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# **AYSO Guidance for Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents**

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**everyone plays<sup>®</sup>**



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# AYSO Basic Overview of the Laws of the Game

## For Referees, Coaches, Other Volunteers and Parents

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### Introduction

AYSO greatly appreciates your participation in your local AYSO programs. This booklet is both an introduction and a refresher for those who want to understand more about the beautiful game of soccer. An overview of the fundamental basics of the laws and of the rules and regulations which govern AYSO soccer are included.

AYSO matches are played in accordance with the current AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game and the AYSO National Rules and Regulations. Each year The International Football Association Board (IFAB) considers modifications to the Laws, and FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) publishes the Laws of the Game which are in effect each July 1st. Since 1984 AYSO has been authorized to reprint the Laws in the AYSO edition which includes certain "Rules of Competition and modifications," as permitted by the IFAB. Subsequent to the AYSO National Annual General Meeting, the AYSO National Rules and Regulations are updated and published.

It is important to have current information, and it is strongly recommended that you obtain current copies of these two booklets available from the AYSO Supply Center at ((800) 872-2976 each August or download a copy from [www.aysotraining.org](http://www.aysotraining.org). Of course, the best way to learn more about the laws is volunteering as an AYSO referee or coach – you will receive the best training available and will be rewarded with years of enjoyment as an AYSO volunteer!

The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) is recognized by FIFA as the national governing body of soccer in the United States. AYSO is a National Association member of the USSF and a member of the Youth Council of USSF. AYSO is the second largest member of USSF and AYSO referees and coaches are encouraged to use USSF reference material. However, where USSF materials differ from AYSO publications, the AYSO publications take precedence.

## AYSO Vision & Mission

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The American Youth Soccer Organization was established in 1964 with the dream to bring soccer to American children. AYSO continues to be a leader in providing quality youth soccer programs.

### AYSO Vision

To provide world class youth soccer programs that enrich children's lives.

### AYSO Mission

To develop and deliver quality youth soccer programs in a fun, family environment based on the AYSO philosophies:



- **Everyone Plays**  
Our goal is for kids to play soccer—so we mandate that every player on every team must play at least half of every game.
- **Balanced Teams**  
Each year we form new teams as evenly balanced as possible—because it is fair and more fun when teams of equal ability play.
- **Open Registration**  
Our program is open to all children between 4 and 19 years of age who want to register and play soccer. Interest and enthusiasm are the only criteria for playing.
- **Positive Coaching**  
Encouragement of player effort provides for greater enjoyment by the players and ultimately leads to better-skilled and better-motivated players.
- **Good Sportsmanship**  
We strive to create a safe, fair, fun and positive environment based on mutual respect, rather than a win-at-all-costs attitude, and our program is designed to instill good sportsmanship in every facet of AYSO.
- **Player Development**  
We believe that all players should be able to develop their soccer skills and knowledge to the best of their abilities, both individually and as members of a team, in order to maximize their enjoyment of the game.

## **The Spirit Of The Game**

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Soccer is designed as a players' game and the involvement of non-players such as coaches and referees is intended to be limited. This can be a difficult concept for those accustomed to seeing active involvement by coaches and officials in other popular sports. Coaches participate in these sports by directing the action of the players, debating rule decisions with officials or completely stopping the action by calling time-outs.

Officials in these sports participate by stopping the game for each rule violation and not continuing play until the infraction and violator have been identified, the punishment options explained to the opposing team and a final accounting of the entire incident announced or signaled to the spectators. Indeed, it is not uncommon in some sports for considerably more time to be devoted to dealing with these matters than is actually spent playing the game. ***The spirit of the game of soccer intends something quite different.***



Soccer is a game, and the reason people play games is to have fun. The role of AYSO coaches and referees is to facilitate a game that will provide the maximum enjoyment for the players. Understanding the spirit of the game and the philosophy of refereeing can significantly contribute toward the enjoyment of the match for all concerned—coaches, referees, spectators and players.

In soccer, particularly youth soccer, the application of the Spirit of the Law is far more important than the rote application of the Letter of the Law. Soccer is a fast-paced game that should flow with a minimum of interruptions. Referees have considerable authority and flexibility when determining whether or not to stop play. Violation of the letter of the Law may be overlooked if the referee considers it to be a trifling or doubtful offense. The referee may also elect not to stop play for a foul when it would be more of an advantage to the team that was fouled to continue playing. Standards of enforcement during international, college or high school competitions are not necessarily appropriate to apply at all levels of youth soccer.

Just as players strive for excellence in playing skills and coaches strive to develop successful teams, referees strive for uniformity of interpretation. With varying degrees of success, each participant does the best he or she can, and it is the inevitable human variation that makes for greater interest and enjoyment.

## **Law 1: The Field Of Play**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The field of play must be safe for players. The goals and markings must be adequate for the referee to perform his duties and should not be confusing to the players.

### **Safety**

The first concern of the coach and referee regarding the field is, obviously, safety. This applies to both practices and games. Common hazards such as holes, exposed rocks or sprinkler heads, broken glass and miscellaneous debris are fairly easily detected by walking over the field. Some of the less obvious hazards are associated with the goals. The goals must be inspected to ensure they are secured well enough – completely anchored – so that they will not collapse or be blown over by a strong gust of wind. The nets should also be secured. Loose netting can also present a hazard to players and to goalkeepers in particular. Corner flagposts and halfway flagposts must be the minimum height (5') and in good repair.

## **Law 2: The Ball**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The ball must be safe for the players and of appropriate size and weight.

### **Size**

Proper size, weight and pressure as well as safety make up the checklist for the ball inspection. Size varies according to age group. The correct weight and pressure can be determined sufficiently by feel with some practice.

## **Law 3: The Number Of Players**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

Each team is entitled to begin play with a maximum of eleven (11) players and shall not continue play with fewer than seven (7). Exceptions in AYSO are permitted for small-sided games. Refer to Small-Sided Games Guide in this manual



### **Maximum and Minimum**

Eleven-a-side is the norm, with a minimum of seven required. Fewer than that is allowed and strongly recommended for younger age groups. The AYSO National Coaching Program recommends 3-a-side for U-5 and U-6, 5-a-side for U-8, 7-a-side for U-10 and 9-a-side for U-12. A goal should be disallowed if it is determined that the team scoring the goal had more than the allowable number of players on the field at the time the goal was scored or if any bench personnel from the team that scored were on the field at the time of the score. This is true only if discovered by the referee before restarting play after the goal.

### **Substitution**

In AYSO it is mandatory that all players who are present at the match play a minimum of one half of the game (a "Three Quarter Rule" is encouraged which means no player on a team should play four 'quarters' in a given game, until all players on the team have played three 'quarters'). Exceptions include: players arriving during the second or third 'quarters' must play a minimum of one 'quarter'. Substitutions during regulation play in AYSO matches occur only at 'quarters' or following an injury. Substitution during 'quarters' is managed by the referee stopping play approximately midway into the first and second halves to allow substitutions to occur. In order to avoid interrupting play at inappropriate times, substitutions should occur at a normal stoppage such as a throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, etc. These stoppages seldom occur at exactly the midpoint of the half, so the referee will begin looking for a suitable stoppage during the period one minute before to one minute after the midpoint of the half. If no such stoppage occurs during this two-minute period, then the referee may stop play for substitutions and then restart play with a dropped ball at the location of the ball when play was stopped.

