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Dear Start Smart Instructor:

Thank you for accepting the position of Start Smart Instructor. This manual will give you detailed instructions on how to run your program.

As you may know, well-meaning volunteer youth league coaches do not always have the time or expertise to teach children the basic motor skills that they need to be successful in sports. Start Smart teaches children the skills that they need to play organized sports in a FUN, non-competitive environment.

The Start Smart Sports Development Program was originally developed based on a 1993 study showing that 49% of children participating in organized sports do not have the minimum motor skills necessary to be successful in those programs. The same study also showed that children who are given proper motor skills instructions in a fun, supervised setting are more likely to be ready for organized sports. In addition to our general motor skills development program, we have created sport-specific programs to focus on the specific skills needed for future participation in particular sports.

Thank you again for bringing Start Smart to your Army Garrison. If you have any questions about the program or this manual, please call us at 1-800-729-2057.

Sincerely,

The Start Smart Sports Development Programs Staff

P.S. Please notify our national office of the start date for your program and send us pictures from your sessions.
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Introduction

What is the Start Smart Football?
Start Smart Football, a program of the National Alliance for Youth Sports, teaches children (ages 3-7) the basic motor skills necessary to play organized football while they work one-on-one with a member of your staff. The program focuses on teaching children basic sports mechanics without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt. Start Smart Football sessions are held once or twice a week for three to six weeks. Each week, the exercises become increasingly more difficult as the class progresses and the children show improvement.

The Start Smart Mission
The Start Smart Sports Development Programs were created to teach children the basic motor skills necessary to participate in organized sports while giving them the opportunity to work one-on-one with an adult. The programs were developed to be informative and fun, so children will have a positive first time sports experience and continue participating in sports beyond this introductory level.

Who is the National Alliance for Youth Sports?
Formed in West Palm Beach, Florida in 1981 the “Alliance” was originally developed as a volunteer youth sport coaches certification system (NYSCA) with a simple mission: to make youth sports fun and safe for kids. Since 1981, the nonprofit association has developed into a diverse organization with a number of national programs and accredited chapters in all fifty states. The programs offered by the Alliance include: the National Youth Sports Coaches and Officials Association, the National Academy for Youth Sports Administrators, Parents Association for Youth Sports, the Start Smart Development Programs and Hook A Kid On Golf. These programs are administered by the Alliance’s two divisions; Education and Youth Development.

While the Education division concentrates on programs that educate adults, the Youth Development division focuses on programs that deal directly with children. Specifically, the Youth Development division develops programs that build proficiency and confidence that youngsters need to participate and remain active in sports by 1) offering programs that teach the basic motor skills necessary for meaningful sports participation, 2) generating interest in lifetime activities and 3) providing a healthy fitness attitude for life. The Start Smart Sports Development Program, along with the other Start Smart programs, is administered through the Youth Development division of the National Alliance for Youth Sports.

Why Start Smart?
Before entering organized youth sports programs, children need to master the fundamental motor skills that serve as a basis for more complex sports skills. Children do not effectively learn these skills by playing games, but rather by practicing developmentally appropriate activities.
Developmentally appropriate activities are tasks designed for the child’s current level of performance ability while using equipment that enables the child to be successful. Success is extremely important in early motor skill learning experiences, as it builds self-esteem and the motivation and confidence needed to try and improve.

Children who enter youth sports programs with fundamental motor skills and confidence in their ability to perform are much more likely to learn new and more complex sport-specific skills, achieve success in competition, and enjoy a positive sports experience. These children are also more likely to participate in sports and fitness activities as adults.

All children should be provided with effective, developmentally appropriate activities and equipment to prepare them for future organized sports and fitness opportunities. Start Smart accomplishes this by offering programs that encourage children to participate in youth sports without the threat of competition or the fear of getting hurt.

References
The Start Smart Football developmental tasks and program guidelines were developed by motor skill development specialists from Northern Kentucky University. The program is based on the research findings (Kirk, 1993), practices of effective motor development teachers and programs (Graham, Holt/Hale & Parker, 1993), and is influenced by the National Association for Sport and Physical Education’s Council on Physical Education for Children’s Position Statement: “Developmentally appropriate physical education practices for children” (1991). And the following publications:


What about the products?
The 1993 study at Northern Kentucky University showed that children ages 5-10 participating in a motor skill development program improved at a greater rate while using specialized equipment as opposed to traditional elementary physical education equipment. The products used in the Start Smart programs are the most innovative available and are developmentally appropriate for teaching youngsters the basic motor skills that are emphasized in the program. The Start Smart Football program utilizes developmentally appropriate products from the following companies:
Program Guidelines
The following guidelines should be emphasized during your Start Smart Football program to ensure that the children obtain high levels of achievement and success during the program. Staff members should be aware of the guidelines at all times while working on basic motor skill development with children.

