



**AYSA**

# **Small Sided Games**

**a comprehensive manual: the what's, how's, why's,  
and when's of small sided games in youth soccer**

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Alabama Director of Coaching

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## **a comprehensive manual: the what's, how's, why's, and when's of small sided games in youth soccer**

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## Introduction

This is designed as a comprehensive support manual for the use of small sided games in youth soccer in Alabama. United States Youth Soccer Association has exhaustively studied and research youth soccer in terms of: enjoyment, physical safety, player development- physical, psychological, cognitive, technical, and tactical. These soccer guidelines follow child cognitive development used for education. The answer is the use of age appropriate small sided games!

The implementation of small sided games is being carried out in state associations across the country. This is the direction to best develop our young soccer players and to ensure a positive, fun environment for them.

Enclosed in these pages is insight from professionals on:

- Benefits of playing in this format
- Player development issues
- Timeline of implementation in Alabama
- Tactical implications and age appropriate tactics
- Modified rules of the game for each age
- Organization needs – field sizes/ layouts, referees, and goals
- Coaching for the Small Sided Games coach
- Alabama competitive team issues
- League formats and issues

I hope you find the information useful and inspiring. I am happy to assist all associations, large or small. Please don't hesitate to call and I will assist via consultation or in person with presentations or clinics.

Yours in Soccer!

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## Timeline

This is the adopted timeline to implement small sided games format throughout all age groups to comply with USYSA guidelines. This grandfathering approach allows for teams to avoid moving to a smaller format than what they are currently playing; which can often be a difficult “sell” to players and parents. This timeline will insure compliance of national standards by the 2005-06 season for all ages groups. The 2005-06 season format is the current USYSA guidelines for youth soccer.

Age Group	2003-4 Season	2004-5 Season	2005-6 Season
U-6	3 v 3	3 v 3	3 v 3
U-8	4 v 4	4 v 4	4 v 4
U-9	8v 8	6 v 6	6 v 6
U-10	8v 8	8 v 8	6 v 6
U-11	11 v 11	8 v 8	8 v 8
U-12	11 v 11	11 v 11	8 v 8
U-13 to 19	11 v 11	11 v 11	11 v 11

# Why Small-Sided Games?

by Tom Goodman

US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching Education

As the newly appointed US Youth Soccer Director of Coaching Education, veteran youth coach and father of three adult children, who used to be little soccer players, I have thought long and hard about the answer to the question, "Why Small-Sided Games?" Let me make sure that everyone understands the meaning of "Small-Sided Games". These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because one ball is being shared by fewer players. All ages can play "Small Sided Games", but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players.

Here are some of the reasons why I believe we, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents must guarantee that our young soccer players play small-sided games:

- Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become more skillful with it! (Individual technical development)
- Because we want our young soccer players to make more, less-complicated decisions during the game! (Tactical development)
- Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on the team will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy...need to feel important)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more, involved playing time in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball! (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
- Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals! (Pure excitement)

These are the reasons why we adults must foster "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a developmentally appropriate environment for our young soccer players.

It's a FUN environment that focuses on the young soccer player.

It just makes sense...doesn't it?

### **ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES**

- ❑ More time with the coach/facilitator
- ❑ 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

## **Frequently Asked Question's**

**Why make the change?** It makes the game of soccer a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Energetic workouts due to playing both attacking and defensive roles. While learning both offense and defense, a player will become more complete and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates.

**Whose idea was this?** US Youth Soccer has been a proponent of small sided games since the 1980's. Small sided games are endorsed by our national coaching committee, the State Directors of Coaching, US National Team Coaches for Men & Women, including many foreign soccer organizations: England, Ireland, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea to name a few!

**Why can't they play 11v11 like "real" soccer?** The 11v11 format is the adult version of the game. Using an adult size field and goals makes little sense for children under the age of twelve.

**Other sports don't alter their game- why does soccer?** It's not a good comparison with football or baseball- neither has the element of transition that soccer does. Look at basketball- how many kids play basketball 5 on 5? Most basketball is played 1v1, 2v1 or 2v2 in a driveway! Kids don't wait until they have nine friends to have a game! Playing on a small field is a more efficient use of space, it takes less time to advance for a shot on goal, and children are more actively involved for a longer period of time.

**I didn't grow up playing this way!** True! Whether you grew up in the USA or another country, soccer was traditionally played 11v11 for all age groups. This isn't true any longer- small sided game formats are in use all over the world- not just in the US.

**How will they learn to play 11v11?** Progressing from 3v3, 4v4, 6v6, to 8v8 BEFORE 11v11 is a sound educational method. The problem is that young players were forced into 11v11 before their bodies were physically developed to play the adult version of the game. Any notion that players will be less prepared to play 11v11 is not justified.

**Does competitive or travel have to play by this new rule?** Yes. The decision to play small sided games is based on "age appropriate"

philosophy- the level of play is not a factor. All players of that age group should play the same format.

**This will never work!** Sure it will! A number of State Associations have been playing 3v3 at under 6 & 4v4 at Under-8 successfully for more than a dozen years! Adopting 8v8 for under 11's and under 12's is the fastest growing trend in youth soccer.



## **Insights from the Professionals**

All of the below insight, quotes, and examples are from US Soccer Staff and USYSA staff. These are descriptions of programming and observations from different areas of the country from the year 2000 – over 3 years ago! These areas have continued to progress in age appropriate soccer curriculum since the time of these quotes as well!