Substitution stoppages are intended only to be a time for the quick substitution of a few players and are not intended as mini-half-time periods or opportunities for coaching or any other purpose that would unduly extend the time taken for the game. On exceptionally hot days, the referee may allow some additional time for players to hydrate. The only players entitled to leave the field are those being substituted for, and the only individuals entitled to enter the field are the new players. This entire process should take only about a minute or less.

The referee or assistant referee must keep and submit a record of playing time on the lineup card, and if it appears that a player (or players) will not be substituted into the match after sitting out the entire first half or they have only one 'quarter' of playing time at the end of the third 'quarter,' the referee should inform the coach of the situation before starting play. If the coach still elects not to substitute the player or players into the match, the referee is not empowered to require the player(s) in question to play, as this is solely the coach's decision. The referee should start play and must include the information in the game report for review and consideration by the governing authority – the Region, Area, Section or tournament/event committee.

Players sent off after the opening kick-off, including during half-time, may not be replaced by a substitute, and the players' team must play with one less player. The players at the end of the half remain players until their substitutes have reported to the referee.

### **Monitored Substitution**

For U-16 and U-19 age groups only, "Monitored Substitution" is allowed which means substitutions need not occur at pre-set intervals, provided a system is in place which will ensure that every participant plays at least one half of every game by requiring a separate time monitor, independent of either team or coach, who checks each player in or out of the game. It is the responsibility of the Regional Commissioner or the Area Director, as the case may be, to monitor this "special" program during the season.

It is generally not the responsibility of referees to monitor playing time during games using monitored substitution, unless the Region/Area has developed modified lineup cards to check off substitutions by eighths, sixteenths or some substitution increment period other than quarters. Except as provided by the rules of the competition – Region, Area, Section or tournament/event rules – monitored substitution for U-16 and U-19 games only may occur only at a stoppage in the match with the referee's permission.





Sanctioning bodies should take care not to establish procedures that will encourage the use of substitutions for delaying a match or limiting quick restarts. Allowing unlimited substitutions during any stoppage of play can often lead to this situation and places undue pressure on the referee to limit these substitutions during a match. Similarly, restrictions may not be imposed upon referees that limit or restrict their authority to conduct a substitution.

### **Injury Substitution**

In the case of an injury, there are two choices available to the team. The injured player may be substituted, in which case the injured player may not return during that 'quarter,' or the injured player may leave the field to recover and the team will play short until the injured player has recovered well enough to return to play with the referee's permission.

Only the injured player gets credit for playing the 'quarter' in which the injury occurred regardless of the total time played in that 'quarter.' The substitute replacing the injured player must still play a total of at least two additional 'quarters' to satisfy the AYSO requirement for all players to play at least one half of the game.

### **Changing the Goalkeeper**

Goalkeepers may be substituted for as described above. Additionally, another player on the field may change places with the goalkeeper during a normal stoppage in play, provided that the referee is first informed. In youth soccer this sometimes occurs at the taking of a penalty kick, with the players again changing positions, following the same procedure, at a subsequent stoppage in play. The referee will normally not give permission for the change if it would be to the disadvantage of the attacking team wishing to take a quick free kick or corner kick. Subsequent goalkeeper changes must also follow the same procedure. If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission, the referee allows play to continue and then cautions both players during the next normal stoppage in play (due consideration being given according to the age group).

## **Law 4: The Players' Equipment**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The players of each team must be safely equipped and easily distinguished from the opposing team.

### **Player Equipment**

According to the Laws of the Game, "A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry)". The basic compulsory equipment of a player includes: a jersey or shirt, shorts, stockings, footwear and shinguards. The shinguards need to provide a reasonable degree of protection and be covered entirely by the stockings.

It is the responsibility of the referee to examine the players and their equipment and then make a decision regarding whether or not there is any danger to the player or to other players. The referee may delegate this inspection responsibility to one or both of the assistant referees. The referee has the obligation and right to disallow players from participation with anything dangerous depending upon the referee's best judgment. AYSO neither endorses nor refutes the claims of companies that produce products intended to increase player safety.

It is a misconception that neither metal cleats nor toe cleats (rubber cleats extending from the sole of each shoe at the front) are permitted on soccer shoes. Both are allowed if, in the opinion of the referee, they are safe to all players. The toe cleat must be an unmodified part of a shoe from a recognized manufacturer. Examples of these athletic shoes can be found on the manufacturers' websites or can be examined at a sports store. Sneakers, tennis shoes, running shoes, and basketball footwear are also permitted. Note that metal cleats can sharpen and develop burrs from the player walking on hard surfaces so they should be inspected carefully. In addition, some cleated shoes have studs that can be screwed onto the sole; if the stud unscrews and there is a screw



Protruding, this is also a safety hazard and should not be permitted. Finally, footwear with a hard plastic construction or similar hard material above the sole should be disallowed as unsafe.

### **Uniform**

AYSO does not train referees to be fashion police, but we do expect the teams to be appropriately attired and equipped. The purpose of uniforms is to allow the teams to be easily distinguished from one another and for the goalkeepers to be further distinguished and recognizable. Players' jerseys must be tucked inside their shorts. Articles worn for adornment that are not part of the team's standard uniform are neither needed nor permitted. In colder times of the year, additional clothing may be desired by the players. With the younger divisions, some deviations are allowed as long as the extra articles of clothing present no safety hazard to either the wearer or to other players and the wearer's team affiliation and player number remain recognizable. Sliding pants, compression shorts, boxer shorts or other types of garments worn under the soccer shorts that are exposed are not illegal but should be the same color as the shorts or as the predominant color of the shorts. Updates to the Laws of the Game also state that, if tape is applied to the socks, the tape should be the same color of the sock in which the tape is applied. Although opinions vary greatly as to the appropriateness, function and esthetic value of these items, they should not be disallowed in games unless the referee believes they present a safety hazard or that they are simply unnecessary adornment. Also see AYSO National Rules & Regulations and Frequently Asked Questions in this booklet.

## **Law 5: The Referee**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The referee's duty is to ensure the match is fun, fair and safe for the players.

The foundation of the AYSO Referee Program is expressed by the following quote from section I.D.5 of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations:

*"The Laws of the Game are intended to provide that games should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators."*

To paraphrase the words of the late, internationally renowned and respected referee and referee instructor, Mr. Ken Aston, "Soccer is like a play in two acts with the referee as the director. The drama contains the full spectrum of emotions including suspense, excitement, periods of calm followed by intense action. There are heroes and occasionally villains, and good performances building to a dramatic conclusion. A good director (referee) with well-coached actors (players) has the capability of creating a wonderful two-act play (game) that will be enjoyed by all who observe."

