

MB Soccer Grassroots Technical Coaching Point Rubric

MEMBER REFERENCE GUIDE | U8-U9 / FOUNDATION PHASE



Purpose: give club leaders and station coaches a simple, consistent set of coaching points they can use without overloading young players.

1



SIMPLE LANGUAGE

Clear, positive words players can understand and remember.

2



GAME-LIKE ACTIVITIES

Engaging, soccer-first tasks that build skills in context.

3



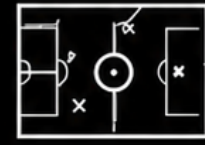
THREE CLEAR POINTS

Focus on three key coaching points per activity.

Your field-friendly coaching reference for everyday sessions.

Use this rubric at practices and games to keep coaching clear, consistent, and fun—helping every player learn, play and love the game.





HOW TO USE THIS RUBRIC

A field-friendly reference, not another long coaching manual.



FOR TECHNICAL LEADS

- Use it to align language across clubs and stations.
- Brief coaches before sessions using one theme and three coaching points.
- Support volunteer coaches by giving them the “look for” cues before players arrive.
- Use the process pages to observe delivery without making coaches feel over-evaluated.



FOR STATION COACHES

- Pick one main behaviour to coach in each activity.
- Let players play first. Watch what happens before correcting.
- Use quick demonstrations and simple language.
- Coach the player, not the drill. Correct what helps the game improve.



FOR GRASSROOTS PLAYERS

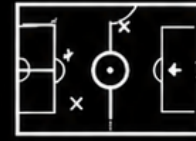
- Hear fewer instructions and get more touches on the ball.
- Learn through games, races, 1v1s, small-sided play and simple challenges.
- Be encouraged to try things, solve problems and make decisions.
- Receive positive corrections that help the next action.



IMPORTANT DELIVERY REMINDER

**Do not try to coach every bullet on the page.
Choose the coaching point that matters most in the activity.
For young players, one clear cue repeated well is more useful than five detailed corrections.**





GRASSROOTS COACHING PROCESS

Simple enough for new coaches. Detailed enough for consistent delivery.

1 ↓		PLAN	Choose one theme. Select one or two main coaching points. Know the activity set-up before players arrive.
2 ↓		ORGANIZE	Create safe space, clear gates/goals, enough balls and simple rotation paths. Avoid long lines.
3 ↓		START PLAY	Explain in under 60 seconds. Show the picture. Let the players try it.
4 ↓		OBSERVE	Stand where you can see the ball, players and space. Watch before you correct.
5 ↓		COACH	Use a quick freeze, demo or guided question. Keep it specific to the theme.
6		RETURN TO PLAY	Restart quickly. Look for the behaviour again. Praise the improvement.



PROCESS PRINCIPLE

The Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards emphasize age-appropriate planning, game-like learning, clear organization, player engagement and effective coachable moments. This version turns those ideas into a practical process for grassroots coaches.



SESSION FLOW AND COACHING DEMANDS

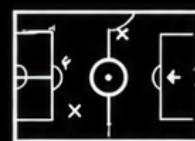
A simple delivery model for station-based Grassroots environments.

Part of Session	Purpose	Coach Behaviour	Common Mistake to Avoid
1. Arrival Activity	Get players active quickly	Simple game, lots of touches, minimal talking	Waiting for everyone before starting
2. Warm-Up / Intro	Connect movement to theme	Show the idea, then play	Long lecture before activity
3. Main Activity 1	Create repetition of the skill	Coach one technical detail	Correcting everything at once
4. Main Activity 2	Add pressure or decision-making	Use questions and quick demos	Leaving the activity too easy or too hard
5. Small-Sided Game	Apply the theme in a game	Let the game teach, then reinforce	Stopping every mistake
6. Wrap-Up	Confirm one learning point	Ask players what helped them succeed	Repeating the whole session again verbally








ADJUSTMENT RULE

If the activity is too easy, add pressure, reduce space, add a target or create a score. If it is too hard, increase space, reduce pressure, add a neutral player or make the target bigger.



COACH DELIVERY RUBRIC

Use this as a support tool for member organizations and coach leaders.

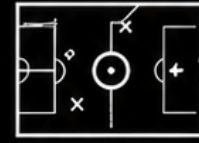
Area	Developing Coach	Effective Grassroots Coach	Coach Leader Look-For
 Outline	Activity is prepared but may be unclear.	Theme, field size, start position and scoring are clear.	Does the activity match the theme and player level?
 Impression	Positive but may talk too much.	Positive, calm, energetic and player-centred.	Is the coach creating confidence and enjoyment?
 Organization	Some waiting or confusion in transitions.	Players are active quickly and rotations are clear.	Are players getting lots of touches and game actions?
 Effectiveness	Corrects effort but not always the right detail.	Identifies the key technical point and keeps flow.	Does the correction improve the next action?
 Coachable Moments	Stops play too often or too late.	Stops briefly when needed, shows the solution, restarts.	Did the coach choose the right moment and return to play quickly?