We are currently doing 7v7, including the goalkeepers, to a size-appropriate goal. Our U-6's play 3v3, and the U-8's are 4v4. In the U-11's we are doing a split season; that is, playing one game 7v7 then the next weekend 11v11 I am certainly of the mind that the longer the kids can play smaller sided games, the better off they will be. If we could just put off 11v11 until U-12 or U-13, I think our kids would be much more technical players. Then, when they are cognitively ready to handle tactics at ages 11, 12 or 13, they can make tremendous strides. But no tactics can be employed if you don't have the stinking ball! So, that's my 2 cents! Do I need to expand any more on this response? Are you trying to drum up a body of support for your proposals? Our club, now Triangle Futbol Club, is a typical TPD (Total Player Development) program, advocating Tony Waiters' Micro Soccer System. Should I send this on to Tony, who is now on our National Staff?

**Alex Hernandex (USSF, 11-16-00) – North Carolina**

I applaud your efforts at trying to get coaches, parents and players to realize the benefits of young players playing in small-sided games. I have had a very difficult time convincing other coaches and parents as to the benefits of the small sided game. As a former middle school teacher and coach I try and explain to parents and players that "soccer school" is very similar to "academic school" in that the foundation skills, love for learning, creativity, confidence, etc., have to be all built in layers a little at a time. This is why we have different grade levels so that the children have time to develop layer by layer step by step. I have been on the Louisiana State Staff for six years now and I always work with the youngest age group of girls each year. My main focus is individual ball skills, first touch and technique with the vast majority of this taught with in the small-sided game format.

**Rick Garey (Staff Coach, LA, 11-19-00) - Louisiana**

Our charge has been lead at the club level wherever we have paid DOC's. In fact several major clubs pulled out of the state run fall leagues and ran small-sided games programs both inter and intra club.

This initiative really put the wind up our board who came to realize the program they offered was no longer wanted. Coupled with this the promotion of small-sided games out of my office, Dave



3v3 (U-6) Single Game	4 x 8 min. quarters	100% 32	75% 24	60% 19	50% 16													
3v3 (U-6) Split Game	4 x 8 min. quarters				100% 32	86% 28	75% 24	67% 21	60% 19	55% 18	50% 16							
4v4 (U-7/8) Single Game	4 x 10 min. quarters		100% 40	80% 32	67% 27	57% 23	50% 20											
4v4 (U-7/8) Split Game	4 x 10 min. periods						100% 40	89% 36	80% 32	73% 29	67% 27	62% 25	57% 23	53% 21	50% 20			
5v5 (U-7/8) Single Game	4 x 10 min. quarters			100% 40	83% 33	71% 28	63% 25	56% 22	50% 20									
5v5 (U-7/8) Split Game	4 x 10 min. quarters								100% 40	90% 36	83% 33	77% 31	71% 28	67% 27	63% 25	59% 24		
5v5 (U-9) Single Game	4 x 15 min. quarters			100% 60	83% 43	71% 37	63% 33	56% 29	50% 26									
5v5 (U-9) Split Game	4 x 15 min. quarters								100% 60	90% 47	83% 43	77% 40	71% 37	67% 35	63% 33	59% 31		
6v6 (U-10) Single Game	4 x 15 min. quarters				100% 60	86% 52	75% 45	67% 40	60% 36	55% 35	50% 30							
6v6 (U-10) Split Game	4 x 15 min. quarters										100% 60	93% 56	86% 52	80% 48	75% 45	71% 43		
8v8 (U-11) Single Game	2 x 35 min. halves						100% 70	89% 62	80% 56	73% 51	67% 47	62% 43	57% 40	53% 37	50% 35			
11v11 (U-12) Single Game	2 x 35 min. halves										100% 70	92% 64	85% 60	79% 55	73% 51	69% 48	65% 46	

This table shows 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.

Table provided by Dr. Thomas Turner.

## Developing Skills with Small Sided Games!

It is recognized that to develop skills, repetitions are needed. The more we touch the ball the better our touch will be! Soccer coaches of all ages use small sided game environments to develop the technical aspects of their teams. We can also safely state that the more a child has the ball (touches), the more engaged he/she is in the activity- the more fun he/she has!

## **Touches On The Ball - A Comparison Between 11 v 11 And 4 v 4**

**by Glen Buckley**

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While I was Director of Coaching of the Eden Prairie Soccer Club in Minneapolis I did a survey of the difference in the amount of touches a player can have in a small sided [ 4v4 ] game as opposed to an 11 v 11 game. Three different games were assessed, the players were average ability. They were 10 and 11 years of age. The following quite remarkable results were recorded. If these figures do not help change the opinions of the anti small sided game coaches and parents then I fear nothing will.

11 v 11 friendly game, 22 touches in 60 minutes, (0.37 touches on the ball per minute).

4 v 4 games ( 205 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 256) (4.3 touches on the ball per minute).

4 v 4 games ( 217 touches in 48 minutes, (projected 60 minutes = 271) (4.5 touches on the ball per minute).

The player in the 4v4 game touched the ball 12.31 more times in the same time period against the same opposition as the 11v 11 game. The assessments were done on four different occasions against different opposition, and assessing different players each time to reinforce the above figures.

The reason to implement small- sided games into the program was to increase the time and amount of touches a player had on the ball and these results clearly back this up.

