

AYSO Region 43

Policy of Play

(version B 8-01-07)

The following rules, guidelines and procedures are for the benefit of players, coaches, referees, and parents and will govern play during the 2007/2008 season. They represent the rules of the region and interpretations of the guiding documents. The regional Policy of Play (PoP) is just the last in a series of documents that start with the FIFA Laws of the Game (LOTG) and continue through the AYSO National Rules and Regulations (NR&R) and down through the Standard Regional Guidelines (SRG). The current edition of each document is the one in effect. In general, this document does not introduce new rules but further explains them along with procedures for handling violations.

1. GENERAL RULES, GUIDELINES, AND PROCEDURES

Many of these items are already stated in the Standard Regional Guidelines or other Operational Guidelines. They are simply restated here for emphasis and with some additional description or procedures to be followed. This provides more guidance to the coaches, parents and referees in handling issues that may arise.

A. PLAYING TIME: The first philosophy is the AYSO motto, "Everyone Plays". Every Player must play at least two quarters of every match at which she/he is present, able, and willing to play. Late arriving players who miss the first half must play at least one quarter. Regionally, as dictated originally in the Short-Sided Rules but applied to all divisions, no Player may sit out a second quarter if someone else on his/her team has not sat out one quarter. Any violation of this guideline is to be reported by the Referee who observes it to the Division Coordinator immediately following the match. This is tracked via the Lineup Card being correctly filled out for the quarters that a player does not play. The playing time is clearly stated in the AYSO National Rules and Regulations and Region 43 Standard Regional Guidelines. Furthermore, a coach should strive to equalize the time each player must sit out across the season and the number of times each player starts a game. This is conveniently tracked for the coach in our online system.

B. POSITIVE COACHING: The second philosophy is the AYSO motto "Positive Coaching". We define this to mean that Coaches and Spectators should, under no circumstances, engage in public and/or demeaning criticism of their own or opposing players during matches. For more information on Positive Coaching, please refer to the book Positive Coaching by Jim Thompson (1995 edition, Portola Valley: Warde Publishers). Referees are to remind coaches of this expected behavior if they determine the coach is not conforming. The referee will engage the coaches to keep spectators aware of such expected behavior as well. Damaging verbal or other abuse that is not stopped is grounds for dismissals and terminating a match early by the referee.

C. DISSENT: One of the basic Laws of the Game (LOTG) of soccer is that dissent from the referee or assistant referees' decisions is not allowed. The referee's decision is final. Players and Coaches who directly criticize or dissent from the Referees' decisions are subject to a formal warning (Caution / Yellow Card for players). No reminder is required from the referee. Repeated or continued dissent after a formal warning is cause for dismissal (Send Off / Red Card for a player). Coaches are responsible and held accountable for the conduct of Assistant or Co-Coaches and Spectators during the match. If one or more Spectators persist in open and loud criticism of the referees' decisions, the Coach will be subject to a formal warning for the Spectators' conduct. In extreme cases, the Coach may be dismissed for persistent abusive conduct towards the Referee on the part of Spectators on that Coaches' touchline. More likely, the referee can simply suspend or terminate the match if the coaches did what they could but the spectator would simply not change their behavior. It serves no purpose to claim misconduct of a coach if the coach tried to assist in the situation. When the referee is announcing a suspension or termination, the coaches should stand by the referee's side in a show of solidarity and support. A full report of the actions must be submitted. This is a strict FIFA, USSF, AYSO and Regional

policy.

D.MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS: Coaches must have the original, signed registration forms for all of their Players, or legible, originally-signed photocopies, in their possession during all practices and matches. Referees may ask to be shown the registration forms (which also serve as medical release forms) at any time, without exception. If the Coach does not have the forms with her/him at that time, the match may not begin until the forms are physically shown to the Referee. If the form for a particular player is missing, then that player cannot play.

E.PERMISION TO ENTER THE FIELD: Spectators and Coaches are not allowed on the playing field during the course of the match except with the explicit permission of the Referee. The course of the match includes from just before kick-off until after the final whistle. U8 and U10 Coaches may usually gain permission to come onto the playing field immediately before the match starts and during the half break to help players understand their positions on the field. Coaches must immediately leave the playing field when requested to do so by the Referee.

F.LOCATION OF TEAMS, COACHES, AND SPECTATORS: Coaches (or those spectators acting or sounding like coaches) must stay, at all times during the match, within 10 yards of either side of the halfway line. The Coaches of the home team (the team listed first on the match schedule) choose the touch line area from where to coach, if they arrive at least 20 minutes prior to the scheduled starting time of the match. The other team's Coaches and their Spectators take positions outside the opposite touch line. A consensus among Coaches and Referees of a match may allow one touch line to be shared by both teams, Coaches and/or Spectators. Spectators must stay at least 6 feet from either touchline, where allowed by the field. Under no circumstance are Parents, Coaches, or other Spectators allowed to watch the match or shout out from behind either goal line or along the touch line closer to the goal line than the penalty area defines. The referee may, at his/her discretion, allow a silent photographer who is not disruptive behind either goal line or close to the goal line on either touch line. Any parent who is giving prescriptive, game-control directives as opposed to descriptive cheers of encouragement is considered to be coaching and bound by the coach restriction as to their location on the field. But such parents should be encouraged to change their behavior as well.

G.LINEUP CARDS: Lineup cards printed from the Web Youth Soccer system must be given to the Referee before the start of the match; filled out with team name, Coaches' names, and Players' names and numbers. Please cross out only the Players Name for those not present at a match and only when you are absolutely sure they will not be there (injury, travel, etc). It will be the Referees' responsibility to note on the card those Players that are out for specific quarters, who scored, goalkeepers during a quarter, and assessments of conduct on the field of Players, Coaches, and Spectators. Referees will be responsible for entering completed lineup cards into the Web Youth Soccer system within 24 hours after the matches they officiate and hold onto the card originals until well after the end of the season, in case issues arise after the fact. Referee's may bring their own lineup cards if they are assigned to the game before hand. Referee's may disallow any name on the line-up card that does not appear in the Web Youth Soccer system. So it is important to get the online roster correct well before game time. If a referee discovers an apparent illegal player after the game when entering the card into the system, s/he should report this to the DC / Board via the notation section.