Positive Learning Environment: Children must be provided with a positive non-threatening learning environment where they receive a great deal of encouragement and success.

Children are Unique: All children are unique and learn at different rates. It takes them much effort and many practice trials to improve.

Maximum Involvement: Each child needs the opportunity to practice skills learned. START SMART activities are organized to provide children optimal time to practice skills at the same time. To maximize individual practice time, equipment is provided for each instructor-child group.

Success is Important: The child should experience high success rates on a task. Modify the task if it is difficult for the child to succeed. Once success is attained, increase the difficulty of the task incrementally. An example of modifying a task is changing the distance that a ball must travel.

Appropriate Equipment: The equipment must be developmentally appropriate for the child. Start Smart provides equipment that is the appropriate size and weight for this age group.

Keep it simple: Children are not “little adults” and they learn and comprehend differently than adults. In the early learning stages, keep it simple by demonstrating exactly what you want them to do.

Positive Feedback: Clear, concise, positive feedback from the staff regarding the child’s performance and effort will enhance learning.

Expert Success: All kids need a lot of encouragement and a feeling that your only expectations are that they learn and improve. If you expect success, the children will have the confidence to believe that they are capable of succeeding in the particular task.

Complete Tasks Before Continuing: Start Smart activities are organized from simple to more complex. A child should complete one task successfully before moving on to the next exercise.

Review Tasks: Children will benefit from reviewing previously completed tasks. This practice is especially helpful if they are having difficulty with the task at hand.
The Start Smart Football Instructor

What are your Responsibilities?
As the Start Smart Football Instructor, you are the key to the success of your program! We recommend that you, the Child Development Center (CDC) Training and Curriculum Specialist, CDC Lead or Mentor, or Child and Youth Program Assistant (CYPRA), and volunteers assigned to implement the Start Smart program familiarize yourself with all of the program materials prior to running Start Smart for the first time.

You can use the instructor manual to successfully implement your Start Smart program. This Start Smart Instructor Manual should be used in conjunction with the Skill Guide that you received with your Start Smart Starter Kit.

Program Checklist
Below is a checklist of your responsibilities as a Start Smart Football Instructor. Each item refers to a subject covered later in the manual. We recommend using the checklist as a timeline while working toward your program start date.

- Review Start Smart Football Instructor Manual
- Review the Materials Checklist (page 5) to assure that you have received all of the equipment in your Starter Kit.
- Establish a location for your program (CDC/SAS multi-purpose room or outdoor area).
- Develop Start Smart Implementation Plan.
- Schedule Smart Start into the CDC or SAS Daily Activities Plans.
- Recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with the program.
- Order any additional materials from the National Office 3 weeks prior to the start of your program.
- Gather the additional program materials needed for your program (page 5)
- Implement Start Smart by following the Program Format (page 8) in this manual
Materials Checklist
The following is a list of items that should have been received in your Start Smart Football Starter Kit. Please use this list to make sure you have received your entire order:

- 2-Instructor Manual
- 2-Skill Guide
- 1-Model Youth Sports Parent Video
- 1-Carry-All Bag
- 10-Cones
- 1-Cone Carrying Strap
- 1-Ball Pump
- 5-Footballs
- 5-Kicking Tees
- 5-Red Flag Belts
- 5-Yellow Flag Belts

Don’t Forget: Check to see if you have all the equipment needed to start your program!

Additional Programs Materials You May Need
The following is a list of materials that you may need to run your Start Smart Football program. You most likely will already have some of these materials and most of them can be substituted by using other items.

- balloons
- duct or masking tape
- poster board
- table and chairs (for sign-in)
- name tags
- first-aid kit
- marker cones
- clothes line rope
- hula hoops
- plastic milk or soda containers
Promotional Tips
The following checklist will ensure the success of Start Smart Football in your centers for years to come.

Before your program begins:
- Coordinate with your Public Affairs Office (PAO) or (MWR) Marketing Office to:
  ~ Daily and weekly local newspapers.
  ~ Local Radio Stations that may run public service announcements.
  ~ Local cable television stations that run public service announcements.