I have heard it said by someone who falls into the above category that yes they get more touches on the ball but they aren't all quality touches? Of course they aren't all quality touches because if every touch was a quality touch then our players would all be great players with nothing to learn and we know it doesn't work like that. Even the best players in the world have non quality touches on the ball. Lets say for arguments sake 50% of touches were quality touches, then in the 11 a side game that player got 11 quality touches and in the 4 a side games the same player got 135 quality touches. Players learn from doing it right but also from doing it wrong. I believe players must make mistakes to help them learn how to do things correctly as well as learning from doing it correctly in the first place. From the 135 non - quality touches they will have gained valuable experience of what not to do e.g. a first touch was bad and the ball went to the opposition so next time that player concentrates on making a good first touch and so on. In comparison in the 11 a side game the same player hardly touched the ball making only 11 quality touches but also only 11 non quality touches meaning very little opportunity to learn from quality work and non quality work.

My experience in the game has taught me this is an important way to help players develop their technique and improve their game and these results act as confirmation of this. I am sure this presentation goes some way to show how important it is to continue to use this type of developmental work as a part of our overall coaching programs.

*By Glen Buckley*

## **Small Sided Games Tactics:**

**Teaching Tactics in preparation for 11 a side soccer**

### **“What? We Didn’t Grow Up Playing That Way?”**

**A Natural Progression for teaching the tactical aspects of the game in an age appropriate environment.**

**By Vince Ganzburg (Indiana Director of Coaching)**

The title above is just one of the quotes I have been hearing as your Director of Coaching with the recent approval of implementing small sided games. “We want our kids to be playing the “REAL GAME”! “How are we going to prepare our kids for High School soccer?” These are questions that I hear from time to time concerning the change of going from 11 aside soccer in the U-11/12 age groups to playing 8v8 (7 field players and a goalkeeper). The U9/10 age groups will be playing 6v6 (five field players and a goalkeeper). Again, this is a change from the normal pattern that we have been using for the U9/10 age groups.

What this is about, is how this will improve our players from a developmental standpoint not only in getting more touches on the ball, but to prepare them tactically as well without really even teaching them tactics. The playing shapes of 4v4, 6v6, and 8v8 will teach by themselves how “playing lines” relate to the 11v11 match. So, in short, this article is not about teaching tactics to these younger players, but how the 4v4, 6v6, and 8v8 versions relate to the 11v11 game that we are all accustomed to.

#### **4v4-Teaching Shape and Style**

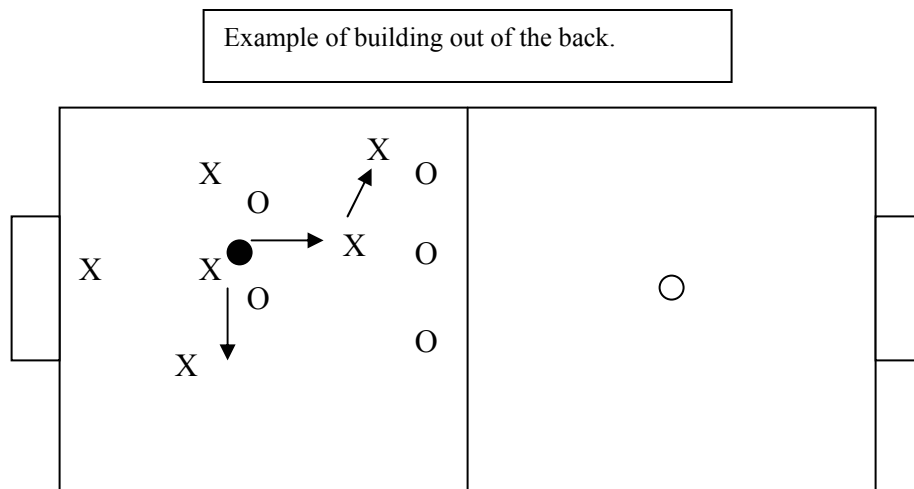
As a progression, from the U6 and U8 age groups, players learn the shape of a triangle in both 3v3 and 4v4 play. In the 4v4 model, the diamond shape is the desired starting shape but as the game progresses, triangles are still present. Players in the 4v4 model learn the basic diamond shape and the importance of length, width, and depth. Because they are actively more involved, they stay interested and have fun because the possibility of scoring and preventing goals is present. I am now seeing basketball leagues play 3v3 with younger ages, shorter baskets, and courts. I saw a quote by Bobby Howe, our previous USSF coaching director, say that “Realistic experience + Fun=Improvement in Play”. Playing 4v4 with these two youngest age groups is more realistic experience for them. After all, 4v4 in the youngest age groups really become 1v7 doesn't it?

#### **6v6 in Two Playing Lines**

Now, let's look at the U9/10 age groups. So, how is 6v6 instead of 8v8 going to improve them? When they get to 9/10 or the “Golden Ages” now coaches feel like they can coach! Players can actually do things like “Drills!” I hope for their sake, we teach them by playing games and in particular 6v6 so that they can meet the demands of the game and not the coach. Playing 6v6 instead of 8v8 is a better progression due to the fact that now players can start understanding how two playing lines relate to the 11v11 match. For example, let's say your formation is a 3-2. Three players who start behind the line of two players. In the 11v11 match, games are usually won or lost when linking or not linking with the midfielders happens on a consistent basis. As the players get older, the backs in particular, should always look to the forwards to see if they can connect. This, however, usually is offers the lowest percentage of keeping possession. So, the next logical choice to get the ball up the field is to pass to a midfielder. Then the midfielders now look to play the ball forward (length), if that is not on, then play the ball either back (depth) or across (width) in order to get around defenses. With a 3-2 formation, this connection of teaches players how to play through two thirds of the field. The backs playing into the midfield (building out of the back) or the midfield playing into the forwards (attacking in the final third).