H.STANDINGS: In divisions U12 and up, match scores are tracked and standings are kept to determine which team will be the division champion at the end of the regular season and possibly which team(s) may represent region 43 at the Area tournaments following the regular season. Only the last scheduled match played against each of the regions teams will be considered part of the standings. Subject to board decision near the end of each season, the leader in standings at the end of the regular season may receive an automatic spot in the Area tournament. An intra-region tournament at the end of the season may also be used to select all or additional teams to play in the Area tournament. The season standings are nominally used to determine the seeds for the tournament ladder or not. This is determined by the board at any point in the season and executed by the tournament director.

Standings at the end of the season are determined by the following point system: 3 points for a win, 1 point for a tie, 0 points for a loss, 2 points (i.e. -1 penalty) for a blowout victory. Blowouts are defined as any match

where the final score shows a victory margin of 6 or more goals. Matches are forfeited if the minimum number of players are not present on the field 5 minutes after the scheduled starting time for that match (as determined by the referee) and counted as a 2-0 scored game for purposes of standings. If both teams forfeit, no points shall be awarded. In the event that teams do not have the same number of matches (due to unequal Bye matches or unsafe playing conditions), the relative standings shall be computed by dividing the team's total number of points earned by the total number of matches considered. In case of ties, the tiebreaker system is as follows:

1. Who beat whom in head-to-head competition (last match up)
2. Fewest goals allowed in considered matches
3. Most goals scored in considered matches (counting a maximum of 3 goals per team per match)
4. Least number of disciplinary actions in the season (Red Cards count as 3 Yellow Cards)

I. PLAYER EVALUATIONS: Near the regular season end, Coaches must complete Player Rating forms on line via Web Youth Soccer in exchange for Player trophies and photographs. The information contained on the Player Rating forms is important for balancing next year's teams. Just as important, the division coordinators must then normalize the coaches ratings across the division as supported by the application.

J. MATCH DURATION AND FIELDED TEAM SIZES: Matches consist of two halves of equal duration with a break in between. The break will be no shorter than 5 minutes and no longer than 10 minutes; the length to be determined by the referee and reported to the coaches. The length of each half is dependent on the age division. For lower divisions, see the Short/Small Sided Game rules in the next section. For the upper divisions, it is given as follows:

- U14 35-minute halves
- U16 40-minute halves
- U19 45-minute halves

For these upper divisions, a size 5 ball is used. A team must field a minimum of 7 players and a maximum 11 players during the match, per FIFA rules. There are no restrictions on time as a goal keeper other than normal AYSO playing time requirements that apply to all players. The goal keeper position may be specialized. Team fielded sizes (i.e. Number of players on the field from each team) do not have to match as play is usually inter-regional. Referees are responsible for keeping matches on schedule but coaches have a major role to play in supporting this. We have a severe shortage of fields every year, so we need to keep matches on track.

K. NORMAL AYSO SUBSTITUTION: Substitution opportunities are normally available at approximately the midway point of each half as determined and called for by the referee. Additionally, substitutions can be made at the break between halves and optionally when a player is injured and removed from the field at a stoppage.

In U12 and younger divisions, coaches are expected to report to the Referee which Player, if any, is being replaced. After a Player being substituted has left the field, the new Player is allowed to enter the field after permission is granted by the referee. Coaches are responsible for sending on substitutes (with permission of the referee) and getting replaced players off the field as quickly as possible. Coaches are not to enter the field at this time nor unduly delay the game during substitutions.

Substitution opportunities at midway points are just that — short extensions of stoppages to allow for the substitution of players. They are not mini half-time breaks. Only Players being substituted are allowed to leave the field. All other Players should remain on the field and in their positions. Players may go to the touchline to be passed a refreshment at any time during the game and possibly at the substitution opportunity. The referee need not hold up the restart of play for players who have left the field for an extended break at the substitution opportunity. Players off the field when the whistle is blown to restart the game must wait for referee permission to re-enter the field of play. It is the referee's discretion to permit U12 and younger players to leave the field for a longer stoppage at the midway substitution opportunity for rest and water. This may be done for safety on severe weather condition days. Otherwise, players leaving the field without permission of the referee are subject to a formal caution (yellow card). To aid the substitution process, the coach should have all players sitting out at the restart of the match stand together with their backs facing the referee or assistant referee so

she can record the jersey numbers of those players not on the field. It is highly recommended that the coach arrange the roster and playing positions so that the substitute replaces the player in the same position on the field for substitutions midway in each half. Rotating players through different positions each "quarter" is not recommended and can lead to sanctions for disrupting and delaying the match. Only in younger kids games (U10, maybe U12) should the keeper be a position changed at every substitution opportunity.

Contrary to AYSO Small Sided Guidelines and National Rules and Regulations but in line with the FIFA and USSF rules, the clock is not stopped during substitution opportunities. So coaches are reminded that they are cutting into the playing time and player enjoyment by extending the stoppage for substitutions beyond what is necessary. Note that there is limited time between matches. So if extended stoppages are needed due to weather, either the match should be shortened (by the same amount each half) or limited "stoppage" time added to the running clock to account for some of the substitution time. This is at the discretion of the Referee.

L. INJURY AND OTHER SUBSTITUTION: When play is stopped and a Player is injured, she/he may be substituted immediately upon leaving the field with permission of the referee. If a Player is injured and is substituted by another player, the injured Player may not return until the next Normal substitution opportunity. An injured Player receives credit for having played the entire quarter in which she/he became injured (that is, the referee does not record the substitution). If a Player is injured, but no substitution is made, the injured Player who has recovered may return to the field at any time after getting the Referees' attention AND permission to re-enter the field. The referee may delegate some of this authority to her assistant.

If a team has not been able to field the allowed number of players at a Normal substitution opportunity or start of the game, for any reason (late or absent players, injured player still out and no substitute available, etc.), then when a player becomes available and ready to play, the referee may allow the player onto the field either immediately or at the next convenient stoppage of play.