*Note: The national office can also provide you with a press release if needed!*

- Distribute a promotional flier (see sample on page A4) to:
  ~ Local youth sports leagues
  ~ Public libraries
  ~ Schools
  ~ Day care facilities
  ~ Community centers

During your program:
- Contact daily newspapers to remind them of the program and encourage them to send a staff writer and a photographer.
- Contact weekly newspapers in your community to let them know that the program is being held (many weeklies prefer having the story done for them since most are under staffed; the national office can provide help with a story).
- Contact all television stations’ news and sports directors to get additional coverage. Local radio and television talk shows may be interested in having the Start Smart Football Instructor on the show with some parents, kids, etc. to talk about the program.
Frequently Asked Questions

When is the best time to conduct a Start Smart Football Program?
Smart Start Football can be run anytime, but you may want to consider running your program as a developmental program prior to the next scheduled soccer season. This would enable those children who would like to participate in the next season to prepare themselves in advance. The Sports Readiness Assessment will enable parents to recognize if their child is ready for organized baseball. Smart Start Football is recommended for children between the ages of 3-7 years old.

Where can I implement my Start Smart Football Program?
Start Smart Football can be run indoors or outside with the equipment that is included in your Starter Kit. If you are planning to hold your program outdoors, you need to consider variables like the weather, time changes in the spring and fall, and insects. Please remember - some of the Start Smart exercises require the use of a wall as a target.

How do I recruit parent and teen volunteers to assist with Start Smart?
Advertise at the front desk, Central Enrollment and Registration (CER), through the Parent Advisory Council, at the youth center and ask during sports registration sign-up, bearing in mind that many parents are apprehensive to coach a team but may be interested in teaching a skill development program.

Some questions that may be asked from parents during your program:

What if my child’s attention span prompts him/her to want to move to the next station before the instructor gives the signal?
For a program comprised of mostly young children, where attention spans are generally very short, you may want to decrease the time at each station to 7 or 8 minutes (rather than the 10 minutes, as specified in the program format).

Is the child ready to play in an organized youth sports league once he/she has finished the Start Smart Football program?
Refer to the “Interpreting Assessment” section in the back of the Skill Guide. However, it is important to remember that even if a child proves to be physically ready to participate in organized sports, he or she may not be emotionally ready. This decision should be based on both the physical and emotional development of the child. The National Alliance for Youth Sports recommends that children should not be involved in competitive sports before the age of eight.
Section 3 - Program Format

The following is a standard schedule for Start Smart. The 3/6 weeks of staff-child instruction should be scheduled for 1/2/3 days per week, and each session should last approximately one hour. The ratios are 1/10 in CDC and 1/15 in SAS:

**Standard Start Smart Schedule**

**Week 1:** Sports Readiness Assessment and Skill Development Exercises  
**Weeks 2-5:** Skill Development Exercises  
**Week 6:** Skill Development Exercises, Mock Game and Post Assessment

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**Sample Schedule - Week 1**

**Child Assessment and Exercise #1**

*For example, if your class starts at 9 am...*

**8:30 am: Set-Up**
- Set-up your room with the four skill-assessment stations. Please see the sample floor plan (page A3) for how each skill area is set-up for the assessment.  
- *Performance Cues* posters should be placed in a visible spot at each station.  
- Appoint volunteers to specific stations to assist the participant groups.  
- Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets (class rosters) and nametags.  
- Before the class begins, divide the children into equal groups according to the participating child’s age. (i.e. all of the 4-year-olds in one group)

**8:45-9:00 am: Check-In**
- Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

**9:00-9:10 pm: Instructor (CDC/SAS-Assigned Staff) Welcomes Participants and Conducts the Start Smart Program Assessment**
- Before administering the Sports Readiness Assessment, explain to the staff members that the assessment is ONLY an evaluation for them to gage the progress of the child. **The assessment is NOT used to rank or score any of the children, and the scores are only for the staff to see.**  
- Have the participants turn to the assessment section of the Skill Guide.  
- Explain to participants that they have 5-6 minutes at each skill station for assessment. If possible, there should be a volunteer at each skill station to demonstrate each task with the proper equipment.  
- At this time, separate the staff/child groups into equal groups and assign them to a station.
9:10-9:35 am: Conduct Readiness Test
• Have staff/child groups rotate every 5-6 minutes from one station to the next, performing the assessment that is explained in the skill guide.

9:35-10:00 am: WEEK 1 Exercises
• After the assessment is complete, have the groups rotate through the stations again and perform the skill development exercises for WEEK 1 (page 11) for each of the skill areas. Spend 5-6 minutes in each station.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
• Before the children are dismissed, explain the format of the program for the upcoming weeks. This is also a good time to answer any questions.