The diagram below shows how the x's in two playing lines of 3 backs and 2 forward build out of the back. The central back, has at least two options to get out of the back and to get the ball into midfield. These 5 players must work together and do so in a way that is something more than the “Hail Mary”

approach of knocking the ball up to the biggest, fastest, strongest player. Then after getting the ball through the midfield, now the 3 backs become midfielders and the 2 midfielders become forwards. Think about how many repetitions they will get with 6 aside, which will pay dividends down the road as far as their overall development to the “real” game. With the 8v8 model, some players are going straight from 4v4 to 8v8 and miss the development of how to “link” up with the playing line that is in front of them.



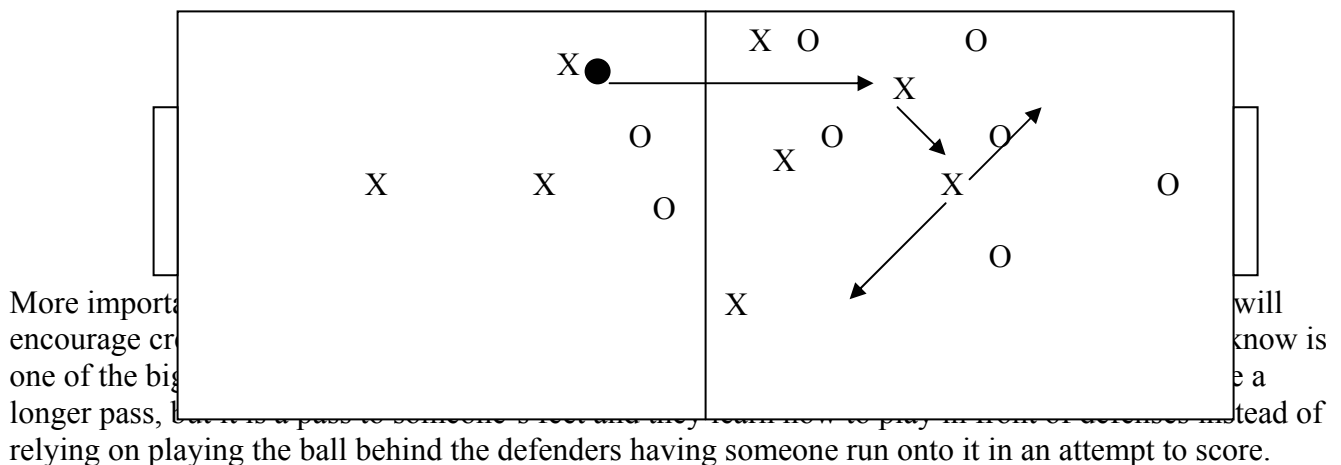
It teaches also how to defend in different thirds of the field. When teaching defending at the 11v11 stage, individual defending is a must before group defending can even be considered an idea. When group defending is taught, usually two playing lines work together. (i.e. 2 forwards-4 mids, 4 mids-4 backs). Teaching the importance of two playing lines is important to the “real” game. Once playing in lines of two (by the way is only suggested by yours truly) has been exposed to them they can now “realistically” progress to having 3 playing lines, which the 8v8 model presents. By once again, reducing the playing numbers, field sizes, their technical and tactical opportunities increase. If we keep their minds in the game, then they remain more interested. When I was a teacher, anytime I could teach them something without them really even knowing it, then the motivation was easy. The fun element of being more actively involved is present because as a playing group, the all attack and all defend. “Realistic experience + Fun=Improvement in Play”.

### **8v8 in Three Playing Lines**

Now our players move from the 8v8 game at U9/10’s to 11v11 on the “real field”. Having coached this transitions a time or two and after observing numerous U11/12 matches, it only makes sense to not only reduce the fields, but the playing numbers. The ball takes an unusual amount of time getting from one half to the other unless you utilize the “Hail Mary” approach and just knock it to the biggest, strongest, fastest player, have them run onto it and then score. You may win games, but are you really developing them? Most players in these age groups can strike a ball “accurately” around 30-40 yards with their strong foot. Yet, we have them play on a field that is in some cases 120 yards long and the distance between the front line and the back line sometimes can get up to 60-70 yards, players naturally will still bunch up because they simply can’t connect with each other. With 8v8, and a smaller playing field, not only will they be able to connect with more realism, but the possibilities of combinations, the importance of midfield play, flank play, and the movement between all of the players becomes more in sync. By reducing the field size and the numbers, “real” linking between back players and the forward line can happen. So, now when a ball is played up to the forwards,

because at U9/10 they learned that when the front line has the ball, they need support, more players will move into supporting positions earlier in order to get in behind defenses. If the possibility of playing up to the front is not on, now they can then link with the midfielders and develop play in the midfield. By doing this, we put our players under more decisions that they have to make for themselves increasing their own interest level because they are now an active participant in the game and simply have to play. The goalkeeper instead of staying back on his/her line now is forced to also take a more active role and playing as a sweeper in addition to his/her goalkeeping responsibilities.