A late arriving player needs their equipment checked by the Referee before entering the field. Players asked to leave the field to correct equipment or uniform problems are marked like injured players on the lineup card if the equipment problem cannot be fixed. The player asked to leave to correct equipment problems can only re-enter the field after receiving the referee's permission. The referee may delegate the handling of these non-normal returns of a player to the field (injury, late arriving player) to a neutral assistant referee nearest the team, if available.

M. TEAM REFEREES: Teams in U8 through U12 are expected to provide a trained, certified team referee for every game. The team referee in U10 and U12 should be available for one additional game other than their team game each week as well. Any team with a team referee that completes 5 games during that season is then eligible to participate in tournament play.

2. SHORT-/SMALL-SIDED MATCHES (U12 through U6)

To make the game more fun and educational for the younger players, the Laws of the Game are modified for youth as allowed by FIFA to accommodate the U6, U7, U8, U9, U10, and U12 developmental players. For the most part, Region 43 follows the AYSO National Short-Sided (aka Small-Sided) Game rules and the AYSO "Fouls for the Ages" recommendations. Exceptions are noted.

For U8/U7/U6 players, we reduce the size of the field, goals, fielded team size, ball – and the Laws! The U8/U7 simplified Laws are designed to make the game easier to understand and more fun for inexperienced players, coaches, spectators, and referees; while preserving the spirit and the structure of the full Laws of the Game. For U9/U10 and U12 players, the field, fielded team size, ball and goal dimensions are reduced but otherwise the full laws are applied. Age appropriate application of the laws, especially with regards to fouls and misconduct, is strongly endorsed as described in the AYSO "Fouls for the Ages".

There are a few National rules or those introduced by Region 43 that apply to all divisions (U12 through U6) and they are listed here first. Then each divisions' rules are described after these general rules for the ease of the coach or referee concerned with only a particular division.

A.GOALKEEPER PLAYING TIME: For Players in age division U12 and below, no Player may play as goalkeeper for more than half the match. The Player playing goalkeeper must also play part of the match in the field as a non-goalkeeper player, as possible. Normal playing time requirements apply whether a player is a goalkeeper or not. In general, as stated in the Standard Regional Guidelines, no U12 or below player may play goalkeeper for more than half their total time on the field during the season.

B.NUMBER OF FIELDED PLAYERS: For matches in age division U12 and below, the coaches must agree to and field the same number of players to start the match; or at most one player different. It is unsporting for a coach to insist on starting with a number of fielded players larger than the opposing teams available roster of Players (before or after any swap of players that may occur to balance teams). The coaches can agree to an amount less than or equal to the maximum allowed for the age division but not more. If the coaches cannot agree to the number of fielded players, then the match is declared abandoned by the referee and a report issued with the details. Fielded player differences due to send-offs and temporary injury absences are not considered in this count. Coaches are encouraged to pick a fielded team size that allows for at least one reserve Player (substitute) on each team.

If a team cannot meet the minimum fielded team size, then the team must forfeit. After the forfeit, coaches are strongly encouraged to re-balance the teams by swapping players and then play as a scrimmage to finish out the expected time period. This enables the players to have a full chance to play and learn during their allotted time. The game final score, where standings are kept, will be recorded as a forfeit (2-0) even if started as a normal match. If possible, a referee should still be used and playing time, goals by players, and similar game information should still be recorded. Any forfeits or any match is subject to league review for abiding by the five (5) tenets of AYSO including good sportsmanship.

Due to the mini-teams in the U8/U7 division, fielded mini-teams must match in size always and coaches are encouraged to play all players all the time if roster sizes and maximum fielded team sizes allow.

C.MATCH PARTICULARS: The match duration, fielded team size, restart distance, and ball size follows the AYSO National Rules and Regulations for youth games as modified by the Short-Sided Game rules:

U6	10-minute halves, 3 to 4 players on the field per team, 4 yard distances, cones only, size 3 ball
U7/8	20-minute halves, 4 to 6 players on the field per team, 6 yard distances, size 3 ball
U9/10	25-minute halves, 5 to 7 players on the field per team, 8 yard distances, size 4 ball
U12	30-minute halves, 7 to 9 players on the field per team, 10 yard distances, size 4 ball

D.MISCONDUCT: Intentional misconduct is not possible or very rare due to the developmental level of most players in these divisions. Formal cautions (Yellow card) and send-offs (Red card) are not to be used except in rare circumstances at the U12 level. In general, the coach should be utilized to try and help correct behavior in young players that ignore the referee's request. A Caution for Misconduct should be handled discretely as an injury by the referee and coach. As with normal injuries, the player can re-enter the field once the disorder is corrected by utilizing normal "injury" substitution rules. A send-off, without a public display of the card, can be utilized and explained as an injury (and should be recorded as such in subsequent quarters in the lineup card). A player sent-off for misconduct without the showing of the card is not recorded as misconduct and the player is not restricted from play in the following games. It is the referee's discretion as to whether a formal misconduct (public display of a card and booking) is warranted in the U12 division. But such actions should be considered very carefully for the benefit of all the players as such actions are more likely to cause long term harm to the player receiving the card and the other players on the field witnessing such an act. The purpose of the cards and misconduct is to control that particular match, not to mentally injure the player for an extended period of time.

U12 Small-Sided Matches

AYSO Region 43 plays with the full laws as described for U12 play in the AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game and the AYSO Small Sided rules with no exceptions. The AYSO Small Sided rules call for the ball size to be reduced to #4, the duration of the game adjusted to 30 minute halves, number of fielded players per team to be 7 to 9, and the field size to be slightly smaller than the minimums normally allowed (nominally, 90yd by 45yd). Key restart distances are kept at **10 yards** and the goal size reduced to be no larger than **7 feet high by 7 yards wide**. Formal misconduct actions (including the display of the card) should be very rarely, if at all, utilized. Nominally, 7 foot high by 7 yard wide goals are used. U12 laws apply to any U11 division as well.