Sample Schedule - Weeks 2-6
Skill Development Sessions

8:30 am: Set-Up
• Set-up your room already set-up with the four skill stations.
• Display Performance Cues posters in a visible spot.
• Set-up a check-in table with attendance sheets and nametags.

8:45-9:00 am: Check-In
• Have the participants check-in and receive a nametag.

9:00-9:10 am: Preview
The Start Smart Instructor (CDC TACS, Mentor, Lead or CDC/SAS CYP) previews the program. Include the following:

• Show each exercise for the appropriate week at the skill stations with the suggested equipment.
• Study and instruct volunteers on how to review the Performance Cues with the child and how to use the Performance Cues as praise when the child performs the exercise correctly.
• Remind staff members that tasks may be altered (adjust the distance, etc.) to make the skill easier or more difficult to suit each child’s ability.
• If a 1/10 ratio exists, then work one station at a time. If you have parent or teen volunteers, you can have the participants split into groups and rotate stations. Pay special attention to each child’s skill level in the first few weeks. Throughout the course of the program, an effort should be made to group children that have similar skill levels.
9:10-9:20 am: Begin Skill Development Exercises
- As the Start Smart Instructor, you should monitor all skill stations. If enough volunteers are not available, the instructor will need to run one station at a time.
- Each skill should be reviewed with the staff/child groups before they actually begin the tasks. Staff members should concentrate on proper execution of the Performance Cues by the children, and not necessarily the results.
- The Start Smart Instructor needs to continuously remind staff members of the importance of the posted Performance Cues and of giving positive feedback to the children.

9:20-10:00 am: Rotate to all Stations
- Rotate through the rest of the stations, switching every 10 minutes.

10:00 am: Wrap Up
- Before the staff/child groups are dismissed, answer any questions that they may have.
- Encourage the children to practice at home.
- Discuss what skills will be learned the following week.

Special Note for WEEK 6: Give the children enough time to complete the Start Smart Assessment again to see what progress the child has made since week 1. Tell the staff members to record the child’s score in the “Post Assessment” column of the scoring sheet in their Skill Guide. Again, this assessment is ONLY an evaluation to gage the progress of the child. The assessment is NOT used to rank or score any child, and the scores are for the staff eyes only.
Station #1 – Throwing
Throwing at a Large Target
Equipment Needed: Footballs
Mark a line five feet away from a large target such as a wall. Have the children stand on the marked line and throw the football at the target area. Do not emphasize accuracy, but rather distance. Remind the staff members/volunteers to emphasize the Performance Cues. When the child is able to get 8 out of 10 footballs to reach the target, increase the distance that the child is standing in 5-foot increments.

Station #2- Catching
Catching a Football Above the Waist
Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Make 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff members/volunteers to softly throw the ball underhand in a slight arc to the child so that the child can catch the football above their waist using his/her hands, arms and/or body. After the child can catch the ball 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance, speed and arc of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

Station #3 – Kicking/Punting
Kicking the Football from a Tee for Distance
Equipment Needed: Footballs, Cones, Kicking Tees
Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have the children line up along one line and kick the football so that it travels past the other marked line. When the child can successfully kick 8 out of 10 footballs beyond the line, encourage him/her to take a few steps backwards to increase difficulty.

Station #4- Running/Agility
Run then Leap
Equipment Needed: None
Have the child run for a few steps, and then leap. Alternate the take off foot as the child improves.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 2

**Station #1 – Throwing**

**Throwing for Distance and Accuracy at a Large Target**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Masking Tape*

Designate a large target area (8 feet by 8 feet) with tape on a wall or other surface, and mark off throwing lines 5 feet away, and then at five foot increments. Have the child use a football and throw overhand at the target. When successful 8 out of 10 times, have the children move back 5 feet and repeat.

**Throwing for Accuracy at a Smaller Target**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Masking Tape, Hula Hoops (Optional)*

Put Hula Hoops or taped circles on a wall (3 feet from the ground) and mark a starting line 5 feet away. The child will throw a football overhand at the target. After throwing 8 out of 10 balls inside the circle, encourage the children to move back five feet and repeat.

**Station #2- Catching**

**Catching a Football Below the Waist**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Make two lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to softly throw the football to the child so that the child can catch the football below the waist using both hands. After the child can catch the ball using only his/her hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance and speed of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

**Catching a Football to the Side of the Body**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Make 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to softly throw the football in a slight arc to the child so that the child can catch the football sideways to the right. The child should use their hands and pull the ball into his/her body. After the child can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity to the left.