The diagram below has the x's playing in a 2-3-2 formation (3 playing lines). The o's are in a 3-2-2 formation. The left back, if you will for the x's has an opportunity to play the ball forward to the one of the two forwards. Because in the 6v6 model, when the forward players received a ball, they learned how to link up with other forward player. As you can see as well, when the x forward player that is the closest to their goal receives the ball, they have two good options. One would be to play the ball back to the opposite midfielder and the second would be to combine with the other forward player who originally gave them the ball. There are more options as the armchair "central midfielder" might be able to explore, but the point is that because they learned how to play in two playing lines in the 6v6 model, now when you only add two more players to the mix, not only is the possibility of them seeing their options clearly, but they will probably have more success in doing so.



Now, when the players go into the 11v11 match they may have, can say will in all cases, the ability to see where the little games of 4v4, 6v6, and 8v8 play into the "real" game. The point is, give these players time to develop into playing the "real" game. This is one way where, as a country, we will truly start developing "soccer players" and not just "kids that play soccer" because there is a difference. Now they are making up the script, figuring out how to make decisions on the field with their own minds.

So, what is the goal? Is it to create "soccer players"? I think that it is a little bit of creating "soccer players", players who now will appreciate the game on a little different level, which will in the long run create an even larger base of soccer fans in this country. Don't we want our kids to be life long fans of the game instead of dropping out at the age of 14 only because when they were younger they didn't get the opportunity to truly play? So, let's not rush them into making too many decisions when on the field. Their minds are already full enough off of the field. "Just Simply Let The Kids Play" on a scale that will be not only developmentally, but fun as well.





## ***MODIFIED LAWS OF THE GAME FOR U6***

### **Law 1**

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

Field Markings:

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 20 yards	maximum 30 yards
Width:	minimum 15 yards	maximum 25 yards

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: None.

The Penalty Area: None.

Flagposts: None.

The Corner Arc: Conform to FIFA.

Goals: 6 x 12 feet (or other: see below)

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 not execute corner kick plays 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 U6 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings. Cones may be used in lieu of corner flag posts if desired. Neither cones nor corner flag posts are mandatory for this age group.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 12 feet, is the same for the U6 and U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals. 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 broadside of the barn at which to shoot, the more goals the merrier. Finally the shooting odds for the U6 age group are one versus five, so let's give them a chance by having a larger target. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for U6 Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use **smaller goals (4 x 6 feet)**, cones, corner flag posts, Pug goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Indeed, even the entire goal line could be considered the 'goal' and a ball kicked over the goal line is considered a goal.

**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: A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than three players. There are NO goalkeepers.

Substitutions: At any stoppage.

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

There are no goalkeepers in the U6 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 kicking 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 repeating game situations more frequently. The work rate and 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 teammates.

**Law 4** The Players' Equipment: per FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

**Law 5** The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should supervise the game for safety sake. All rule infractions shall be briefly explained to the offending player. 'Do-overs' should be a regular occurrence allowed by the adult(s) supervising the U6 game.

**Law 6** The Assistant Referees: none are needed.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: The match shall be divided into four (4) equal, eight (8) minute quarters. There shall be 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.

The game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the U6 age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

**Law 8** The Start and Restart of Play: per FIFA. 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: per FIFA.

**Law 10** The Method of Scoring: per FIFA.

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

**Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: No cautions or ejections shall be issued to players.

**Law 13** Free Kicks: All free kicks shall be direct so that the children can understand that all they have to do is shoot at goal. This should also keep the game flowing and keep the attention of the kids.

**Law 14** The Penalty Kick: since there is no penalty area marked on the field of play for this age group there will not be any penalty kicks called.

**Law 15** The Kick-In: A kick-in is considered as a direct free kick with the opponents four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

Most U6 players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. This leads to endless retakes from one team to the other. Additionally with a kick-in the ball is on the ground and stationary so the U6 player has a better chance of striking it correctly. This may lead to some intentional passes. However, this is still unlikely given that whether it is a throw or a kick all of the kids on the field will be yelling for the ball at the same time and the child putting the ball into play will be confused.

**Law 16**      The Goal Kick: The goal kick should be taken within 2-3 yards of the goal line anywhere across the width of the field of play at the nearest point from where the ball was retrieved. Opposing players must be four (4) yards away from the ball until it is in play.

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

- ⇒ Roster Size: The recommended minimum roster size is four to six players. The recommended maximum roster size is six to eight players.
- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of 50% playing time is required. The goal of the U6 facilitator should be to get to 100% playing time for each child.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See Format / Logistics
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept

### **US Youth Soccer Under 6 Recommendations**

- ❖ Opposing parent/coaches and players 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 will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.



## ***MODIFIED LAWS OF THE GAME FOR U8***

### **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. 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 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 (4 ft X 6 ft are acceptable smaller goals).

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 12 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 broadside 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, corner flag posts, Pug 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: 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. Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Teams and games may be coed.

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 kicking 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 more 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 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.

**Law 4** The Players' Equipment: per FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

**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 infractions 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 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.

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 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: 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: 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.

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: Conform to FIFA with the exception that an improperly performed throw-in can be retaken once.

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.

- ⇒ 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 Logistics/ format .
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

### *US Youth Soccer Recommendations*

- ❖ 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.





## ***MODIFIED LAWS OF THE GAME FOR U10***

### **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 45 yards	maximum 60 yards
Width:	minimum 35 yards	maximum 45 yards

Field Markings: Distinctive lines not more than five (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 eight (8) yards is marked around it.