The referee is empowered by the Laws of the Game with considerably more latitude to allow play to continue even when an apparent infraction has occurred if, in his judgment, no significant advantage is gained from a trifling or doubtful offense or if stopping play for an infraction of the rules would, in fact, actually be an advantage to the team which committed the offense. The Laws intend for the game to flow with a minimum of interruption, and the referee is charged with conducting the game accordingly.

### **Referee Signals**

Signals, approved by the IFAB and universally in use, are illustrated in the Laws of the Game. The following quote from previous editions of the Laws of the Game still applies today:

While it is not the duty of the referee to explain or mime any offense that has caused him to give a particular decision, there are times when a simple gesture or word of guidance can aid communication and contribute to greater understanding and more respect, to the mutual benefit of referee and players. Improving communication should be encouraged, but the exaggerated miming of offenses can be undignified and confusing and should not be used.

An indication by the referee of the point where a throw-in should be taken may well help prevent a player from taking a throw-in improperly. A call of "Play on, Advantage!" confirms to a player that the referee has chosen to apply Advantage and allows play to continue (see Law 5). ). Even an indication that the ball was minutely deflected by it's touching another player on its path across a touchline, might be helpful in generating a greater understanding between referee and players. A better understanding will lead to more harmonious relationships.

All signals given by the referee should be simple, clear and instinctive. They should be designed to control the game efficiently and to ensure continuous play as far as possible; they are intended essentially to indicate what the next action in the game should be, not principally to justify that action.

An arm pointing to indicate a corner kick, goal kick or foul, and the direction in which it is to be taken, will normally be sufficient. The raised arm to indicate that a free kick is indirect is clearly understood, but if a player queries politely whether the award is a direct free kick or an indirect free kick, a helpful word from the referee, in addition to the appropriate signal, will lead to a better understanding in the future.

For an indirect free kick, the referee is required by the Laws of the Game to signal by holding his arm in the air and keeping it in this position until the ball is touched or played by another player, or the ball goes out of play. This serves as a reminder to players, coaches, spectators and the referee that a goal may not be scored directly from an indirect free kick. For less experienced players' games it is also helpful for the referee to help players learn that the raised referee arm means the kick is indirect.

### **Advantage**

The advantage clause, in the Laws of the Game, instructs the referee, in the interest of the flow of the game, to not stop play for an infraction when the referee believes that it would be more of an advantage for the team that was fouled to allow play to continue. If, after allowing advantage, the advantage does not materialize within about 3 seconds, the referee should stop play and award the free kick. The referee should use the advantage signal (see picture below) to indicate that advantage has been applied.



If, during this time, a second offense is committed by a teammate of the player who committed the first offense, the referee must sanction the more serious of the two offenses or again apply advantage.

### **The Diagonal System of Control**

The diagonal system of control is the only system for officiating outdoor soccer games recognized by FIFA and AYSO. This system employs three referees, one referee and two assistant referees. In addition to being the universally approved method of officiating outdoor matches, the diagonal system is an effective method for increasing the number and retention of referees by recruiting, training and assigning them first as assistant referees.

The use of the dual refereeing system is not an approved technique for officiating AYSO games. The dual refereeing system uses two referees on the field, each with a whistle. This system encourages the development of poor officiating habits and is the source of frustrations as the referees attempt the unattainable task of remaining close to play and, at the same time, being correctly positioned to watch for offside infractions. This system also fosters hesitancy on the part of the officials and unnecessary interruptions in play as the two officials attempt to consult with one another for a consensus in making calls.

If only two qualified officials are available for a match, one should assume the duties of the referee and the other should become an assistant referee. A volunteer club linesman, if available, after receiving instructions from the referee, should also be used. The only duty of a club linesman is to indicate when the ball has completely crossed the touchline or the goal line. If no club linesman can be found, the referee must assume the duties of the missing assistant referee, just as he or she would if working the game alone.



### **Sideline Behavior by Coaches and Spectators**

AYSO coaches and referees and all other AYSO volunteers have a responsibility to provide a fun, pleasant environment for the players. According to the AYSO National Rules & Regulations, it is the duty of each coach, referee and official to “conduct him/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO”, “comply with the AYSO Rules & Regulations”, “encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship”, prohibit negative comments and complaints about officiating” and “present a healthy, athletic environment for team members by neither consuming alcoholic beverages nor using tobacco products during practices or games or in the immediate vicinity of the soccer fields.” Coaches must also “Limit his sideline participation during AYSO games to comments that are positive, instructional and encouraging. Be the proponent of the AYSO Kids Zone pledge.

Additionally, coaches and referees must work together to ensure the comments and behavior of spectators are within the boundaries of the AYSO philosophical tenets. Comments and behavior that may be common at the high school, college or professional level are often not appropriate in youth sports. Referees are authorized to stop, suspend or terminate play for outside interference of any kind. AYSO is about ‘kids first and soccer second.’

Cooperation between coaches and referees is essential in maintaining an appropriate environment for the players. The lessons young players learn from the behavior coaches and referees demonstrate will long endure after win/loss records are forgotten.

## **Law 6: The Assistant Referees**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The assistant referees assist the referee in officiating the match.

‘Running the line’ as an assistant referee is a demanding task when done correctly, and is not easily mastered. The assistant referees must follow the lead and instructions of the referee. Their positions are determined by the position of the players, ball and instructions of the referee, and they must be ready to adjust based on the constantly changing conditions during play. They are also expected to judge misconduct or fouls out of sight of the referee and, when these activities occur and as instructed, to bring them to the attention of the referee.

### **Assistant Referee Signals**

Signals, approved by the IFAB and universally in use, are also illustrated in the Laws of the Game. Standardized flag signals are used to avoid confusion. Additional communication with the referee is also made through frequent eye contact and by other accepted signals agreed upon during the referee’s pre-game instructions.

### **Club Linesmen**

Club Linesmen are sometimes used when neutral assistant referees are not available. Club Linesmen are usually selected from volunteers present at the game and often are supporters of one of the clubs or teams playing in the game, thus the derivation of the name ‘Club Linesmen.’ Because of their lack of official training, Club Linesmen have very limited responsibilities.

To acquire the most effective cooperation from Club Linesmen, the following procedure shall be adopted:

- The Club Linesmen shall report to the referee before the start of the game for instructions. The referee shall inform them that, regardless of their personal opinion, the referee’s decision is final and must not be questioned.
- Their work as Club Linesmen is to signal when the ball is entirely over the touchline or goal line subject always to the final decision of the referee.



Keeping in mind their distinct duties as outlined above, the referee shall decide beforehand exactly what he requires of the Club Linesmen and, as head of the trio, tell them clearly how they can best assist him. The three referees must therefore confer before the game, and the referee's instructions must be specific in order to avoid confusion. The Club Linesmen must, for their part, fully appreciate the referee's authority and accept the referee's ruling without question should there be any difference of opinion among them. They must be supportive and never contradict his decisions. They are to assist, not insist.

## **Law 7: The Duration Of The Match**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The players are entitled to the entire designated playing time.

### **Adding Time**

Referees have sole responsibility for maintaining an accurate accounting of playing time. Additional time may be added by the referee to make up for any time lost due to injury, substitution, unusual delay, time-wasting tactics or any other cause. It is the referee's responsibility to determine when these particular events have occurred and to add time for the time lost.