*Week 2 Continued on Next Page…*
Station #3 – Kicking/Punting
Running and then Kicking the Football from the Tee for Distance
Equipment Needed: Footballs, Cones, Kicking Tees
Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Line up the tees and footballs along one of the marked lines and have each child start behind a football and take two or three running steps before kicking. Each child should kick the football so that it flies in the air over the other marked line 8 out of 10 times. Repeat the activity while increasing the distance in increments of five feet as the child shows improvement.

Kicking for Distance and Accuracy at a Large Target
Equipment Needed: Footballs, Masking Tape, Kicking Tees
Designate a large target area (8 feet by 8 feet) with tape on a wall or other surface and mark off kicking lines 5 feet away and then at five foot increments. Have the child kick the football off of the tee at the target. When successful 8 out of 10 times, have him/her move back 5 feet and repeat.

Station #4- Running/Agility
Agility Drill
Equipment Needed: Cones
Mark lines 5 yards apart. Line the children up at the 10-yard line. Have a staff member/volunteer yell or whistle and the children run to the 15 yard line, run backwards to the 5, and then run to the 10.

Skip Forward, Backwards, in a Circle or in Different Directions
Equipment Needed: None
Children may need to practice hopping first. Then, on the staff member’s/volunteer’s call, the child will try skipping right, left, backwards or in a circle ( whichever direction the parent calls).
Skill Development Exercises - Week 3

**Station #1 - Throwing**

**Throwing for Accuracy at Two Smaller Targets**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs, Hula Hoops, Masking Tape*

Prop, tape or tie Hula Hoops in sets of two in a vertical position three feet above the ground, and space the hoops two feet apart from each other. Mark a starting line five feet from the hoops and have each child begin throwing ten times at the hoops, alternating between the right hoop and then the left hoop, getting 4 out of 5 in each hoop. As the child improves, encourage him/her to move back at five feet increments.

**Throwing for Accuracy at Multiple Small Targets**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs, Small Table, Plastic Bottles*

Place 5 plastic milk jugs or soft drink containers 6 inches apart in a table or bench. Have the child throw footballs from a line 5 feet away. The object is to hit all 5 jugs in as few throws as possible. When the child is able to achieve this task in 6 throws, challenge him to move farther back and try again.

**Station #2 - Catching**

**Catching a Football Above the Waist while Moving**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs*

Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the child to move to the right or left while the staff member/volunteer softly throws the football in a slight arc to the child, so that the child can catch the football above their waist. After the child can catch the ball 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance, speed and arc of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

**Catching a Football Below the Waist while Moving**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs*

Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the child to move to the right or left while the staff member/volunteer softly throws the football to the child so that the child can catch the football below their waist. After the child can catch the football with both hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance and speed of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

*Week 3 Continued on Next Page…*
**Station #3 – Kicking/Punting**

Kicking Without a Tee

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Mark 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have the staff members/volunteers hold the football upright on one of the lines. Have the children line up and successfully kick 8 out of 10 footballs beyond the line, encourage him/her to take a few steps backwards to increase difficulty.

Kicking for Accuracy to the Parent

*Equipment Needed: Footballs, Kicking Tees, Masking Tape, Cones and Hula Hoops (optional)*

Put hula hoops or taped circles on the floor and mark a starting line 10 feet away. The child will kick the football off of the tee toward the staff member/volunteer standing in the hula hoop or taped circle. The staff member/volunteer should be able to catch the ball without moving from the circle. After kicking 8 out of 10 footballs to the staff member/volunteer inside the circle, encourage the children to move back five feet and repeat.

**Station #4- Running/Agility**

Run Backwards and Sideways

*Equipment Needed: Cones*

The child will practice running backwards for 20-50 feet from a starting point. Have the child then practice running sideways, right, and then left. As the child improves his/her skills, have him/her increase his/her speed.

Square Drill

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Set four cones in a square about five yards apart. Have the child run around the box. The children should hold a ball in their outside hand and go as fast as they can while under control. Have the child push off the outside of their foot at each come. To increase difficulty, change the direction that the children run around the square.
Station #1- Throwing
Throwing to a Partner
Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones, (or Masking Tape)
Mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart and have the staff member/volunteer stand behind the first line and the child stand behind the second. Encourage them to play throw and catch with the football. After the child completes 8 out of 10 throws and catches successfully, the staff member/volunteer moves back at five foot increments. Repeat at the next line back, and as the child is successful, increase the height and speed of throws.