The Goal Area: Conform to FIFA.

The Penalty Area: A penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, fourteen (14) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of fourteen (14) 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 penalty area. Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

Flag posts: Conform to FIFA.

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 corner flag posts and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The maximum distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the maximum distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

Safety: Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

Dimensions are smaller to accommodate the six-versus-six game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of eight- and nine-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the penalty area is marked, but is smaller than the adult field size penalty area. The center circle is two yards smaller than the adult size field marking. All other markings are per FIFA.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the U10 and U12 age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals.

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

**Law 3** The Number of Players: A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than six players, one of whom is the goalkeeper.  
Substitutions: Conform to FIFA with the exception of unlimited substitution.  
Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time.  
Teams and matches may be coed.

The six-a-side game now includes the goalkeeper. The smaller number of field players will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their physical and technical abilities. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. 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 repeating game situations more frequently. The work rate and 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 teammates. The need for the players to make the mental and physical transition from offense to defense and vice-versa will be enhanced in this playing environment.

**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: per FIFA.

Clubs are urged to use this age group as the training opportunity for the new referee program. All rule infractions shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

**Law 6** The Assistant Referees: Not required. May use club linesmen if desired.  
Implement here the referee in training program.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: per FIFA with the exception of the halves being 25 minutes each.

**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 eight (8) 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: there shall be no offside called during these games.
- Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA with the exception of the opponents of the team taking the free kick are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.
- Law 13** Free Kicks: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.
- Law 14** The Penalty Kick: conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is ten yards from the center of the goal line and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight yards from the penalty mark.

The distance of eight yards conforms to the radius of the center circle. The distance of ten yards from the center of the goalmouth for the penalty mark fits within the reduced dimensions of the penalty area and is a reasonable distance for the kick.

**Law 15** The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 16** The Goal Kick: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 17** The Corner Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

- ⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the recommended minimum roster size is eight players and the maximum roster size is eleven players. Under the dual field method the recommended minimum roster size is fourteen players and the maximum roster size is eighteen 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 Logistics/ format.

## **US Youth Soccer Under 10 Recommendations**

- ❖ Opposing parent/coaches and players 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 will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ Coaches of U10 teams should attend the U10/U12 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course



## ***MODIFIED LAWS OF THE GAME FOR U12***

### **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 60 yards      maximum 80 yards

Width:            minimum 45 yards      maximum 55 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 eight (8) yards is marked around it.

The Goal area: Conform to FIFA.

The Penalty Area: A penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line, fourteen (14) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of fourteen (14) 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 penalty area. Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

Flagposts: Conform to FIFA.

The Corner Arc: Conform to FIFA.

Goals: Conform to FIFA with exception that the maximum distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the maximum distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

Dimensions are smaller to accommodate the eight-versus-eight game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of ten- and eleven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the U10 and U12 age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals.

**Law 2** The Ball: Size four (4).

**Law 3** The Number of Players: A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eight players, one of whom is the goalkeeper.  
Substitutions: Conform to FIFA with the exception of unlimited substitution.

The eight-a-side game includes the goalkeeper. The smaller number of field players will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their physical and technical abilities. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. 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 repeating game situations more frequently. The work rate and 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 teammates. The smaller field dimensions and number of players on the field of play will require more concentration on transition, which a vitally important tactical concept for the players to learn.

**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: Registered referee.

**Law 6** The Assistant Referee: Use registered assistant referees or club linesmen.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: Conform to FIFA with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) halves of thirty (30) minutes each. 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 that opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least eight (8) 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: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 13** Free Kicks: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball.

**Law 14** The Penalty Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is at ten yards and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight (8) yards from the penalty mark.

The distance of eight yards conforms to the radius of the center circle. The distance of ten yards from the center of the goalmouth for the penalty mark fits within the reduced dimensions of the penalty area and is a reasonable distance for the kick.

**Law 15**      The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 16**      The Goal Kick: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 17**      The Corner Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards away from the ball until it is in play.

- ⇒ Roster Size: The recommended minimum roster size is ten and the maximum recommended roster size is fourteen.
- ⇒ Playing Time: refer to the Effective Playing Time chart.

### **US Youth Soccer Under 12 Recommendations**

- ❖ Opposing parent/coaches and players 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 will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ Coaches of U12 teams should attend the U10/U12 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course

## **Logistics for the Organization:**

<b>Age Division</b>	<b>Playing Format</b>	<b>Goal-keeper</b>	<b>Game length</b>	<b>Ball Size</b>	<b>Field Size</b>	<b>Off-sides</b>	<b>Roster Size</b>
Under 6	3 vs 3	NO	4 x 8 MINUTE QUARTERS	3	15/25 YDS WIDE x 20/30 YDS LONG	NO	4-6 plyrs
Under 8	4 vs 4	NO	4 X 12 MINUTE QUARTERS	3	20/30 YDS WIDE x 25/35 YDS LONG	NO	5-8 plyrs
Under 10	6 vs 6	YES	2 X 25 MINUTE HALVES	4	35/45 YDS WIDE x 45/60 YDS LONG	NO	7-11 plyrs
Under 12	8 vs 8	YES	2 X 30 MINUTE HALVES	4	45/55 YDS WIDE x 60/80 YDS LONG	YES	8-14 plyrs
Under 13+	11 vs 11	YES	2 X 35-45 MINUTE HALVES	5	FIFA STANDARDS	YES	18 max

## The Dual Field Method

The Dual Field Method is a system of two games being played simultaneously between two teams: "Green A vs Blue A and Green B vs Blue B".