Time should not be added (or the 'clock stopped') following a goal or to administer a caution or a send-off, or other such stoppages unless the delay is, in the opinion of the referee, unusually long. The time needed to attend to an injured player on the field as well as the time needed to make substitutions at the 'quarters' is easily determined and should be added. However, determining what constitutes an unusual delay or time-wasting tactic requires more careful consideration by the referee. An unusual delay would involve such things as retrieving a lost ball, removing an outside agent (dog, spectator, elephant, etc.) from the field or rain delay.

Referees are trained not to be influenced by the emotions of the moment when determining whether or not to add on time. Referees must consider what is fair for BOTH teams in determining the exact moment to end the half or the game. For example, a player on a breakaway attack on goal at the end of an exciting match with the score tied should not be given extra time to see if the player scores or not. Similarly, the referee should not stop the clock because the team that is winning is not rushing to put the ball into play near the end of the game. In general, the referee will not add time at the end of the match for an event for which he or she would not have added time had it occurred at the beginning of the game. The ball does not have to be in play for the game to end.

### **Wasting Time Versus Consuming Time**

Referees are also taught to distinguish between time-wasting and time-consuming tactics, the former being illegal and the latter legal. Time wasting would involve techniques used by one team to waste time that the opposing team has no opportunity to counter. A goalkeeper refusing to release the ball into play within six seconds or a team taking an unusually long time to put the ball into play on a given restart are examples of time wasting. In such situations, the opposing team is powerless to prevent the situation and must rely on the referee to intervene. On the other hand, a team may legally consume time by simply skillfully controlling the ball. Kicking the ball out of play can be interpreted as legal time consumption or illegal time wasting depending on the circumstances. Kicking the ball out of play is often a good defensive decision and should not be penalized. However, if in the opinion of the referee, the player kicking the ball out of play is intentionally using excessive force so that the kick causes an unusual delay in retrieving the ball, this could be considered an illegal time-wasting tactic.

## **Law 8: The Start And Restart Of Play**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

Neither team shall have an unfair advantage at the start of play.



### **Starting Time and Forfeits**

If one or both teams are not present with the minimum number of players at the scheduled starting time, the referee should wait the time specified in the rules of the competition and then abandon the match. If the rules of competition do not specify a time, the referee should wait 15 minutes and then abandon the match. The referee may not declare a forfeit but must make a full report to the appropriate authorities, who will decide what action is to be taken.

### **Coin Toss**

To begin the game, the team winning the coin toss chooses which goal they will attack in the first half, and the other team must kick off (the same procedure applies to a first overtime period when required). When kicks from the penalty mark are needed to determine a winner, another coin toss is conducted at the end of regulation play and/or the last overtime period. The team winning this coin toss has the choice whether to take the first or second kick.

### **Kick-Off**

Starting play with a kick-off is a relatively simple process and should not present significant difficulties. Remember, the ball is not in play until it has been kicked and moves forward. It is not uncommon for the opposing team, upon hearing the whistle for the kick-off, to immediately run into the center circle rather than waiting for the ball to be kicked into play. The correct restart in this case is to retake the kick-off.

### **Dropped Ball**

The dropped ball is used to restart play after the referee has stopped play for some neutral reason such as an injury, interference by an outside agent or when play is stopped for substitution with the ball still in play. The dropped ball should not be used to restart play when it is not obvious who last played the ball before it went out of play. Referees must make a decision.

When having a dropped ball, although not required, referees usually will wait until one player from each team has taken up position to attempt to kick at the ball and then will instruct the players to wait until the ball hits the ground before commencing the kicking. If the ball is kicked before it has touched the ground, the dropped ball must be retaken. The referee may remind the players to be good sports and try not to kick each other.

The 2012-2013 LOTG added the following administration and sanction of drop ball:

If the ball enters the goal:

If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the opponent's goal, a goal kick is awarded to the opposing team.

If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team.

### **Common Elements of Restarts**

There are a total of eight different ways to restart play, and for each restart except the dropped ball the player restarting play may not touch or play the ball a second time until it has been touched or played by at least one additional player from either team. The dropped ball is the exception because it is the referee who is restarting play.

## **Law 9: The Ball In And Out Of Play**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The ball remains in play even if an assistant referees has signaled, unless the referee has signaled it out of play or has stopped play.



### **Ball in Play**

The Laws of the Game state that for the following restarts the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves: free kicks outside the penalty area, indirect free kicks by the attacking team within their opponents' penalty area and corner kicks. The United States Soccer Federation's Advice to Referees states that "The distance to be moved is minimal and the 'kick' need only be a touch of the ball with the foot in a kicking motion." "The referee must make the final decision on what is and is not 'kicked and moved' based on the spirit and flow of the match". It is important to always remember that referees should not interfere with play for trifling or doubtful offences. This also applies to kick-offs and penalty kicks, with the additional requirement that movement must be in a forward direction.

### **Ball out of Play**

It is the position of the ball, and not that of the player, that determines when the ball is out of play. This concept is somewhat foreign because the reverse is true in other popular sports such as football and basketball. It is also sometimes difficult to resist the temptation to think the ball is out of play when it touches a goal line or touchline, but we need to remember that the entire ball must cross the entire line before it is out. Position is critical when judging this fact, and in the vast majority of situations, we should thank the assistant referee for being in the best position to make this decision.

Curving balls from corner kicks or kicked from near the touchlines or goal lines may briefly cross the outside plane of the line in the air and then return within the playing field. In these situations, the ball should be declared out of play and the appropriate restart taken.

## **Law 10: The Method Of Scoring**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

The referee will award a goal when the entire ball enters the goal except as otherwise provided by the Laws of the Game.

### **Goal Versus No Goal**

If a player kicks the ball into the goal making the net bulge to withstand the impact, most will realize a goal has been scored. However, goals are not always so obvious. For those less than obvious goals, we must frequently rely on the correct positioning and judgment of the assistant referee, who will apply the same set of criteria used to determine when the ball is out of play together with the fact that it has left the field between the goalposts and under the crossbar. The best seat in the house to judge this is occupied by the assistant referee looking directly down the goal line.

One circumstance under which a goal can be scored that is not obvious occurs when the goalkeeper attempts to stop a particularly hard shot that causes the goalkeeper to retreat sufficiently back across the goal line that the ball completely crosses the goal line for a brief period while in the possession of the goalkeeper. It is the position of the ball, not the player that determines whether the ball is in or out of play.

## **Law 11: Offside**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

A player may not participate or interfere with play from an offside position.

### **Origin**

The late Ken Aston, internationally renowned referee instructor, gave the following account of the origin of the Offside Law.

Many years ago there was not an offside law in soccer. In the English schools where soccer was often played, it was noticed that players who were not willing to work with their teammates to help



advance the ball would simply loiter around in front of the opponents' goal waiting for the ball to arrive so they could score a goal.

The schoolmasters determined this was not a sporting thing to do and therefore made a rule that any player guilty of this offense would be temporarily off their side (off the team) and not allowed to play. Thus, the Offside Law was born. As a point of interest, Ken would point out there is no "s" at the end of the term offside—since a player plays for only one side (team), he can be taken off only one side (team), not off both sides.