U10 Small-Sided Matches

AYSO Region 43 plays with the full laws as described for the U10 play in the AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game AND the AYSO Small Sided rules with no exceptions. The AYSO Small Sided rules call for the ball size to be reduced to #4, the duration of the game adjusted to 25 minute halves, the number of fielded players per team to be 5 to 7, and the field size and dimensions reduced. The key restart distances are reduced from 10 yards to **8 yards**, and the goal size reduced to be no larger than **6 feet high by 6 yards wide**. Offside is applied when the referee can see it (sometimes more difficult if only club linesman are available) and advantage is gained. Formal cautions or send-offs are not allowed (no display of cards). The region uses 70 yard by 35 yard fields. U10 laws apply to any U9 division as well.

U8 Small-Sided Matches (simplified rules)

For the U8 officials, it is much more useful to have these Laws described as a self-contained whole, rather than having to sift through lots of material from different sources that may or may not apply. As such, Appendix A to this Policy statement covers the U8 laws for the region in detail to assist the U8 Official in having a single place to understand all the applicable laws they may need to care about.

The U8 Simplified laws can be described as the full Laws with offside, indirect free kicks, goal keeper, and penalty kicks "left out". We concisely list these changes below, for the more experienced reader and trained referee. The longer description in the appendix takes precedence and is geared for the U8 Official and coach. U8 Laws apply to all U7 and generally U6 division games as well. U6 jamboree games are scrimmages without formal laws and referee officiating.

Applicable to all laws: on all restarts except throw-in and dropped ball, the opponents must be **6 yards** or more away from the ball on a restart as opposed to the traditional 10 yards.

Law 1: The field and goals are smaller. The center circle is **6 yards** in radius rather than 10. The penalty area line is coincident with the goal area line (and thus no penalty kicks). Instead, the goal area is relatively enlarged. See diagram in appendix. Fields are normally 50 yards by 25 yards. Goals are 5'x10' for U8 and 4'x8' for U7.

Law 2: A size #3 ball is used.

Law 3: Each team is divided into two (2) mini-teams with 4 (min) to 6 players (max) on the field for each mini-team, rather than seven to eleven as in the normal laws. No goal keepers.

Law 6: Assistant referees or club linesman are not used due to the small field size.

Law 7: Mini-teams play 2 consecutive 20 minute half-matches. Each half match has a substitution opportunity midway like a normal match.

Law 11: The offside law is not applied. But persistent "parking" in an offside position to gain an advantage is unsporting behavior and, like all misconduct at this age level, should be dealt with via the coach.

Law 12: All foul restarts result in a direct free kick; there are no indirect free kicks. Fouls in the goal area are treated with special circumstances as normal.

Formal cautions and send-offs of players from the match, although technically within the referee's power, are only to be used in very extreme and rare circumstances and after working with the coach. Cards are never to be shown.

Law 13: All free kicks are direct. Remember that free kicks from the goal area by the defending team must leave the goal (penalty) area to be in play. Also, Direct Free Kicks by the attacking team must be moved out of the goal area to the point nearest the goal area line that is parallel to the goal line.

Law 14: No penalty kicks; only direct free kicks. Law 8 special circumstances apply.

Law 16: Goal kicks are taken, as in the full Laws, from anywhere in the goal area. Opposing players are still required to be **6 yards** from the ball and outside the goal area when it is kicked. As there is no larger penalty area, this may require opposing players to be farther away from the goal/penalty area line than just outside the line. The ball is in play when it leaves the penalty/goal area.

Administrative Procedures for U8 Small-Sided matches:

There are the following administrative differences (procedures) in small-sided matches, although they are not a formal part of the Under 8 Laws:

- Each U8 team of 8 to 12 players is divided into two mini-teams on match day. Players should remain on the same mini-team throughout the match. Each of these mini-teams plays two 4v4 (or up to 6v6) half-matches against another U8 team's two mini-teams. Thus, there are 4 such half-matches played, two-at-a-time, on adjacent fields. There is a 5-minute break between the first and second pair of half-matches, during which time the visiting team's mini-teams swap fields (and thus change opposing mini-teams). It is expected that as many of the players as possible play; no reserve substitutes are expected unless one mini-team is one player larger than the other. The adjacent fields may have different size fielded teams but the teams on the same field must match in size. That is, one field could be 4v4 and the other 5v5, for example.

- Each team supplies a referee, who officiates two successive half-matches on the same field. The referee provided by the home team has the choice of fields to officiate.

- Coaches are expected to balance their two mini-teams as much as possible. They are also expected to substitute and rotate players within a mini-team so that playing time is approximately equal. A coach may only switch a player between mini-teams if, due to injury, the number of players on the field would require a forfeit of the half-match.

- If, as is generally the case, the teams each provide a referee, each referee checks in the entire opposing team (that is, both of the oppositions mini-teams) before the match begins. Separate lineup cards can be used for each mini-team and half-match but the results should be merged into a single card per team for purposes of recording the goals and playing time for each player in the regional database. The regional database does not distinguish that two mini-team matches were played on parallel fields. Standings are purposely not kept so goals and scores are only kept to make sure blow-out rules are applied and the region gets statistics on goals by specific players.

U6 Matches

U6 division plays scrimmages during practice sessions using cones for field boundary and goal demarcation. Referees are not used. Coaches are expected to manage the safe, fair and fun play at this age level. Play is nominally 3v3 as described in the National guidelines and use 1/2 a U8 field (roughly 20 yards by 25 yards)

3. CONDUCT ON THE FIELD

Players, Coaches, and Spectators are required to conform to the Laws of the Game from the time they enter the area around the field of play until they exit, including the entire period of time that the match is in progress. The Referee, whose authority commences from the time she/he enters the area around the field until she/he leaves the area, will enforce the Laws. Good conduct is expected of Players at all times. Coaches are expected

to support, model, and enforce the highest standards of behavior for team Players and Spectators at all times.

Misconduct (Yellow and Red Card infractions) must be reported to the Division Coordinators for the age group. Referees must report cautions (Yellow Card misconduct violations) with a report via telephone or email to the Division Coordinators, and send offs (Red Card misconduct violations) with a report via telephone and an email to the Division Coordinator and the Regional Commissioner within 48 hours of the Send Off.