We recommend the "dual field" method for 3v3 and 4v4- two fields, side by side, with the coaches and substitutes in between.

Players rotate from Field "A" to Field "B" to Substitute. Using this method maximizes player participation.

How to coach two fields at once? That's the beauty of two fields- you can't! Let the kids play!

**Practices are the coaches' time, games are for the players.** Simply facilitate players rotating in and out of games!

**The Dual Field Method helps resolve a number of issues!**

- 1 coach needed per 8-12 players instead of per 3-6 players
- Coach is a game facilitator more than an active coach – easier to convince parents to volunteer as coach
- Easier to keep games competitively fair for all- coaches can coordinate stronger vs stronger players and weaker vs weaker players
- Easier to balance playing time – regardless of who shows up on game day – teams can be split in equal numbers

If you use the Dual Field Method, you should generally double the suggested roster sizes when that is listed as you will have two games being played instead of one!

The next 4 pages are suggested examples of using the Dual Field (or Split Field ) Method and how the field layout would work.









## **Field layouts**

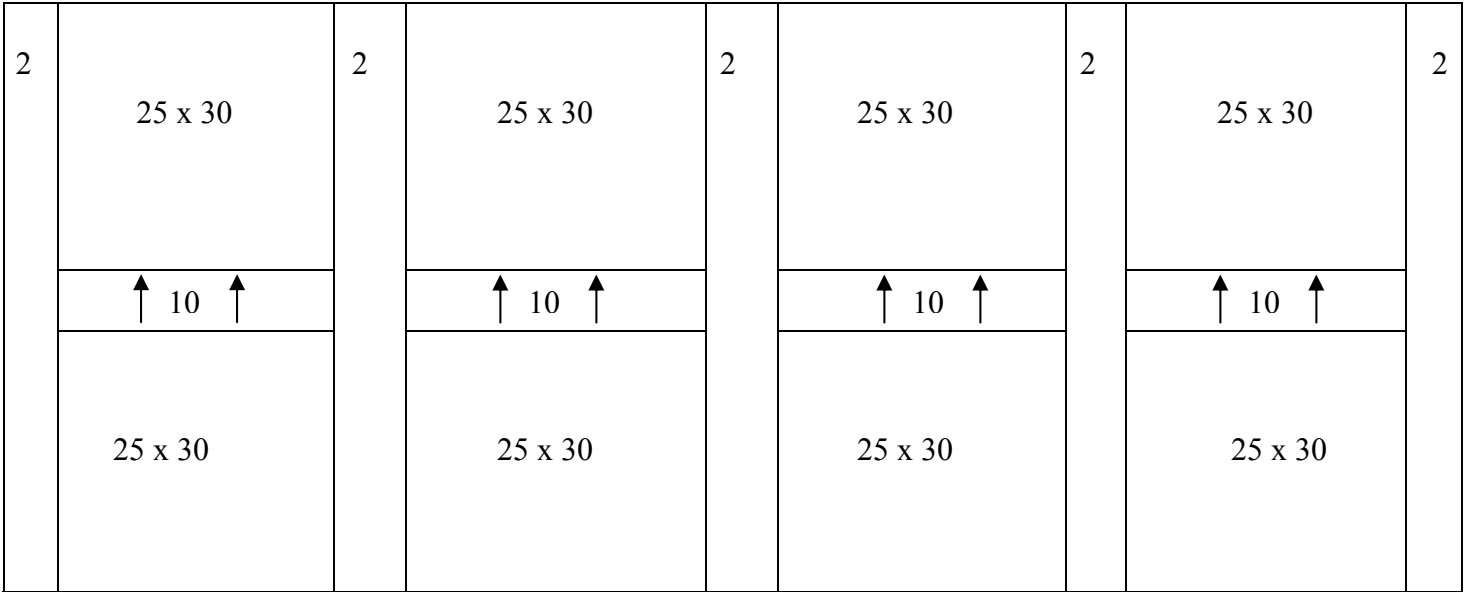
As each association looks to layout their playing fields, they will face varying space, usage, and field size issues. While the recommended field sizes are ideal, fields that are close in dimension will be fine if the ideal dimensions are not possible.

Since most associations have limited space, we recommend double lining your fields; i.e. using different color lines to paint small-sided fields on top of 11 vs 11 fields. Having portable goals that are easily moved on and off will quickly turn a 11 vs 11 field in to two 8 vs 8 fields.

As soccer continue to grow, league schedulers may need to look as scheduling recreational games at not standard time slots – other than Saturday. You may need to look at games on Sunday afternoons and if you have lights- weekdays. This will greatly spread out field usage and thus availability.

Below are diagrams for having small sided fields on a 11 vs 11 field that is 110 x 70 yards. You could also have 4 vs 4 fields on a 8 vs 8 field and so on...

MAXIMUM 3v3 FIELDS



MAXIMUM 4v4 FIELDS



5	30 x 35	5	30 x 35	5	30 x 35	5
5	30 x 35	5	30 x 35	5	30 x 35	5

MAXIMUM 6v6 FIELDS



6 2/3	5	6 2/3	5	6 2/3		
	45 x 60		45 x 60			
	5		5			

## MAXIMUM 8 v 8 FIELDS

← 80 yds x 55 yds →

	6 2/3
--	----------

## Soccer Goals

**Will I need more goals?** YES! But they should not be permanent or expensive. A number of manufacturers offer lightweight portable goals or you can make your own. Flags can be used for the U6 and U8 age groups. Remember player safety is a priority- don't let children hang or play on the goals. If the goals are not the perfect sizes, work towards acquiring the correct sizes but the games can still be played and the kids will still have fun!