HOW TO USE THIS WITH VOLUNTEERS

















Avoid making this feel like a formal assessment. Use it as a conversation guide: 'Here is what went well, here is one thing to focus on next time.'



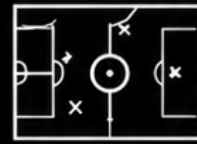


TECHNICAL COACHING POINT OVERVIEW

One page summary of the main technical themes.

Technique	Simple Coaching Language	What Coaches Should Look For	Grassroots Priority
 Dribbling / RWB	Head up, use both feet, change speed and direction.	Ball close in traffic, bigger touches in space, safe-side foot.	 Very High
 Passing	Plant beside the ball, lock the ankle, pass to a teammate's advantage.	Firm ground pass, accurate target, timing and disguise.	 High / Medium
 Receiving	Get in line, open your body, first touch into space.	Cushion touch, back foot, prepare the next action.	 High / Medium
 Shooting	Look at target, strike through the ball, follow through.	Balanced body, steady head, decision between power and placement.	 Medium
 Defending / Tackling	Close quickly, slow down, stay side-on, be patient.	Angle of approach, no diving in, win or delay.	 Medium
 Long Passing	Ball out of feet, support foot forward, follow through to target.	Only introduce when age and strength allow quality.	 Medium / Low
 Heading	Safe technique only when age appropriate.	Not a core U8-U9 priority. Use caution and follow current guidance.	 Lowest Priority
 Goalkeeping	Body behind ball, hands ready, protect the goal first.	Simple catching, footwork, angles and bravery without overcomplication.	 Low Priority





DRIBBLING AND RUNNING WITH THE BALL

Coaching points aligned with Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards.



SHIELDING

- Use when a player is under pressure and needs to protect the ball.
- Keep body between defender and ball.
- Use the foot furthest from the defender.
- Stay low and strong.
- Move sideways or away from pressure when needed.



RUNNING WITH THE BALL

- Use when there is space ahead.
- Toe down, use instep or outside of the foot.
- First touch can be bigger to attack space.
- As pressure gets closer, take smaller touches.
- Encourage players to scan while moving.



ATTACKING A DEFENDER

- Change speed and direction.
- Attack the defender's front foot or unbalanced side.
- Play the ball past the defender and explode into the space.
- Use disguise before accelerating.
- First touch beyond the defender should reduce their recovery angle.



SIMPLE COACH CUES

"Head up." "Can you attack the space?" "Keep it on the safe side."
"Change speed after the move."

PASSING AND CHECKING

Focus on speed, accuracy, timing and disguise.



INSIDE FOOT PASS

- Look at the target when possible.
- Support foot beside the ball and pointing to target.
- Bend the support knee.
- Lock the ankle and make the foot firm.
- Strike the middle of the ball.
- Follow through toward the target.



OUTSIDE / LEAD FOOT PASS

- Useful for disguise and quick play.
- Played within the running motion.
- Support foot slightly behind the ball.
- Toe slightly down and foot turned inward.
- Short punching action, not a big swing.
- Use when the picture requires speed or surprise.



CHECKING TO RECEIVE

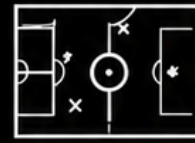
- Move to help the player with the ball.
- Use a decoy step to lose the defender.
- Check at an angle, not always straight.
- Receive sideways on when possible.
- Receive on the foot furthest from pressure.
- Scan before and while the ball travels.



GRASSROOTS TRANSLATION

For young players, do not overload them with every body-detail. Start with: plant foot, lock ankle, pass to a teammate, then move again. Add checking and disguise once the basic action is improving.





RECEIVING AND FIRST TOUCH

The goal is not to stop the ball dead. The goal is to prepare the next action.

1



GROUND BALL RECEIVING

- Get in line with the path of the ball.
- Lower the centre of gravity.
- Present the inside or outside surface of the foot.
- Look at the ball at contact.
- Cushion the ball by giving with the foot.
- Prepare the ball into usable space.

2



OPEN BODY RECEIVING

- Try to see the ball, space, teammates and opponents.
- Receive sideways on when possible.
- Use the back foot when it helps the next action.
- First touch should create time, space or direction.
- Do not force every player to receive the same way if the game picture is different.

3



RECEIVING UNDER PRESSURE

- Scan before the ball arrives.
- Know where pressure is coming from.
- Use the body to protect the ball.
- Take the first touch away from pressure.
- If pressure is tight, set the ball back or combine quickly.
- Praise players for preparing their next action, not just for controlling the ball.



SIMPLE COACH CUES

“Check your shoulder.” “Open up.” “First touch away from pressure.” “Where is your next pass or dribble?”

SHOOTING AND FINISHING

Keep the message clear: positive mentality, good body shape and appropriate technique.

