come back
- Parents TRUST the program
- Development happens naturally

Our goal is simple:

Happy kids + lots of touches + freedom to explore

Program Overview

Age Group: U4

Primary Objective: Love the ball + confidence + movement

Session Length: 45 Minutes

Training Style: Play-based learning (games, not lines)

Golden Rule: The ball should be moving 80%+ of the time

Falcons United U4 Coaching Philosophy

U4 soccer is about:

- Joy
- Confidence
- Exploration
- Safe and positive experiences
- Social comfort in a group setting

U4 soccer is NOT about:

- Winning
- Positions
- Tactics

- Perfect technique
 - Long instructions
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U4 Coaching Mantra

More touches.
More smiles.
More confidence.

Top Things Every U4 Player Should Learn

1. Love the Ball

Every player should have their own ball.
The ball should feel like a friend, not something to kick away.

If a child is smiling while touching the ball → we are winning.

Coaching Cue:
“Can you make the ball stay close to you?”

2. Basic Ball Control (Feet First)

At U4, hands may still be involved sometimes — and that’s okay.
We gently guide players toward using their feet.

Focus on:

- Stopping the ball
- Pushing the ball forward
- Changing direction

Avoid too much correction. Keep it simple and encouraging.

3. Running With the Ball

Most U4 players will either:

- Kick the ball too far ahead, or
- Stop after one touch

Help them learn to:

- Take small touches
- Chase their own ball
- Move confidently with the ball

Coaching Cue:

“Can you run with your ball like a puppy following you?”

4. Scoring Goals

Goals create excitement and motivation.

At U4:

- Everyone attacks
- Everyone shoots
- Everyone celebrates

Do NOT assign positions.

Scoring builds:

- Confidence
 - Courage
 - Joy
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5. Listening & Simple Instructions

This is not about tactics.

It is about helping kids learn to:

- Stop when the coach talks
- Try something new
- Follow simple instructions

Simple coaching cues:

- “Freeze!”
- “Show me your ball!”
- “Can you do it again?”

6. Social Confidence & Team Comfort

U4 soccer is often a child's first group activity.

Players are learning how to:

- Play near other kids
- Take turns
- Celebrate together
- Feel safe making mistakes

This matters as much as skill at this age.

U4 Practice Structure (45 Minutes)

Rule: The ball should be moving at least 80% of the time.

Ideal Practice Breakdown:

5 minutes — Welcome + free play with a ball

30 minutes — Skill games (fast rotations, 5–7 minutes each)

10 minutes — Small-sided game OR “Score & Celebrate” shooting fun

U4 Games That Work Every Time

These games keep lines short, touches high, and kids engaged.

1. Red Light, Green Light

Setup:

Each player has a ball inside a small grid.

How It Works:

- “Green Light” = dribble
- “Red Light” = stop the ball

Fun Variations:

- Yellow = slow dribble
- Purple = jump
- Speed bump = roll foot over the ball

Develops:

- Ball control
 - Listening
 - Movement skills
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2. Sharks & Minnows (U4 Version)

Setup:

All players have a ball. Coach is the shark.

How It Works:

Players dribble across the area while the coach tries to steal balls.

If a ball is stolen:

Player does 3–5 toe taps and re-enters.

Important Rule:

No one is ever “out.”

Develops:

- Dribbling
 - Bravery
 - Problem solving
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3. Clean Your Room

Setup:

Split the field in half with balls everywhere.

How It Works:

On “GO,” players dribble balls to the opposite side.

Everyone is moving constantly. No winners or losers.

Develops:

- Dribbling
- Directional awareness
- High energy movement

4. Treasure Hunt

Setup:

Cones represent treasure scattered across the field.

How It Works:

Players dribble to collect treasure and bring it back to their home area.
Celebrate every find.

Develops:

- Ball control
 - Exploration
 - Confidence
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5. Score & Celebrate

Setup:

Multiple small goals with no goalkeepers.

How It Works:

Players dribble and shoot whenever they want.
Coach celebrates every goal and encourages fun celebrations.

Develops:

- Shooting
 - Confidence
 - Love of scoring
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Important U4 Coaching Rules

These are essential for success.

Avoid:

- No laps
- No yelling
- No long lines
- No standing still
- No assigned positions

Encourage:

- Effort
- Creativity
- Trying new things
- Smiling and celebrating

Use simple words and positive energy.

Bonus Activities

Freeze Dance (Soccer Edition)

Setup:

Each player has a ball.

How It Works:

- Music on = players dribble
- Music stops = players freeze with foot on ball

Fun Variations:

- Balance on one foot
- Sit on the ball

Develops:

- Ball control
- Balance
- Body awareness

Music instantly increases engagement.

Target Dribble

Skill Focus:

Dribbling with purpose + stopping the ball.

Setup:

Place cones or discs around the field as targets.

How It Works:

Players dribble to a target and stop their ball on or near it.
Coach calls a new target.

Why It Works:

- Introduces direction
 - Teaches control
 - Keeps everyone moving
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Free Coaching Resources (Optional for Coaches)

Coach Education:

- U.S. Soccer Learning Center (free courses) — learning.ussoccer.com
- US Youth Soccer Coaching Library — usyouthsoccer.org/coaches
- The FA Coaching Resources — thefa.com/coaches

Training Sessions & Drills:

- Soccer Coach Weekly — soccercoachweekly.net
- YouTube Channels: AllAttack, 7mlc, Progressive Soccer, Coerver Coaching, The Coaches' Voice

Safety:

- FIFA 11+ Warm-Up — fifa.com/medical
- CDC Heads Up — cdc.gov/heads-up

Positive Coaching:

- Changing the Game Project — changingthegameproject.com
 - Positive Coaching Alliance — positivecoach.org
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Key Coaching Reminder

At the youngest ages, success is not measured by wins.

Success is measured by:

- Kids smiling
- Kids touching the ball often
- Kids wanting to come back next season

If players leave practice excited, you are doing it right.