Remember as well:

U6 (3 vs 3) and U8 (4 vs 4) will use the same size goals (6 ft x 12 ft or less [4 ft x 6ft])  
6 vs 6 fields and 8 v 8 fields will use the same size goals (6 ft x 18 ft )

**The company "Soccer Supplies"** has goals listed as low as \$261 and up. U6 and U8 goals can fairly easily be made out of PVC plastic prices for very low costs.

For more information on Soccer Supplies contact:

Soccer Supplies  
1-800-297-6386  
7349 Canoga Avenue  
Canoga Avenue, CA 91303

# Coaches! I need them! .... and coaching development.

**Will I need more coaches for small sided games?** No, if you currently play 8v8 for under 8's you probably have eleven or twelve players rostered per team. To play 4v4 without changing your roster sizes simply use the "dual field" method described below.

If you do not use the Dual field method and have rosters of few players than yes, you will need more coaches.

## Or, I already need more coaches! How can I find them!

Most recreational associations struggle to find enough coaches for their soccer teams. The great thing about youth soccer is "the game is the best teacher" and should be! Basic coaching supplemental manuals and information should be given out to the coaches. Also, AYSA has state licensed coaching courses designed specifically for the Under 6/Under 8 coach and the Under 10/ Under 12 coach. These courses are about 4 hours long each.

### **Focus of the Youth Module I and II:**

Characteristics of the Under 6/8 Player

Physical Stage of Development

Social Stage of Development

Cognitive Stage of Development

Technical/ Tactical Stage of Development

Age Appropriate Coaching in games and practices (with activities to use)

Team management

Equip your coaches with this support system of information. A parent who doesn't know the game can still be an effective coach! Many parents will be interested in helping with their child's team if they feel they have enough support to "know what they are doing". Many places have called their coaches-team facilitators or managers to replace the stigma of being qualified to "coach". Encourage finding two parents to be "co-coaches" and share the responsibility of coaching.

AYSA is developing coaches' *soccer season guides* that associations may use for their coaches as a support guide as well. This will include 10 training sessions that are easy to follow that a coach can use to progress through a season's worth of practices!

Contact Scott Spencer at 205-991-6694 or [Scott@alabamayouthsoccer.org](mailto:Scott@alabamayouthsoccer.org) to set up a Youth Module course in your area.

In the end you may need to resort to this method:

Call everyone on the team stating " *We must find a coach or we will not have a team- someone has to volunteer to coach or the kids will not have a team to play on.*" While forcing a parent to coach may not be the ideal solution, it is very rare that someone will not step forward.



# Referees

**Will I need more referees?** Small sided games rarely need more than one referee to cover the field. Under 6's playing 3v3 rarely have need for the referee to solve a dispute more serious than who's "kick in" it is!

If you have a shortage of certified referees consider using coaches or parents as "officials"- someone to monitor the game. Provide these "officials" with the rules of the game and the modified rules of the small-sided game. Until teams are playing in the 8 vs 8 format, linesmen are not mandatory needs while they can be helpful in the 6 vs 6 game.

Once we completely grandfather in the small sided games format, we would not necessitate the need for linesmen until Under 11 – the age of beginning 8 vs 8!

However, there is a shortage of referees across the state and at different associations. We will be looking at referee recruiting programs to develop. Look to recruit teenagers to begin refereeing these younger ages. This can amount to both a mode of supplemental income for them and as a tutoring opportunity to become a better referee to graduate to older ages.

# League Formatting

As we progress to smaller playing formats up to the Under 12 age, there will be many advantages for organizations after the initial growing pains.

It will be easier to form teams in areas where numbers are very low!

It will be easier to form enough teams to have self-contained leagues! 5 teams will easily allow for a 8 game season! 25 players in the 3 vs 3 format can create a workable league! Or, even 4 teams could play a 9 game season playing each team 3 times.

For large associations the dual field system can allow for more flexibility while containing the number of teams.

Organizations may choose to have a self contained league and one or two selected groups of players to play in a inter-association league.

Competitive teams can be formed with as two teams where both teams could comfortably train as one group.

# Competitive Team Issues for Small Sided Games

AYSA has formed a Small Sided Games Committee to review the implications of converting to small sided games and how it may affect the competitive landscape. Specifically, as our U10's move to 6 vs 6 and our U11's and U12's move to 8 vs 8.

In another revision, we will more fully address all of the issues which are still in formative stages.

These issues are:

**Teams wishing to play up in age which changes playing format**

**Tournament Play and travel**

**State Cup Competition**

**Flexible Rostering- players may freely move within their association**

As our competitive soccer environment embraces small sided games, this format will also greatly benefit these teams. Teams will be more easily formed in smaller areas where it is sometimes hard to find enough players. There is a likelier opportunity to form multiple teams which will increase the overall player pool. With these smaller teams, it will be easier for pool training (groups of teams) which will allow for more of a club identity and unified coaching/ player development. Overall, there will be more freedom for coaches and directors to vary their programs as the see is the best option!