1



FINISHING MENTALITY

- Encourage players to be positive around goal.
- Look for opportunities to shoot when the picture is on.
- React quickly to rebounds and second chances.
- Celebrate brave attempts, not only goals.
- Help players choose between power, placement or quick finish.

2



POWER STRIKE

- Body compact and balanced over the ball.
- Support foot beside the ball.
- Toe down and ankle locked.
- Strike through the centre of the ball.
- Keep head steady.
- Land forward on the shooting foot.

3



PLACEMENT FINISH

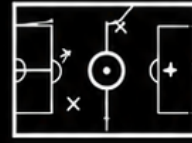
- Make an early decision on the target.
- See the goalkeeper and open space.
- Aim support foot, hips and knee toward target.
- Strike before the goalkeeper sets when possible.
- Use both feet in simple finishing games.
- Adjust technique based on ball position.



GRASSROOTS TRANSLATION

Start with balance, eyes, locked ankle and follow-through. Use lots of small-sided games and finishing races so players repeat the action naturally.





DEFENDING, CLOSING DOWN AND TACKLING

Teach safe pressure first: close space, slow down, stay balanced and make play predictable.

1 CLOSING FROM THE FRONT

- Close down quickly at first.
- Slow down as you get near the attacker.
- Stay low and balanced.
- Turn side-on.
- Use an angle to force the attacker one way.
- Do not dive in. Wait for the right moment.

2 POKE TACKLE

- Use when the attacker has the ball but takes a poor touch.
- Stay balanced and able to recover.
- Focus on the ball.
- Tackle with the front foot.
- Use it as a safe way to nick the ball away.
- Praise patience before the tackle.

3 CLOSING FROM BEHIND

- Close quickly at first, then slow down.
- Avoid fouling or running through the player.
- Stay one-touch away.
- Position behind the foot that will play the ball.
- Be ready if the attacker turns.
- Use pressure to delay, not just to win immediately.



SAFE GRASSROOTS LANGUAGE

Use: 'Close, slow, side-on, be patient.' Avoid encouraging reckless challenges. Young players should learn to delay and win the ball safely.

OTHER TECHNICAL AREAS

Introduce only when appropriate for age, ability and safety.

1 LONG PASSING

- Ball should be out of the feet before striking.
- Approach from a slight angle.
- Support foot points forward.
- Toe down and ankle locked.
- Follow through to the target.
- Use only when players can strike safely with quality.

2 HEADING

X Heading is not recommended or taught in this age group.

Do not include heading instruction or heading activities in U8–U9 Grassroots sessions.

Follow Canada Soccer Grassroots standards and prioritize safer foundational skills instead.

3 GOALKEEPING

- First objective is to prevent a goal.
- Body behind the ball when possible.
- Hands prepared and eyes on the ball.
- Simple catching, footwork and angle work.
- Encourage bravery but protect safety.
- Goalkeepers should still participate with feet in Grassroots activities.



GRASSROOTS PRIORITY

For this age band, prioritize development in the following order:







1. DRIBBLING | 2. PASSING & RECEIVING | 3. SHOOTING | 4. DEFENDING | 5. LONG PASSING | 6. HEADING | 7. GOALKEEPING

Focus on fun, repeated touches, decision-making and confidence. Let players explore, be creative and enjoy the game.



HOW TO CORRECT WITHOUT STOPPING FLOW

A simple method for new and developing coaches.

Step	Coach Action	Example Language
1  See It	Watch for a repeated moment connected to the theme.	"I am looking at our first touch today."
2  Stop Briefly	Freeze only if the picture needs to be shown. Otherwise coach on the run.	"Hold there for a second."
3  Ask or Show	Use one question or one quick demonstration.	"Where is the space after your first touch?"
4  Rehearse	Let the player repeat the action once or twice.	"Try that same receive again."
5  Restart	Get the game moving again quickly.	"Play."
6  Reinforce	Praise when the correction appears in the game.	"Yes, <i>that first touch</i> gave you space."



COACHING STANDARD

Corrections should be short, specific and connected to the session theme. The best correction is the one players can apply on the very next action.

FIELD REFERENCE CARD

A one-page summary for station coaches.



BEFORE THE ACTIVITY

- Know the theme.
- Choose one or two coaching points.
- Set up space, balls, bibs and goals.
- Know the scoring rule and restart.



DURING THE ACTIVITY

- Start quickly.
- Observe before correcting.
- Coach one thing at a time.
- Keep players active.
- Use praise to reinforce the behaviour.



AFTER THE ACTIVITY

- Ask one question.
- Name the behaviour that improved.
- Rotate clearly.
- Share one quick note with the next coach if needed.



THREE QUESTIONS EVERY COACH CAN ASK

1. What is the one thing I want players to improve?
2. Is the activity giving them enough chances to practice it?
3. Did my coaching help the next action?



BEST GRASSROOTS COACHING CUE

Less talking. More playing. Clearer pictures. Better questions.