### **Application**

The argument is sometimes made that a player who is standing in an offside position, even though inactive, is a cause for concern or worry on the part of the opposing goalkeeper or defender and therefore this can be interpreted as participation. This argument is not considered valid because referees cannot base their decisions on what is in the minds of players but rather must make their decisions based on what has, in fact, actually occurred. If players were penalized because they caused the opponents to worry about them because of what they might be able to do, this would have eliminated a lot of great players from the game. Do you think opposing teams had cause for concern or worry when they were about to play against great players such as Pelé or Mia Hamm?

As an example, consider the following: A player with the ball is near the opposing team's corner flag. The opposing goalkeeper is anticipating the ball being passed in front of the goal and has positioned himself close to the near goalpost and out from the goal line about two yards, which is close to where an opposing attacking player is legally positioned waiting for the ball. Another attacking player has taken an offside position inside the far goalpost on the goal line behind the goalkeeper. The ball is centered to the legally positioned teammate who, to the goalkeeper's dismay, heads the ball just inside the near goalpost. This goal should be allowed (and applauded) if the player in the offside position did not actively interfere with play or an opponent, despite proximity to the goalkeeper. But what if..., begin the dissenting voices. The 'what ifs' would each be considered separately, but in the situation described, a goal should be awarded.

If the assistant referee does not raise the flag immediately when a player is in an offside position, players, coaches and spectators need not get upset. The assistant referee is properly waiting to assess whether or not the player in an offside position becomes involved in active play. By using a brief delay and observing the caution "If in doubt, don't signal," assistant referees do not stop the game needlessly. Furthermore, the referee is not obligated to accept the assistant referee's recommendation to make the offside call, and may "wave off" the assistant referee's flag. Accordingly, players should continue to play the ball until the referee has determined that an offside offense has occurred.

The Offside Law always seems a source of debate and controversy as it contains elements of fact and of judgment which the referee must consider and interpret. There are additional criteria the referee must consider in some situations which are best learned through demonstration under the direction of a competent referee instructor.

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## **Law 12: Fouls And Misconduct**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

Teams that fail to play in a sporting, fair and safe manner will be penalized.

Referees and coaches want the game to be enjoyable at all levels of play. Player enjoyment and deliberate fouling are not compatible. Coaches, through their teachings and behavior, set the tone for fair play, sporting behavior and injury prevention by reinforcing the importance of fair play at all practices and games. Referees must walk the fine line between letting the game flow without unnecessary interruption and knowing when to interfere with the action to keep play within the boundaries of fairness and safety. Coaches and referees must work together to ensure players learn and abide by the Laws of the Game and respect the principles of fair play and sporting behavior.





### **Direct Free Kick Fouls Most Frequently Debated**

Direct Free Kick Fouls are rare with the younger players whose actions are more often clumsy rather than careless, reckless, or using excessive force. With older players, the game becomes more intense, and challenges for the ball often involve vigorous contact between players. The referee must judge the manner in which the contact is made. The fact that players may get knocked to the ground or bumped off the ball does not necessarily mean a foul has occurred. It is not a democracy; only the referee decides foul or no foul, even if in the minority. There are 10 Direct Free Kick fouls; the following four are most frequently debated.

### **Handling the Ball**

Handling the ball is arguably the source of most confusion. Referees must judge whether the contact of ball and hand or arm was caused by a deliberate act by the player or did the ball struck the hand or arm in the normal course of play. If the referee feels the contact was not deliberate, then no foul has occurred and play should continue. It matters not that an advantage might have been gained as long as the contact of ball and hand or arm was not deliberate. The rule of thumb for referees is that it is handling if the player plays the ball, but not handling if the ball plays the player

### **Tripping**

There is a difference between tripping and being tripped. When a player stumbles or falls the referee must judge whether or not an opponent illegally tripped the player or if the trip was the result of a fair challenge for the ball.

Often when a fair tackle is made, with contact first being made with the ball, the opponent may trip over the extended legs of the player making the tackle. However, even though contact is first made with the ball, if the player making the tackle subsequently lifts his or her leg with the intent to cause the opponent to fall, it is a foul and a direct free kick or penalty kick must be awarded to the opposing team.

A player who tackles an opponent, in a manner that endangers the safety of the opponent, must be sent off for serious foul play.

### **Charging**

A legal charge is an attempt to physically separate an opponent from control of the ball. Charging while contending for the ball is fair providing the following conditions are met:

- The player being charged is within playing distance of the ball.
- The charge is a sharp staccato impact, not a push.
- When charging from the side, contact is made as near shoulder to shoulder as possible, depending upon the relative heights of the players involved.
- If the charge is made in a manner that the referee considers to be careless, reckless or using excessive force, a direct free kick or penalty kick, as appropriate, is awarded to the opposing team.
- If the charge is otherwise fair, but not made within playing distance of the ball, the charging player is called for impeding the progress of an opponent, and an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team.

### **Screening or Shielding**

Players may often place themselves between an opponent and the ball to screen or shield the ball. This is a legal tactic provided the ball is, in the opinion of the referee, within playing distance of the player. If a player while screening or shielding the ball illegally uses his or her hands, arms, legs or body (pushing, holding, etc.) to prevent an opponent from challenging for the ball, it is a direct free kick foul.



### **Tackling**

Legal tackling is the act of blocking the ball or moving the ball away from the feet of an opponent in a manner that is not dangerous to that opponent. Players controlling the ball with their feet may be tackled by an opponent who is attempting to dispossess them of the ball. If contact that the referee considers to be careless, reckless or using excessive force is made with the player being tackled, then a free kick may be awarded plus possibly a caution (yellow card) or send off (red card) depending on the circumstances. In some cases, contact with the player after the ball has been played may also be a foul, again depending upon the circumstances.

### **Indirect Free Kick Fouls Most Frequently Debated**

Indirect free kick fouls result in an indirect free kick rather than a direct free kick as the penalty. The following two indirect free kick fouls are the frequent source of debate:

### **Impeding**

As with charging an opponent, impeding the progress of an opponent can either be legal or illegal depending on the circumstance. As long as the ball is within playing distance a player may legally use his body to “shield” or “screen” an opponent, legally denying them access to the ball. It is not necessary for the player to be touching the ball with his feet as long as it remains within playing distance. Illegal impeding occurs when a player who is not within playing distance of the ball moves between the ball and an opponent to slow the opponent’s progress or prevent playing the ball. If this illegal play occurs without contact, the restart is an indirect free kick. It is not uncommon for impeding to begin legally and then evolve to an illegal play where the impeded player runs into the player committing the impeding, or one player starts to push or hold his opponent. In this case the restart is a direct free kick.

### **Dangerous Play**

Although the Laws of the Game state that an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player, in the opinion of the referee, plays in a dangerous manner, the indirect free kick must be awarded only if an opponent is involved and the act is dangerous to either the player or to the opponent. If the dangerous act does not involve an opponent and play is stopped, play must be restarted with a dropped ball.