Circle of All Participants with One Person in the Middle
Equipment Needed: Footballs
Have all of the participants stand in a large circle, and choose one person to stand in the middle of the circle. The person in the middle will throw the football to another participant, and then the participant will throw the football back to the person in the middle. Rotate the person who is in the middle of the circle so that everyone gets a turn.

Station #2- Catching
Catching a Football to the Side of the Body while Moving
Equipment Needed: Footballs
Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the child to move to the right or left while the staff member/volunteer softly throws the football in a slight arc to the child so that the child can catch the football sideways to the right. After the child can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity to the left.

Catching a Football from Above (as if Kicked)
Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Make two lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to throw the football in a high arc to the child so that the child can catch the football above their head. You should ask the staff members/volunteers to try to simulate a kick and a punt by throwing the ball end over end or in a high spiral. After the child can catch the ball 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance, speed and arc of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

Week 4 Continued on Next Page…
Station #3- Kicking/Punting

Hold and Punt!

Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Mark two lines, 10 feet apart. Have the staff member/volunteer stand sideways and hold the football 10-12 inches from the floor. The football should be long-ways, parallel to the floor. Have the child step once and kick the ball as high and as far as they can. Encourage each child to kick it past the other line. To increase difficulty, have the child add a step before kicking and have the staff member/volunteer drop the ball before the kick.

Drop and Punt!

Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Mark two lines, 10 feet apart. Have the child hold the football with both hands parallel to the floor. Have the child kick the ball, without stepping, as high and as far as they can. Encourage each child to kick it past the other line. To increase difficulty, have the child add a step before kicking.

Station #4- Running/Agility

Run at the Change of the Ball

Equipment Needed: Footballs
Have a staff member/volunteer stand in front of the children holding a ball. When the staff member/volunteer moves the ball, the children shuffle their feet and turn to the direction in which the ball is pointed. If the staff member/volunteer points the football to the right, the child shuffles to the right. If the staff member/volunteer points the football to the left, the child shuffles to the left. If the staff member/volunteer points the football up, the child jumps.

Flag-Pulling While Standing in One Place

Equipment Needed: Flag Belts and Cones
Mark two lines, 10 yards apart. Have the children stand on one line and the staff members/volunteers stand on the other line, facing each other. Have each child put a flag belt on. Have a staff member/volunteer run up to them, grab a flag, and run back to their starting line. Repeat the activity for the other flag. Then, have the staff members/volunteers put on the flag belt, and have the children run up and grab the flag. Repeat for the other flag.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 5

Station #1- Throwing
Circle of All Participants Where Parents and Children Pass to Anyone

*Equipment Needed: Footballs*

Have all of the staff members/volunteers and children stand in a circle, and encourage them to pass the football to anyone in the circle except for the person standing next to them. To increase the difficulty of this station, have the participants take a few steps backwards and increase the distance between the passes.

Throwing to a Moving Target

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Make 2 lines, 10 feet apart. Have each child stand on a line across from his/her parents, and encourage the child to throw the football to the staff member/volunteer as the parent runs to the right. The child should throw 8 out of 10 times so that the parent has a good chance of catching the ball. Repeat with the catcher running to the left and back away from the thrower. Complete 8 out of 10 successful throws for each situation, and then repeat while increasing the distance by 5 feet.

Station #2- Catching

**Jump and Catch!**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*

Make 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to throw the football in a high arc to the child so that the child has to jump to catch the football above their head using his/her hands. After the child can catch the ball with both hands 8 out of 10 times, repeat this activity while increasing the distance, speed and arc of the football in gradual increments as the child achieves success.

**Catching with Flags**

*Equipment Needed: Footballs, Cones, Flag Belts*

Make 2 lines, 15 feet apart. Have each child stand on a line across from a staff member/volunteer. Encourage the staff member/volunteer to throw the football to the child, either above the waist, above the head, or below the waist. Have the children catch the football, then run toward the staff member/volunteer, while trying to keep the staff member/volunteer from grabbing their flag as they cross the starting line.

*Week 5 Continued on Next Page…*
**Station #3- Kicking/Punting**

**Punt for Distance**
*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*
Mark 2 lines, 10 feet apart. Have each child hold the football, as if they were punting. Encourage each child to kick it to a staff member/volunteer, who is standing on the other line. To increase difficulty, have the staff members/volunteers take a few steps backwards to increase the distance that the child has to kick.

**Punt for Accuracy**
*Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones*
Mark a line with cones for each staff member/volunteer-child group. Encourage the child to punt the football so that it goes as far as possible, but as close as possible to the line of cones.