A. Any Player who was sent off (issued a Red Card) for misconduct must be suspended from the match immediately and may not return to the match. The team of the offending Player may not substitute for that Player, and will play shorthanded for the rest of the match (unless the match has not restarted). If the team has fewer than the required minimum number of Players after the Send Off, that team forfeits the match.

B. Any Player receiving a Red Card is ineligible to play in the next match the team plays following a match in which the Player was sent off (i.e. one match suspension).

C. Any Player who was Sent Off (issued a Red Card) twice or has received 5 Cautions (Yellow Cards) in the season is suspended from further Regional, Area, and Section play until he/she appears before the Regional Sanction Committee (or AYSO Area Council, in divisions with intra-Area competition).

D. Any Player who is Cautioned (issued Yellow Cards) 3 times during the course of the season is ineligible to play in the next match following the third Caution (Yellow Card) issued (i.e. one match suspension).

E. The team Coach is responsible to ensure that ineligible Players do not play in matches. Ineligibility resulting from Red or Yellow Card misconduct must be enforced by the team Coach or the team will forfeit any matches where ineligible Players participate.

F. The Referee or Coach have no discretionary power to force a Player who has received a caution off the field for any period of time. A referee may declare a player to be injured if in an erratic or abusive state of mind exists and thus ask that the player be removed or substituted due to that injury before the match is allowed to continue. An injury judged by the Referee or Coach, or a send-off, are the only reasons a player may be required to leave the field. Any player not following a request for injury substitution or send-off may force the termination of the match and appropriate sanction response from the region board. Declaration of an injury should be used as a last resort and in extreme and rare cases where the match would have to be suspended or terminated due to behavior not being corrected because there is a high risk of serious injury that may result if the player is allowed to stay, and to prevent a likely send-off due to a temporary mental state.

G. Coaches are expected to behave according to the Laws of the Game and may be penalized for misconduct. They must be suspended from matches when they are dismissed, in addition to being suspended from the next team match (i.e. one match suspension). Any Coach receiving a third formal warning during a season is suspended from coaching the next team match and they must also appear before the Regional Sanctions Committee (or AYSO Area Council in divisions with intra-Area competition).

H. A match may be suspended or terminated by the Referee if the behavior of the Players, Coaches, or Spectators becomes severely disruptive to continuing the match. Matches may also be suspended or terminated by the Referee if the behavior of the Players, Coaches or Spectators threatens the safety of anyone on the field. Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their teams and spectators at all times during AYSO functions. This includes litter removal after the match. As with other forms of misconduct, the Referee will report the situation to the AYSO Regional Council for disposition of the match and disciplinary action.

I. **Excellent Sportsmanship** is expected of all AYSO Coaches and Players at all times. A skilled team is expected to adjust play discretely to balance the match when a significant advantage is attained. Failure to sustain a sporting attitude, whether winning or losing, will be brought to the attention of the Regional Sanctions Committee (or of the appropriate Regional Commissioner in the case of intra-Area competition) for disciplinary action.

J. Blowouts are defined as matches where the score shows a 6 goal or more margin of victory. Blowouts are incompatible with the basic principles of sportsmanship, and are inconsistent with AYSO's goal of making participation in youth soccer fun and competitive for all participants. Therefore blowouts are strongly discouraged. Referees will quietly remind Coaches of AYSO's strong policy against blowouts during matches whenever a team goes up by 3 goals. All blowouts will be reported by both the winning and losing teams to the Division Coordinator for the age group. Clever and discrete coaching can avoid a blowout, no matter how enthusiastic a team might be.

- Judiciously reposition Players (put goal scorers on defense)
- Judiciously substitute Players (change substitution plans to have stronger players sit out, while still allowing each player to play 2 quarters)
- Instructing Players discretely that they can only shoot on goal with their "off" foot
- Instruct Players discretely that they must make at least 5 consecutive passes among teammates before taking a shot on goal
- Instruct Players to let defenders get the ball cleared from their defending half of the field
- Requiring that only Players who have never scored before are allowed to take shots

Remember to reward your team for good sportsmanship later if you change the rules to avoid a blowout. Instructing players discretely is not always effective at U12 and below and so the coach may be required to use positioning and substitution as the main means to adjust the team dynamics.

K. Respect for the opposing team's Coaches and Players must be a guiding principle and evident in how Coaches, Referees, Spectators, and Players handle avoiding blowouts. Obvious and ostentatious instructions to Players to stop doing their best does not serve anyone's interests and may cause harm by offending the losing team and dampening the competitive spirit of the players. Remember, we are here to build self-esteem among all of our players.

APPENDIX A:
Under 8 Match Rules for U8 Officials
(as modified from the original document by Roy Levin, Region 26)

For Under 8 players, AYSO reduces the size of the field, the teams, the ball – and the Laws! These simplified Laws are designed to make the game easier to understand and more fun for inexperienced players, coaches, spectators, and referees, while preserving the spirit and the structure of the full Laws of the Game. These laws apply to U8 and U7 division games and generally to U6.

The Under 8 Laws can be described as the full Laws with offside, indirect free kicks, penalty kicks, and the goal keeper “left out”. However, it is much more useful to have these Laws described as a self-contained whole, rather than having to sift through lots of material that does not apply. This document lays out the Laws for Under 8 play in AYSO Region 43 fully, yet concisely, including relevant Regional, Area, AYSO and FIFA rulings. You should not need any other document than this one to understand the full laws.

Although this document focuses on Under 8 play, it should also serve to introduce the structure of the Laws to the U8 Official, and prepare you to move up to the complete laws in U10 play. Once you become more familiar with the game and these laws, we hope you will look at the full laws to see how the same principles and spirit are expressed in the complete game. A companion book, “The Rules of Soccer: Simplified” from Soccer One may be helpful to further describe the laws of soccer in general.

