

US Youth Soccer Official Under 8 Playing Recommendations

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at www.ussoccer.com/referees.

Please note the U8 addendum and appendix.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

Dimensions: The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

Length: minimum 25 yards maximum 35 yards

Width: minimum 20 yards maximum 30 yards

Field Markings: Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of four (4) yards is marked around it.

The Goal Area: A goal area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line three (3) yards from the inside each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of three (3) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the goal area.

The Penalty Area: none.

Flagposts: none.

The Corner Arc: Conform to FIFA.

Goals: Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet. Goals may be smaller in dimension.

Law 2 – The Ball: Size three (3).

Law 3 – The Number of Players: A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than four players. There are NO goalkeepers.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Teams and matches may be coed.

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Law 4 – The Players’ Equipment: Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

Law 5 – The Referee: An OFFICIAL (Game Manager or Coordinator or Parent or Coach or Grade 9 referee) may be used. All infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referees: None.

Law 7 – The Duration of the Match: The match shall be divided into four (4) equal, twelve (12) minute quarters. There shall be a two (2) minute break between quarters one and two and another two (2) minute break between quarters three and four. There shall be a half-time interval of five (5) minutes.

Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play: Conform to FIFA, with the exception of the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play: Conform to FIFA.

Law 10 – The Method of Scoring: Conform to FIFA.

Law 11 – Offside: None.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA with the exception that all fouls shall result in a direct free kick. The referee/coach/parent must explain ALL infringements to the offending player. No cards shown for misconduct.

Law 13 – Free Kicks: Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that all kicks are direct and all opponents are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick: None.

Law 15 – The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA with the exception that an improperly performed throw-in can be retaken once.

Law 16 – The Goal Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents must remain outside the goal area and at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Law 17 – The Corner Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

PLEASE ALSO READ THE U8 ADDENDUM AND APPENDIX.



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ADDENDUM

MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR U8

Law 1 The Field of Play: dimensions are smaller to accommodate the four-versus-four game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of six- and seven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the center circle gives the players a concrete marking on where to be for the kick-off. The corner arc gives the young player a concrete place to put the ball to kick it back onto the field of play. While kids this young will execute corner kick plays to a modest degree taking a kick from the corner is a reasonable way for them to put the ball into play and provides continuity with all other age groups. However, the center circle and the corner arc for U8 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet or smaller, is the same for the U6 to U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for these age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals and there will be greater flexibility in the use of fields. A big goal without a goalkeeper should mean a few more goals for kids whose shooting technique is primitive along with their eye-foot coordination. Let's give them the broad side of the barn at which to shoot, the more goals the merrier. Finally the shooting odds for the U8 age group are one versus seven, so let's give them a chance by having a larger target. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for U8 Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use cones, pop-up goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

Law 2 The Ball: must be a size three. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

Law 3 The Number of Players: there are no goalkeepers in the U8 age group so that all of the players may chase the ball around the field. The kids want to be where the action is and at this age it is around the ball. This will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their running, jumping and kicking coordination. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting, passing and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeated game situations frequently. The involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of

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teammates. Children in the U8 age group will intentionally play in pairs. The smaller number of players on the field will make it easier and more likely that passing and receiving will occur.

There should not be a minimum number of players for U8 and U6 and clubs, administrators, coaches and referees should be encouraged to allow players from the team with sufficient numbers to 'loan' a player or two to the team that is short players and then PLAY.

Law 5 The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should officiate the game. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player. It is strongly recommended that the adult officiating the U8 game attend the Grade 9 referee course.

Law 6 The Assistant Referees: none are needed.

Law 7 The Duration of the Match: the game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the U8 age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

Law 10 Goal Scored: shall conform to FIFA.

Law 11 Offside: there shall be no offside called during these games.

Law 12 Fouls and Misconduct: no caution or send off shall be issued to players. If a child is being too rambunctious then the game official will ask the coach to make a substitution of that player to give the child a chance to calm down before returning to play.

Law 13 Free Kicks: all free kicks shall be direct. This will keep the game flowing and keep the attention of the kids.

Law 14 The Penalty Kick: there will not be any penalty kicks called.

Law 15 The Throw-In: some U8 players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. However, some U8 players have sufficient eye-hand coordination to attempt the throw-in. One 'do-over' per thrower should be the normal response if the throw-in is incorrect. The adult officiating the match should explain to the child how to execute the throw-in correctly.

Law 16 The Goal Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play once it has left the goal area.

Law 17 The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play.

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- ⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the recommended minimum roster size is six players and the maximum roster size is eight players. Under the dual field method the recommended minimum roster size is ten players and the maximum roster size is twelve players. This range of roster sizes allows for a club to use either the single field or dual field set up.
- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of at least 50% playing time is required.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See appendix for options.
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- ❑ More time with the coach
- ❑ Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- ❑ More efficient use of field space
- ❑ Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- ❑ Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- ❑ Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- ❑ It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- ❑ Greater success rate for the players

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- ❖ Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- ❖ Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- ❖ No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.
- ❖ Coaches of U8 teams should attend the U6/U8 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course.

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Effective Playing Time Relative to Game Format and Roster Size

Single Game	Roster Size >	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Game Format	Game Duration																
3 v 3 (U-5/6)	4 x 8 min. quarters	100% 32 min	75% 24 min	60% 19 min	50% 16 min												
4 v 4 (U-7/8)	4 x 12 min. quarters		100% 48 min	80% 38 min	66% 32 min	57% 27 min	50% 24 min										
5 v 5 (U-7/8)	4 x 12 min. quarters			100% 48 min	83% 40 min	71% 34 min	62% 30 min	55% 26 min	50% 24 min								
6 v 6 (U-9/10)	2 x 25 min. halves				100% 50 min	85% 42 min	75% 37 min	66% 33 min	60% 30 min	54% 27 min	50% 25 min						
8 v 8 (U-11/12)	2 x 30 min. halves						100% 60 min	88% 53 min	80% 48 min	72% 43 min	66% 40 min	61% 36 min	57% 34 min	53% 32 min	50% 30 min		

Split Game	Roster Size >	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Game Format	Game Duration																
3 v 3 (U-5/6) Split	4 x 8 min. quarters				100% 32 min	85% 27 min	75% 24 min	66% 21 min	60% 19 min	54% 17 min	50% 16 min						
4 v 4 (U-7/8) Split	4 x 12 min. quarters						100% 48 min	88% 42 min	80% 38 min	72% 34 min	66% 32 min	61% 29 min	57% 27 min	53% 25 min	50% 24 min		
5 v 5 (U-7/8) Split	4 x 12 min. quarters								100% 48 min	90% 43 min	83% 40 min	76% 36 min	71% 34 min	66% 32 min	62% 30 min	58% 28 min	55% 26 min
6 v 6 (U-9/10) Split	2 x 25 min. halves										100% 50 min	92% 46 min	85% 42 min	80% 40 min	75% 37 min	70% 35 min	66% 33 min

These tables show effective playing time relative to game format and roster size. The figures are presented as a) percentages of total playing time and b) as actual minutes played. Both figures assume equal rotation of players. At the youth level, a minimum goal of 70% playing time is recommended.

Tables provided by Dr. Thomas Turner with contributions from Mr. Bill Spens.