

# 7 ESSENTIALS FOR THE FIRST SOCCER PRACTICE

As a soccer coach, your bag of tricks doesn't have to be huge, but it should be well-stocked

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Twenty20

Grassroots soccer coaches come in all stripes — from the comically underprepared to the type-A overachiever, toting six duffle bags full of gear, looking like they themselves are ready to step onto the field at the World Cup.

We're here to help you find a happy medium — prepared with some essential soccer gear and ready for anything practice throws your way, but not over the top.

After all, this is youth soccer.

MOJO asked [long-time youth soccer coach Mike Singleton](#) about the gear you do and don't need for the first practice.

## **Soccer balls**

Sure, your enthusiastic players will probably show up with their [shiny new soccer balls](#), but it's important to have a few extras in case anyone forgets. (Be sure you have the [correct size ball](#) for your age group.) They don't have to be fancy as long as they're functional.

You might also consider purchasing a netted ball bag to transport balls to and from practice without them rolling all over your car.

## **First aid kit**

You can assemble a first aid kit from your bathroom closet, or buy a new one. Just make sure you have the following essentials for basic mishaps at practice:

- Band-Aids

- Medical tape
- Rubber gloves
- Antibiotic ointment
- Gauze
- Cotton balls or cotton pads

“You should have this at every practice for your whole coaching career,” says Singleton.

### **Disc cones**

A disc cone is like a pointy orange traffic cone... but smaller and flatter. *Like a disc.* Get it? Disc cones are pretty essential, in that they are used to create boundaries, small gates and goals.

Singleton recommends having at least 20 available, saying less than that may limit the types of activities and games you and your soccer players can do. Expect to pay about \$10 for a set of 20 cones.

### **Pinnies**

No, not pennies. [Pinnies](#) are practice jerseys that designate special players or groups for activities. These are used most often when scrimmaging.

Singleton recommends six to 12 pinnies, based on how many soccer players you have. “The days of shirts and skins are long passed,” he jokes. Make sure to pick

youth sizes, not adult.

If your league or club doesn't provide them for you, a set of pinnies will set you back around \$20.

### **Ball pump**

Go ahead and assume a ball will go flat at some point this season. But don't feel the need to haul your large soccer ball pump out of your garage.

Instead, Singleton recommends getting a small and handy pump with tiny tubes that fit into a backpack for practices. "They are really simple and about as big as a tube of toothpaste," he says. If you are pumping up an entire bag of balls, do it at home before practice.

### **The right outfit**

Choose athletic clothes that are comfortable and easy to move around in. Coaches don't really need cleats or soccer shoes, but rather comfortable athletic shoes.

And don't forget your mask, which Singleton says has pretty much been expected on all practices and games he's participated in since the pandemic started. "Coaches are typically recommended to keep masks on all the time, but some states don't force them to," he says.

## **A phone**

Your phone should be on, working and with you at all times, not stashed in your car six fields away, Singleton says. Having it on your person or in your bag will be easiest in an emergency, such as an injury, or if someone's running late for pickup. (Bonus: If you're using MOJO, you've got it in the palm of your hand anyway.)

## **And one thing notto bring...**

A whistle. You are not herding or corralling animals, Singleton says. Especially if you are working with younger kids, using your voice and their names is much more personal and effective than a shrill whistle, which can be as alarming as it is annoying. "If you are trying to make it fun and catch attention really quickly that's fine, but it shouldn't be used as a controller."