### **Other Indirect Free Kick Fouls Most Frequently Called**

#### **Goalkeeper Possession**

The goalkeeper is considered to be in control of the ball by touching it with any part of his hand or arms. Possession of the ball includes the goalkeeper deliberately parrying the ball, but does not include the circumstances where, in the opinion of the referee, the ball rebounds accidentally from the goalkeeper, for example after he has made a save.

The ball is also considered to be in the possession of the goalkeeper when

- bouncing the ball and catching it.
- throwing the ball in the air and catching it.

A goalkeeper who moves outside his or her own penalty area to intercept the ball and play it with his or her feet, back into the penalty area may then handle the ball. However, he/she may not pick up the ball when it was deliberately kicked directly to the goalkeeper by a teammate or the received the ball directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate.

If a teammate, taking a throw-in, throws the ball in the general direction of the goalkeeper, but before the goalkeeper receives the ball, it is intercepted in the air and headed by another teammate, the goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball within his or her own penalty area. (Goalkeepers are allowed to handle “pick up” the ball when headed back to them by a teammate.)



### **Temporary Expulsions**

If a player cannot control his emotions and needs a 'time-out' to regain control, either the player must recognize this and request permission to leave the field of play or the coach should convince the player to do so. Players have the right to ask the referee for permission to leave the field of play for a variety of reasons, and the referee should grant this permission. Coaches also have the right to ask their players to request this option from the referee. In no case is a substitution allowed to replace these players for this temporary interruption in their play.

Coaches also have the right to call players to the touchline during play if they feel the need to tell them something or to 'calm them down', but the player must remain on the field of play. Giving the coach this responsibility, which is where it belongs, is not a violation of the Laws.

FIFA has expressly forbidden mandatory temporary expulsions, sometimes called "sit outs", by a referee for cautioned players to regain their composure or to 'cool off.'

### **Serious Foul Play**

It is serious foul play, a sending-off offense, when a player uses deliberate violence when challenging for the ball against an opponent on the field of play while the ball is in play.

### **Violent Conduct**

It is violent conduct, a sending-off offense, when a player is guilty of aggression toward an opponent when not challenging for the ball. If the ball is in play, a direct free kick or a penalty kick, as appropriate, is awarded in favor of the team of the player against whom the aggression was directed. If the ball is out of play, the match is resumed with the appropriate restart.

It is also violent conduct if a player, substitute or substituted player attacks a teammate, the referee, an assistant referee, a coach, a spectator or any other person. If the ball is in play, an indirect free kick is awarded against the team of the player committing the violent conduct. If the aggression took place outside the boundaries of the field of play, a dropped ball is the correct restart. If the ball is out of play, the match is resumed with the appropriate restart.

### **Cautions (Yellow Cards) and Send-Offs (Red Cards)**

A player, substitute or substituted player who is cautioned or sent off during the match is shown the yellow or red card, as appropriate. Cards are only shown to players, substitutes and substituted players. The referee has the authority to take disciplinary sanctions and show the red or yellow cards from the moment he or she enters the field of play prior to the game until he or she leaves the field of play following the final whistle. The purpose of a caution is to give players fair notice that the manner in which they are playing or behaving is unacceptable and that they will be sent off the field for the remainder of the game if they continue to play or behave in this way. The referee may offer a verbal reprimand or warning, which is not an official caution, and in this case, will not hold up a yellow card.

The cards are never shown to coaches or spectators for their misconduct. The referee may, however, expel team officials from the field of play and its immediate surroundings without displaying a card. The referee's report (in accordance with Region, Area or Section procedures, as appropriate) must indicate in detail all misconduct occurring before, during and after the match.

Children who are under 12 years of age should not be formally cautioned or sent off unless there are exceptional circumstances. Referees should consider whether children in this age group are fully aware of their actions and should consult and work with the coach to get the desired behavior. Young players can usually be controlled by a verbal admonishment, thus avoiding the need to display the cards.

In the case of players being sent off (red carded) for misconduct after the game has started, substitution is not permitted for that player and the team must play with one less player for the duration of the match. The player that was sent off receives a minimum one game suspension and additional sanctions may be imposed pending review by the governing authority. As with cautioning, sending off young players (U10 and below) should be avoided. At this young age where the player is



just starting to learn the game, work with the coach to help explain the behavior issues with the player.

### **Administering Cautions and Send-Offs**

Referees, when administering cautions or send-offs, should:

- treat the individual in a calm, courteous and respectful manner.
- try to take the player or team official aside so he or she is out of the direct earshot of other players, team officials and spectators.
- explain briefly the reason he or she is being cautioned, sent off or expelled.
- display the yellow or red card, in the case of players, substitutes or substituted players.
- avoid a protracted discussion with the person being cautioned, sent off or expelled.

Although the Laws of the Game require that “a player who has been sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area” youth players who are sent off must be allowed to remain on the sideline, under the control of their coach unless their parents are present.

### **Spectator Misconduct**

The model set by the adults present (referees, coaches and spectators) at games influences the development and behavior of the young players watching. The referee team establishes the parameters of acceptable behavior and must be attentive to and deal appropriately with any adult behavior that does not present positive role modeling for youth. Law 5 and AYSO National Rules and Regulations provide this authority.

The influence adults have on the impressionable young players in AYSO will far outlast the memories of win/loss records. The behavior modeled by the adults present at AYSO games should have a positive effect on the development of the players watching. All adults present at AYSO games share in the responsibility to ensure positive role modeling is demonstrated. However, the ultimate responsibility rests with the AYSO referees as the guardians of the game to ensure there is truth in the motto that... **“In AYSO, it’s about more than the game!”**

## **Law 13: Free Kicks**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

Free kicks are to be taken without interference from the opposing team.

### **Application**

Free kicks generally are either ceremonial kicks or quick kicks. The ceremonial kick occurs when the team awarded the kick elects to take its time before taking the kick, possibly to attempt a set play learned in practice. It is the duty of the referee to enforce the Law and ensure that the opponents retreat the required distance as quickly as possible.

Conversely, it is the kicking team’s right to put the ball into play quickly and thus take advantage of an opportunity to advance the ball or to score a goal before the opposing defenders can get organized. In this situation, the team taking the kick may elect to kick the ball before the opponents have retreated the required distance. The quick-kick option is the choice of the team taking the kick and is perfectly legal as long as the ball is placed correctly, it is stationary before it is kicked and the referee has not told the kicking team to wait for his signal.

## **Law 14: The Penalty Kick**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

A penalty kick is awarded the offended team when a defending player commits a direct free kick foul within his own penalty area.

**Application**

A penalty kick provides an excellent goal-scoring opportunity, and this is precisely the intent of the Law. Direct free kick fouls, when committed by the defense close to their goal (inside the penalty area), seriously hinder the attacking team's chances of scoring a goal. Thus the Penalty Kick Law was devised to provide an additional measure of deterrence for committing direct free kick fouls near one's own goal. In the younger age divisions, direct free kick fouls are rare, and the use of penalty kicks should likewise be rare at this level of play.