The Spirit of the U8 Laws

When reading and applying these Laws, remember always, above everything else, that Laws are laws, but Under 8 AYSO players are, in every sense, very young children playing. At this level, the Laws exist to structure their physical activity in a fair way, and that should be the message to the children. ***Almost all violations of the rules are inadvertent, so “penalties” are assessed to “make it fair” to a team which has been hurt by some action, not to “punish” the offender.*** Make it absolutely clear when you make a call, not just what is being called but why, in terms that young children can understand. Also remember that virtually all violations of technical rules (e.g., the “double touch,” or throw-in rules) reflect ignorance and enthusiasm, and not a deliberate attempt to gain advantage. As such, they should almost always be met with an explanation and a chance to do it again, not the “penalty” that the Laws allow you to impose if you feel that the player really did know better.

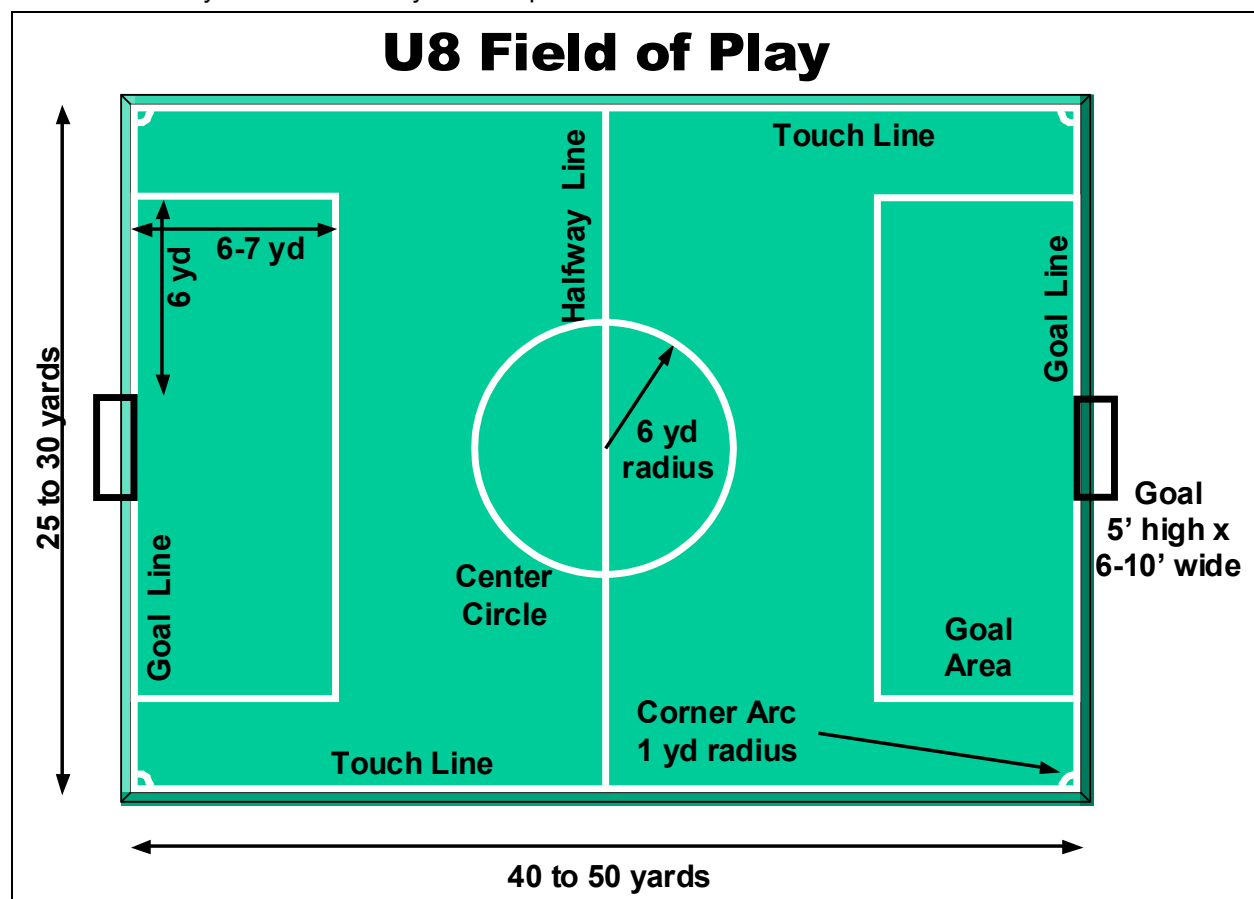
The Laws do not require you to be a kind and gentle teacher. In fact, they give you the authority to be a stern disciplinarian for the occasional time when you might feel that it is necessary. However, don’t let their formality become your only point of view, or you will miss much of the joy of being part of young children’s soccer experience. You are likely the child’s first introduction to organized sport with an official on the field. Make it feel like your their parent in a pick up game in the park among friends. Keep it fair and safe but let the kids play and learn.

Law 1: The Field of Play

The field of play shall be rectangular with a length of **40-50 yards** and a width of **25-30 yards**. It should be marked with distinctive boundary lines, no more than 5 inches in width (ideally not by a V-shaped rut). The longer boundary lines are called the touch lines; the shorter, the goal lines. The lines that mark the areas on the field are considered to be part of the areas that they mark. A ball is out of bounds and off the field of play if it is wholly outside these boundary lines.

A halfway line shall be marked out across the field. The center of the field shall be indicated by a mark and a circle shall be marked around it with a radius of **6 yards**. This circle serves to mark the opponents distance they must keep away during a kick-off restart.

At each end of the field of play, a goal area is defined. For U8, the goal area is marked **6 to 7 yards** from and parallel to the goal line. It extends to **6 to 7 yards** beyond the goal edge on either side and then is finally closed by parallel lines running from the end of the goal area line back to the goal line. The area enclosed by the goal area line and the goal line is called the “goal area.” With a ~3 yard wide goal, this translates to an area that is ~15 yards wide and 6 yards deep.



A goal shall be placed, centered, on each goal line. The two goals shall be identically sized: 4-5 feet high and 7-10 feet wide. Nets should be attached to the posts, cross bars, and ground behind the goals. Nets are not required to play but highly encouraged. They should be placed and secured so as not to impede or endanger a player.

At each corner, a flag shall be placed on a post not less than 5 ft. high and having a non-pointed top. From each corner, a quarter circle, with a radius of 1 yard, shall be drawn inside the field of play. Although strictly required by FIFA LOTG, USSF guidance states that the corner flags are not required to play the game. Soft, 1ft high cones are encouraged if flags are not available.