**Station #4- Running/Agility**

**Square Sprint Drill**
*Equipment Needed: Cones*
Place cones at the corners of a 15-yard square. Line the children up at one corner of the square and have the children run one-by-one to the first cone, shuffle to the second cone, run backwards to the third cones, and shuffle to the fourth. As each child finishes the drill, a staff member/volunteer can throw a pass to them.

**Flag Pulling While Moving Around**
*Equipment Needed: Flag Belts and Cones*
Mark 2 lines, 10 yards apart. Have the children stand on one line and the staff members/volunteers stand on the other, facing each other. Have each child put a flag belt on. Have the children run around while the staff member/volunteer tries to grab a flag and run back to the starting line. Repeat the activity for the other flag. Then, have the staff members/volunteers put the flag belt on, run around, and have the children run up and grab the flag. Repeat for the other flag.
Skill Development Exercises - Week 1

See Special Note for Week 6 on page 13 for other activities to end your program.

Station #1- Throwing
Throwing for Distance and Accuracy to a Moving Target
Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Make 2 lines, 10 feet apart. Have each child stand on a line across from a staff member/volunteer. Have the staff members/volunteers turn and run away from the children, turn back, and catch a football thrown to them by the child. The child should throw the ball so that the staff member/volunteer has a good chance of catching it 8 out of 10 times. After completing 8 out of 10 successful throws, repeat while the staff members/volunteers run farther away, increasing the distance by 5 feet each time.

Station #2- Catching
Catching a Football While “Going Out for a Pass”
Equipment Needed: Footballs and Cones
Make 2 lines, 10 feet apart. Have each child stand on a line across from a staff member/volunteer. Have the children turn and run away from the staff member/volunteer, turn back, and catch a football thrown to them by the staff member/volunteer. The staff member/volunteer should throw so that the child has a good chance of catching the ball 8 out of 10 times. After completing 8 out of 10 successful throws, repeat while the children run farther away, increasing the distance by 5 feet each time.

Station #3- Kicking/Punting
Punting for Accuracy to the Parent
Equipment Needed: Footballs, Masking Tape, Hula Hoops (optional)
Put Hula Hoops or taped circles on the floor and mark a starting line 20 feet away. The child will punt the football toward the staff member/volunteer standing in the Hula Hoop or taped circle. The staff member/volunteer should be able to catch the ball without moving from the circle. After kicking 8 out of 10 footballs to the parent inside the circle, encourage the children to move back 5 feet and repeat.

Station #4- Running/Agility
Grab the Flag!
Equipment Needed: Flag Belts and Cones
Have the staff members/volunteers and children line up in two lines, facing each other. Encourage one child (or staff member/volunteer) to run between the lines while everyone tries to take the participants flag.
APPENDIX

Performance Cues Posters............................A1-A2
Sample Floor Plan.....................................A3
Sample Promotional Flier.............................A4
Sample Press Release..................................A5
Coordinator Survey....................................A6
Participant Roster......................................A7
Performance Cues are designed to teach children basic sports mechanics for each skill area. Have staff members/volunteers use them to encourage the children and praise them when they remember individual steps involved with the particular skill. Make posters to be displayed at each skill station for easy reference during your Start Smart Soccer program.

**Throwing**

**Grip**
- Finger tips of middle, ring and pinky fingers across the laces.
- Pinky finger toward the middle of laces.
- Thumb underneath.
- Support ball on other side with opposite hand.

**Throw**
- Stand sideways to the target – throwing arm away from target.
- Hold ball just under your throwing arm ear.
- Point elbow away from target.
- Point non-throwing arm and hand toward target.
- Weight on back foot.
- Step toward target with front foot.
- Snap arm forward – Throw hard.
- Follow through by shifting weight to front foot.
- Release the ball above and in front of your head.
- Finish with index finger pointing forward and down with palm facing the ground.

**Catching**

**Catching a ball to the chest and above**
- Bend knees slightly.
- Move in front of the ball.
- Palms facing the thrower.
- Touch tips of index fingers and thumbs, form a diamond.
- Reach out.
- Squeeze the ball.
- “Give” with the ball and bring to the body.

**Catching lower than the chest**
- Bend knees slightly.
- Move in front of the ball.
- Palms up facing the thrower.
- Touch tips of pinky fingers.
- Reach out.
- Squeeze the ball.
- “Give” with the ball and bring to the body.

Continued on Next Page….
Performance Cues Posters

Performance Cues are designed to teach children basic sports mechanics for each skill area. Have staff members/volunteers use them to encourage the children and praise them when they remember individual steps involved with the particular skill. Make posters to be displayed at each skill station for easy reference during your Start Smart Soccer program.