The penalty kick is one of the few times players must wait for the referee's signal (whistle) before restarting play so that the referee can ensure that all the players are first legally positioned outside the penalty area and the penalty arc and no closer to the goal line than the ball. Once the referee has given the signal for the penalty kick to be taken, the kick will not be interrupted by the referee if an infraction is committed by either team until the outcome of the kick is determined. The resulting action of the referee will depend upon the circumstances of which team committed the infraction and whether or not a goal was scored.

**Penalty Kick—Goalkeeper Movement**

At the taking of a penalty kick, or kicks from the penalty mark, goalkeepers must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, but may move laterally along the goal line, between the goalposts, until the ball is kicked. If the goalkeeper moves forward off the goal line before the ball is kicked and the shot does not score, the penalty kick must be retaken.

**Penalty Kick (kicks from the penalty mark)—Feinting**

Feinting in the run-up to take a penalty kick to confuse opponents is permitted as part of football. However, feinting to kick the ball once the player has completed his run-up is considered an infringement of Law 14 and an act of unsporting behavior for which the player must be cautioned.

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## **Law 15: The Throw-In**

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**Spirit of the Law**

When the ball completely crosses the touchline, it shall be thrown back into the field of play by a player of the team opposite to that of the player who last touched it.

**Application**

The throw-in is one of the simplest and most common restarts and should not be the source of any unusual problems. The ball is thrown in from where it left the field and the opposing team is required to retreat at least two meters (yards) from the point at which the throw-in is to be taken. The Thrower may not play the ball twice in succession (cannot throw the ball to oneself).

There have developed over the years some misconceptions regarding the throw-in. One of the most common misconceptions is that spin on the ball is illegal. This is not the case, and in fact, it is almost impossible to throw the ball without some measure of spin. In reality, side spin on the ball is generally an indication that the ball has slipped through the hands of the thrower and the ball is not thrown as far or as accurately as the thrower intended. The ball can generally be thrown farther with one hand than it can with two, and this is what is considered illegal. It is the referee's duty to determine if this has occurred, but the simple fact that the ball is spinning should not, by itself, be reason to consider the throw-in illegal.

Another misconception is that the ball must be thrown with considerable force. The operative word is "thrown," and as long as there is a smooth continuous motion with the throw, it is perfectly legal even if the ball does not travel very far from the thrower.

Various techniques are employed by players when throwing in the ball. It is not uncommon for players to make a running throw-in. At the moment the ball is released, with the running throw-in, usually the toe of one foot will be dragging along the ground, which satisfies the requirements of the Law. As the players advance in age, they may develop an acrobatic flip throw-in that can significantly increase the



distance of the throw. This flip throw-in is legal as long as all elements of the Law are complied with at the moment the ball is released.

## **Law 16: The Goal Kick**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

A goal kick is awarded to the defending team when the ball crosses the goal line last touched by a member of the attacking team, without a goal being scored.

### **Application**

The goal kick is a relatively simple method of restarting play and generally causes few difficulties. As with free kicks, the team taking the goal kick may elect to take a quick kick before all of the opposing team has retreated outside the penalty area as required. The kick is retaken if it is touched by another player before leaving the penalty area, or if it is touched for a second time before leaving the penalty area by the player taking the kick. The offside exception for the first player to receive the ball from a goal kick is rarely of any consequence in the younger divisions. However, in the older divisions, this fact must be kept in mind during those long goal kicks that can reach a teammate in the opponents' half of the field.

## **Law 17: The Corner Kick**

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### **Spirit of the Law**

A corner kick is awarded the attacking team after the ball crosses the goal line last touched by a member of the defending team, without a goal being scored.

### **Application**

Corner kicks are excellent goal-scoring opportunities in the older divisions where the ball can be easily kicked in front of the goal from the corner area. Difficulties arise fairly often involving the Offside Law on corner kicks. The first person to receive the ball from the corner kick is, of course, exempt from the Offside Law. However, when a short corner kick is attempted by making a short pass from the corner arc to a nearby teammate, it is fairly common for this player to pass the ball back to the original kicker, who is running down the goal line and may be in an offside position at that time, depending on the position of the defenders.

### **Ball Placement**

The corner arc is to be treated in the same manner as other field markings. It is not required that the whole of the ball be completely within the corner area. As long as any part of the ball is within or overhanging the corner arc lines, this is considered a legal placement of the ball for a corner kick.



# AYSO National Rules & Regulations

## I. GAME CONDUCT

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AYSO games shall be conducted in accordance with the current *FIFA Laws of the Game* and decisions of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) in effect on August 1 each calendar year, with the following exceptions and clarifications:

### A. COMPETITION

- Coaches, officials and spectators shall not enter the field of play unless requested by the referee.
- Except for small-sided games (Article I.H), a scheduled game shall not commence nor be continued unless both teams can field at least seven eligible players.

### B. DURATION OF GAMES

Division	Maximum Duration of Half
U-5	10 minutes
U-6	10 minutes
U-8	20 minutes
U-10	25 minutes
U-12	30 minutes
U-14	35 minutes
U-16	40 minutes
U-19	45 minutes

- Games shall be of two equal halves, not to exceed the following maximum durations:
- Half-time periods shall be a minimum of five and a maximum of ten minutes as designated by the referee.
- Where necessary due to scheduling time constraints, the duration of the two halves is to be reduced by an equal amount to allow for substitution in accordance with Article I.C.1.

### C. PLAYING TIME AND SUBSTITUTION

- Except as noted in Article I.C.3 all eligible team members in attendance at AYSO games must play at least half of the game, excluding overtime.



Such participation is controlled as follows:

- a. Approximately midway through each half the referee shall permit substitution. This normally occurs during a regular stoppage in play, and the game is resumed with the appropriate restart (i.e. throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, kick-off, free kick, penalty kick or dropped ball). On occasion the referee may need to stop play for substitution while the ball is in play, in which case the game is resumed with a dropped ball.
  - b. Substitutions may also be made at half-time and at the start of any overtime periods.
  - c. When the referee signals for substitution, the coaches should have all substitutes entering the game immediately report to the referee or the designated assistant referees, who shall note on the lineup cards those team members substituting.
  - d. During such stoppages, the coach of each team may substitute as many team members, or none, including previously substituted team members, as long as all eligible team members meet the minimum playing requirements.
  - e. The referee shall allow for any time lost due to substitution or other cause by stopping his/her watch or adding playing time. (See Article I.B.3. regarding reducing the length of halves to permit proper substitution.)
2. Substitution for injury:
- a. If a player is injured, the coach may provide a substitute for the player, in which case the injured player may not return until the beginning of the next "quarter". Only the player who is injured is credited with a "quarter" played regardless of the actual time played.
  - b. The coach may choose to not substitute and "play short" thereby allowing the injured player to return during the "quarter" in which he or she was injured.
  - c. The player must receive a signal from the referee in order to return to the game.
3. Late arriving team members shall be substituted as follows:
- a. If the team member arrives during the first "quarter", the team member must play a minimum of two of the remaining three "quarters".
  - b. If the team member arrives during the second or third "quarter", the team member must play a minimum of one "quarter".
4. Signed lineup cards must be completed by the referee and forwarded to the Regional Commissioner or his/her designee.