Law 2: The Ball

The ball should be a FIFA approved size # 3 ball. The ball should be inflated to a reasonable pressure (deflects about 1/4" when pressed with both thumbs in the same patch). The ball shall be approved by the referee before the match and may not be changed during the match without the referee's permission. Generally, at this level of play, one match ball provided by the home team should be sufficient.

Law 3: Number of Players

Each team shall divide their roster into two “mini-teams.” A match shall be played by opposing mini-teams consisting of 4 to 6 players on the roster. There are no goalkeepers. A match may not start if one mini-team

consists of less than 4 players. Fielded teams on the same field should be the same size. All players should play without the need for reserve substitutes, if convenient.

Every player who is present by the mid-point of the first half should play at least half the overall match (a full mini-match length of time). If a player leaves the field through injury, he or she may be substituted for, but in that case may not return until the next substitution opportunity. The "mini-match" half in which a player is injured and leaves the field counts towards that player's playing time (and not to that of the substitute, if any).

There is no goal keeper in U8 play. Therefore, no player can touch the ball with their hands, arms or shoulder during the normal course of play while the ball is in play. A defender cannot be parked in front of the goal to act as a keeper. The whole reason for not having a keeper is to keep all the players involved in the active play. We do not want a player twiddling his thumbs in front of his goal while all the action is in the other half of the field. Defenders may be inside the goal area but should not be guarding the goal at all times and be free to move about the field.

Law 4: Players' Equipment

Every player shall wear the shirt, shorts, and socks of his team's uniform, shin guards, and footwear. Shin guards must be covered entirely by the socks and should provide a reasonable degree of protection.

A player shall not wear anything that, in the referee's opinion, is dangerous to other players, or himself.

Prior to the start of the match, the referee shall inspect the players and players' equipment. Any player whose equipment or self does not comply with these requirements shall not play until it does.

Law 5: The Referee

One referee shall be appointed to officiate in each match.

The referee's authority commences as soon as he enters the field of play and continues when play has been temporarily suspended, and when the ball is out of play. The referee's decision on points of fact connected with the play shall be final.

The referee:

enforces the Laws.

has the option not to penalize a breach of the Laws if, in the referee's opinion, either

- (i) a decisive advantage is immediately obtained by the non-offending team (for example a defensive handball on a shot that goes into the goal),
- (ii) the breach is a trifling one that confers no advantage on the offending team (for example, a slight lift of the foot on the throw-in that does not provide an apparent advantage).

acts as timekeeper and keeps a record of the match,

stops, suspends, or terminates the match, at his discretion, for any infringement of the Laws or because of outside interference of any kind. (However, the referee does not have the power to decide that either team is disqualified and thereby the loser of the match. He must instead simply report the circumstances to the appropriate AYSO official.)

stops the match if, in his opinion, a player has been injured. If a player is only slightly hurt and is clearly in no danger, the match should not be stopped until a normal stoppage such as the ball out of play.

ensures that no unauthorized persons enter the field of play

takes action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds

allows only positive coaching from outside the touch lines and applies this rule on their self.

If two offenses occur in rapid succession (for example, a push followed by a push back), the referee can penalize only the first, since the second one occurred when the ball was out of play (see Law 9) and the referee had already decided to stop play for the first one, whether or not he had yet signaled this to the players. Since only the most serious misconduct is separately sanctioned when the ball is out of play, the referee has no convenient way to penalize the second offense. However, he should clearly warn the second offender.

If a player commits two infringements at the same time, the referee shall punish the more serious offense. This usually only occurs when a deliberate handling of the ball counts as a second touch by the player putting the ball into play.

The referee can base his decisions only on facts observed directly by him. The referee may reverse any decision he has made as long as the match has not been restarted.

Law 6: The Assistant Referees

Assistant referees are not used in U8 play. If volunteers are used to help the referee, their only duty is to help indicate to the referee when the ball is out of play (outside the field).

Law 7: Duration of the Match

The match consists of two periods, each of 20 minutes, with allowance for time lost through substitution, the treatment of injured players, time wasting or other cause. The amount of the allowance for time lost is at the discretion of the referee. A substitution opportunity roughly midway in a period is allowed. This opportunity shall take no more than 2 minutes but ideally be less than a minute. The referee match watch continues during this substitution opportunity and any break in play.

Teams will play two "mini-half-matches" simultaneously on adjacent small-sided fields. Each mini-team shall play a match against both of the opposing mini-teams. The interval between mini-matches (half-time break) shall be 5 minutes. During the interval, the visiting team's mini-teams swap fields while the home team's mini-teams and the referees remain on the fields where the first mini-matches were played. Otherwise, normal procedures apply including who gets to kick-off and who defends which goal at the start of the match or at the start of the second half.

Law 8: The Start and Restart of Play

Kickoff

At the beginning of the match, a coin is tossed for each mini-team match and the team that wins the toss decides which goal it will attack in the first half of the match. The other team takes the kick-off to start the match. The team that wins the toss takes the kick-off to start the second half of the match. In the second half of the match the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals. The result of the coin toss applies to the mini-field and does not go with the visiting mini-team when they change fields.

A kick-off is a way of starting at the start of each half of the match and restarting play after a goal has been scored. The procedure is as follows. All players are in their own half of the field. The opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least **6 yards** from the ball (outside the center circle) until it is in play. The ball is stationary at the center of the field. The referee gives a signal. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team. When a team accidentally scores an "own" goal in the goal they defend, the opponent gets the goal point and the defender kicks off as if the goal was scored by the opponent.

Dropped ball

To restart the match after a temporary suspension of play for any reason for which no other specific restart is specified (for example, if the referee stops play for injury), the referee restarts play by dropping the ball at the place where it was when play was suspended. If the location of any dropped ball would be inside the goal area, the ball shall be dropped at the point on the goal area line (**6- or 7-yard** out from the goal) nearest to the original location of the ball when play was stopped. The ball is in play when it has touched the ground, before which no player shall play it, else the referee shall drop the ball again.

