

Guidelines for picking recreational soccer teams

The goal: To use the first four practices to pick the best A team we can, and to pick evenly talented B teams.

First Night

- Set up three skill stations. Have at least one coach per skill station. The skill stations should consist of:
 - Dribbling and Shooting
 - Passing, Trapping and Throw ins
 - Small sided games (3v3 is best to evaluate players – you could run two 3v3 games at this station at one time, or you could run one 3v3 game for a five-minute game, and the winner stays on)
- Divide your kids up randomly into three groups. Have the kids rotate from station to station.
- Use a lettering system to evaluate the kids. A, B, and T. These stand for...
 - A = true A team player (strongest player)
 - B = true B team player (weaker players)
 - T = a “Tweener” player – could be either an A or B team player, but you’re not sure yet
- The goal at the end of the first night is to have three groups chosen (As, Bs, and Ts). This will allow you to focus on the Tweeners on the second night.

Second Night

- The goal of the second night is to have a better understanding of the Tweener Players relative to each other – you want to understand who are the strongest Tweener players.
- Break the kids up into three groups (As, Bs, and Ts). Have the same three stations as the first night, but have the coaches run a different station than they did the first night.
- Pay special attention to the Tweeners. Put a plus “+” next to the stronger ones, and a minus “-” next to the weaker ones.

Third Night

- Do the same thing you did on the second night, and have the coaches move to the station they haven't been at yet.
- At the end of the third night, there should be a consensus among the coaches who the A players are, the better Tweener players (T+), the weaker Tweener players (T-), and the true B players. This will allow you (on the fourth night) to put the true As and the better Tweeners (T+s) into one group to do a final evaluation before selecting the A team.

Fourth Night

- Using the same three stations as the previous nights, break the kids up into three groups.
 - Group 1: A players and the better Tweener players (T+s)
 - Groups 2 and 3: The weaker Tweener players (T-s) and Bs, evenly mixed.
- The goal of this night is to evaluate the stronger Tweeners (T+s) while they're on the field with the true A team players. They may perform differently with the better players on the field than they did against the other Tweeners only. See how well they fit with the true As on the field.
- At the end of the fourth night, you should have all the information you need to pick the A team, and to make evenly talented B teams. The coaches should get together and come to a consensus on where all players fit. If all of the coaches can come to a consensus on this, you can feel pretty good about having the right kids on the right teams.
- Note: At the end of the fourth night, thank the kids for all of their hard work over the past four sessions, and tell them that their coach will call them within the next day or so to let them know which team they're on, and when/where their next practice is going to be. We don't recommend announcing right then and there who made the A team and who didn't. Some kids who didn't make the A team may be very disappointed, and it's better for them to get the news in private where they don't have to deal with the disappointment in front of the other kids.