**Kicking**
- Step behind and to the side of the football with your non-kicking foot
- Kicking leg should be back, knee bent, and toes pointed
- Swing kicking leg forward, straighten knee at contact
- Contact behind and in center of football with the top of your shoe for long and low kicks
- Contact behind and to the bottom of football with the top of your shoe for high kicks
- Point toes
- Arms out to your sides during kick
- Follow through high with leg

**Running**
- Keep your head up
- “Lean into” run slightly
- Lift your knees
- Bend your elbows and swing your arms freely
- Run on the balls of your feet
- Run lightly

**Jumping**
- Crouch halfway down, arms down and behind slightly.
- “Explode” upward.
- Swing arms forcefully up, then stretch and reach upward.

**Punting**
- Stand straight (erect)
- Hold the football with both hands, laces facing up
- Extend arms, waist high.
- Step with non-kicking foot.
- Keep your eyes on the ball.
- Drop the football and kick it.
- Leg back, toes pointed.
- Swing kicking leg forward, straighten knee.
- Point toes.
- Kick hard.
Sample Floor Plan

The following is a sample of a floor plan for the Start Smart Football program. Please keep in mind that if you do not have enough space for four stations you can alter this floor plan. Refer to the Program Format section of this manual for details.
Is Your Child Ready For Football?

The National Alliance For Youth Sports and ___Your Organization___ present the Start Smart Football program.

What: Start Smart is a six-week instructional program that helps children learn the basics of football: throwing, catching, kicking/punting and running/agility. The program helps prepare children for organized football by using safe and fun equipment to teach them the basic motor skills.

Who: Start Smart Football is open to children (3-7 years old) who can attend each session to prepare for organized football.

Where: Start Smart Football will be held at the ___site____ for six consecutive ___Day(s) of the week____.

Cost: Each participant will be charged ___fee___ which includes any additional materials provided_____.

*To register please call ___sports and fitness director___ at phone number___ or stop by the___address___ and sign up before ____deadline__!
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: START SMART Football Instructor

Parents in _city/town_ have a special opportunity to help their children develop sports skills through a unique national program that’s available.

The Start Smart Football Program is open to youngsters ages three to seven whose parent or another adult is able to attend the six, one-hour sessions with them.

There are ____ spots available for participants that will be filled on a first come, first serve basis.

The Start Smart program will begin __start date__ at the __facility__ and will be held from __time__ every __day(s) of the week__ for __number of weeks__.

“We are excited about being chosen to be a part of this national program,” said __Smart Start Football Instructor__. “We are always looking for innovative ways to help improve youth sports and this program certainly helps.”

The Start Smart Football program targets children who need to develop basic motor skills such as throwing, catching, kicking/punting and running/agility that are needed to participate in organized football.

It will teach children how to develop those skills while building their confidence which will enable them to enjoy participation in all youth sports programs.

A variety of innovative products will be utilized to enhance the child’s skill development.

The program is being administered by the Youth Development branch of the nonprofit National Alliance for Youth Sports based in West Palm Beach, Florida.

For more information, contact __Smart Start Football Instructor__ at __phone #__.

*This is only to be used with the traditional Parent/Child Start Smart Program*
Instructor Survey

Please complete the following survey at the conclusion of your Start Smart program and mail or fax to: Start Smart, 2050 Vista Parkway, West Palm Beach, FL 33411  (561) 712-9887. **This is only used for the traditional parent/child Start Smart Program.**

**Instructor:** ________________________  **Organization:** _______________________________

**Date Program ended:** ______________________  **Number of Participants:** _________________

How much did you charge each participant for the program? __________ Do you feel this price was well-received by the community?

Do you have any concerns regarding the time frame of the program (six one hour sessions)?

Do you feel the program is appropriate for children 3-7 years old?

Do you feel the children showed improvement from the beginning of the program? In what area(s)?

Were the Skill Guides clear for both the instructor and the participants?

Did the Instructor’s Manual contain everything you needed to run your Start Smart Football program? What could be added/changed, if anything?

Will you be hosting another Start Smart Football program in the future? If so, when?

Did your participants express an interest in a follow up program?

What was the overall perception from the participants in your program?

Do you feel the program helped prepare your participants for future participation in organized football?

Please list additional comments you have to enhance our program on the back of this sheet.
Participant Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: __________________________</th>
<th>Age: ___</th>
<th>M/F: ___</th>
<th>Phone: __________</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance (circle weeks present):</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6</td>
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</table>

Make copies of this page if you have more participants than the space provided