General requirements for all restarts

(a) All kick restarts (kickoffs, goal kicks, free kicks, and corner kicks) are direct. A goal can be scored directly on the opponent but an own goal cannot be scored. A throw-in is indirect. A goal cannot be scored until the ball has been played (touched or kicked) by any player other than the person putting the ball into play.

(b) The player putting the ball in play shall not play the ball a second time until it has been touched or played by another player. If he does, a free kick can be awarded to the opposing team at the place they touched it. Note that the referee puts the dropped ball into play and not the player touching it first.

(c) Unless otherwise specified, the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves, no matter how slightly. For Kick-offs, it must additionally move forward. For goal kicks and free kicks from inside the goal area, the ball must leave the goal area before it is in play.

Law 9: The Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play:

- when it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air, or
- when play has been stopped by the referee. Once the referee has decided that an infringement has occurred, the ball is out of play from that time, even though some slight interval may elapse before the referee blows the whistle to indicate the decision to the players.

Since lines belong to the areas of which they are the boundaries, the touch lines and the goal lines belong to the field of play, so the ball is in play if any part of it is on or over one of these lines.

The ball is in play at all other times, from the start of the match to the finish, including when:

- it rebounds from a goalpost, crossbar, or corner flag post and remains in the field of play;
- it touches the referee when he is in the field of play.

If an *outside agent* (such as a dog, spectator, or loose ball) enters the field and interferes with play, the referee shall stop the match and restart it with a dropped ball at the place where the ball was when the interference occurred (subject to Law 8), even if the interruption of play severely disadvantages one team (for example, if the ball is about to enter the goal). Note though that nothing in the rules requires players be near the dropped ball when the referee restarts play. To maintain fairness and good sportsmanship, if one team clearly had possession when play was stopped then only that team should participate in the dropped ball.

Law 10: The Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball, while in play, has passed over the goal line, between the goal posts and under the crossbar. This is the only condition under which a goal may be awarded.

The team scoring the greater number of goals during a match shall be the winner; if no goals or an equal number of goals are scored, the match shall be termed a "draw". This the only method by which a match may be won or drawn.

Law 11: Offside

The offside law is not applied in Under 8 matches. But this does not imply that an attacker can park himself in the goal area or near the goal off the side of his team. Persistent offside behavior that yields an advantage is unsporting behavior (misconduct) and should be dealt with accordingly.

Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct

A player who commits any of the following six offenses against an opponent while the ball is in play in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless, or involving excessive force:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- jumps at an opponent
- charges an opponent
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- pushes an opponent;

or who commits any of the following four offenses:

- tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately, with the hand, arm or shoulder;

or who commits any of the following offenses:

- plays in a manner considered by the referee to be dangerous
- when not within playing distance of the ball, impedes the progress of an opponent, for example, by
 - running between the opponent and the ball, or
 - interposing the body so as to form an obstacle to an opponent
 - stretches the arms or moves from side to side to delay an opponent, forcing him to change course, even without making "bodily contact";
- touches the ball a second time after a restart and before any other player has touched the ball again

then the referee may stop play for an unfair or unsafe foul and award a (direct) free kick to the team that was fouled against.

A player may be cautioned (that is, formally, severely warned by the referee) if he

- is guilty of unsporting behavior
- shows dissent by word or action
- persistently infringes the Laws
- delays the restart of play
- fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick, or throw-in.
- is guilty of serious foul play
- is guilty of violent conduct
- spits at any person
- uses offensive, insulting or abusive language

If the referee chooses to stop play to issue a caution, play shall resume with a free kick taken by the non-offending team at the place where play was when it was stopped.

Under very unusual circumstances, a player may be sent off the field of play by the referee for extreme violations of any of the above. In this case, the sent-off player may not be replaced. That is, his team will play short for the rest of the match.

Law 13: Free Kick

Any player on the team awarded a free kick may take the kick. The ball must be stationary at the place where the kick was awarded when a free kick is taken.

When a player is taking a free kick, all of the opposing players shall be at least **6 yards** from the ball, until it is in play. The opposing players shall not dance about, shout or gesticulate in a way calculated to distract their opponents. If necessary, the referee shall delay the taking of the kick, until these conditions are complied with.

Any free kick awarded to the attacking team within its opponent's goal area shall be taken from the point on the goal area (6- or 7-yard) line nearest to the point where the offense was committed.

A free kick awarded to the defending team within its own goal area is equivalent to a goal kick (see Law 16).

If a free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal is awarded and the restart is a kick-off. If a free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

Law 14: The Penalty Kick

Penalty kicks are not awarded in Under 8 matches.

Law 15: The Throw-In

A throw-in is a method of restarting play. A throw-in is awarded when the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air. The ball is thrown in from the point where it crossed the touch line by a player of the team opposite to that of the player who last touched the ball.

The thrower at the moment of delivering the ball must face the field of play and part of each foot shall be either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line. The thrower shall use both hands and shall deliver the ball from behind and over his head. The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play and left the hands of the thrower.

When a throw in is being taken, the opposing players shall not dance about or gesticulate in a way calculated to distract or impede the thrower. Opposing players must also remain 2 meters from the thrower.

If the ball is improperly thrown in, the throw-in can be awarded to the opposing team if a perceived advantage was gained or the referee may simply allow the throw-in to be retaken.

Law 16: The Goal Kick

When the ball goes out of play over the goal line, and a goal is not awarded, and it was last touched by one of the attacking team, a goal kick is awarded to the defending team.

The goal kick may be taken with the ball stationary on the ground anywhere within the goal area. All of the opposing players shall remain outside the goal area and at least **6 yards** from where the kick is taken from until the ball is in play. The ball is not in play until it leaves the goal area onto the field of play.

Law 17: The Corner Kick

When the ball goes out of play over the goal line, and a goal is not awarded, and it was last touched by one of the defending team, a corner kick is awarded to the attacking team.

The ball is placed within the quarter circle at the nearest corner flag post. The flag post must not be moved. The ball is kicked from that position. Players of the defending team must remain at least **6 yards** from the ball until it is in play.