#### **D. OFFICIATING**

1. Referees shall officiate in accordance with the *AYSO Rules & Regulations* (the rules of competition), the *FIFA Laws of the Game* and decisions of the IFAB.
2. Referees shall officiate in a manner inducing clean competition and good sportsmanship, placing great emphasis on the welfare of the players. If a player is injured, the referee, at his/her discretion, may stop play to ensure the welfare of the player even if the ball has not gone out of play.





3. The goalkeeper shall not be harassed or interfered with while attempting to put the ball in play.
4. It is the duty of referees to protect the goalkeeper against dangerous play.
5. The *Laws of the Game* are intended to provide that games should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators.

**E. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COACHES, REFEREES, OFFICIALS, OTHER VOLUNTEERS, SPECTATORS, TEAM MEMBERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

1. It shall be the duty of each coach, referee, official, other volunteer, spectator, team member and other participant to:
  - a. Conduct himself/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO and consistent with the AYSO philosophies and the highest standards of conduct.
  - b. Comply with and promote compliance with the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations and policies, including those related to registration, certification and training.
  - c. Encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship.
  - d. Prohibit and abstain from making negative comments and complaints about officiating.
  - e. Present a healthy and safe athletic environment for team members, including but not limited to, by not consuming alcoholic beverages, using tobacco products or smoking or simulating smoking or the use of tobacco products during practices or games or in the immediate vicinity of the soccer fields.
2. It shall also be the duty of each coach to:

The **following language in bold and underlined** is effective August 1, 2011 for the U-6 and U-8 age division, and the next age division in each of the subsequent years until implemented for all age divisions.

- a. **Be trained, consistent with the AYSO National Coaching Program standards, for the age/skill level of the team he/she will coach; and** train and coach the team to the best of his/her ability.
- b. Remain within the coaches' area (Article I.G.2) during the game; a maximum of two coaches is permitted for each team.
- c. Limit his/her sideline participation during AYSO games to comments that are positive, instructional, and/or encouraging.
- d. Upon team formation, and during all subsequent team gatherings, practices, scrimmages, and games (regional, inter-Regional, Area, Sectional, National and tournaments), have in his/her possession all forms, rosters, waivers and/or identification cards as may be required by AYSO policies so as to verify registration of team members or confirm volunteer qualifications.

**F. SIZE OF BALL**

Ball size for each division shall be as follows:

Age Division	Size	Circumference	Weight
U-5, U-6 & U-8	3	23.0-25.0 inches	10-12 oz.
U-10 & U-12	4	25.0-26.5 inches	12-14 oz.
U-14, U-16 & U-19	5	26.5-28.0 inches	14-16 oz.

**G. FIELD OF PLAY**

1. The dimensions and markings of the field of play and goals shall be at the discretion of the Region and, whenever possible, conform to the *FIFA Laws of the Game* or to AYSO Small-Sided Game requirements.
2. A coaches' area extending ten yards on each side of the halfway line shall be marked by two lines off the field of play and perpendicular to the touch line. Where possible, the coaches' area shall include two additional lines, with one line parallel to and at least one yard from the touch line, and a second parallel line no more than three yards from the touch line.
3. The field shall be marked, where possible, with a spectator control line parallel to the touch line at a distance of at least three yards from the touch line. Coaches and officials should help the assistant referees keep spectators behind the spectator control line.
4. Spectators shall not be allowed behind the goal lines, with the exception of photographers who have received authorization from the referee, and who must remain quiet and sufficiently back from the goal lines.

**H. SMALL-SIDED GAMES**

1. It is strongly recommended that U-5 through U-12 divisions play small-sided games, conducted in accordance with the current *FIFA Laws of the Game* as modified by the *AYSO National Rules & Regulations* and the age appropriate AYSO Coaching Manual.

Regions may choose to allow goalkeepers in the U-8 division.

Coaches beginning at the U-10 division are allowed to teach team members how to properly head the ball.

2. Small-sided games are permitted for all divisions.

**II. TEAMS**

- A. Team names shall bear no resemblance to a religion, race, ethnicity or nationality.
- B. Teams shall participate only in games approved by their respective Regional Commissioners and/or presiding AYSO governing authority.

**C. Team size:**

1. For full-sided (11-a-side) soccer (not recommended for U-12 and younger), the number of team members at any one time shall be:

<b>Age Division</b>	<b>Maximum no. of team members</b>	<b>Minimum no. of team members</b>
U-16 & U-19	18	12
U-8 through U-14	15	12

2. The following are the recommended team sizes:

<b>Age Division</b>	<b>Players per team on field</b>	<b>Maximum no. of team members</b>	<b>Minimum no. of team members</b>
U-19	11-a-side	18	12
U-16	11-a-side	18	12
U-14	11-a-side	15	12
U-12	9-a-side	12	9
U-10	7-a-side	10	7
U-8	5-a-side (No goalkeepers)	7	5
U-6	3-a-side (No goalkeepers)	5	3
U-5	3-a-side (No goalkeepers)	4	3

3. All divisions may play optionally with teams of smaller sizes for mini-soccer, indoor soccer or small-sided games, subject to rules established by the Section.
- D.** The maximum number of team members listed in Article II.C may be increased with approval of the Area Director, but no more than would allow each team member to play at least half of each game.
- E.** Each primary season, every effort shall be made to balance team strengths within each age division, within a reasonable geographical area.
- F.** A Region or Area shall not form leagues on a major and minor basis within any age division.



- G. The only team member(s) a head coach may specify be on his/her team is his/her own child or children.

### III. REGISTRATION

- A. The standard age divisions for the Boys and Girls programs are as follows:

Age	Division
Under 5 years but not younger than 4 years	U-5
Under 6 years	U-6
Under 8 years	U-8
Under 10 years	U-10
Under 12 years	U-12
Under 14 years	U-14
Under 16 years	U-16
Under 19 years	U-19

- B. The effective date of age determination shall be the registrant's age as of July 31st immediately prior to the start of the membership year as defined in Article V.

Registrants who have reached the age of four years as of this date are eligible to participate in the program.

Individuals who are nineteen years of age or older as of this date are not eligible to participate.

1. Exception: Regions, upon approval by their Area Director and their Section Director, may allow registration and participation of children who have reached the age of four as of the date of the Region's first organized activity (camp, practice or game) in any season, split season or sub-season.

- C. U-5 and U-6 divisions are primarily for the introduction of soccer skills.
- D. In Regions where there are not enough registrants to make any or all standard age divisions, divisions may be combined so that teams may be formed.

Such divisions shall be classified on the basis of the oldest registrant and shall not, after the start of the season of play, be reclassified to a lower age division should the oldest registrant(s) then be removed from the roster.

- E. Regions with a sufficient number of registrants within a standard age division may, with the approval of the Area Director and Section Director, form single-year sub-divisions within the standard age divisions defined in Article III.A.
- F. No potential team member may register without the written consent of his/her parent or guardian, unless the registrant is of legal age.



- G. A registrant becomes an official team member upon:
  - 1. payment to the Region of its required registration fee, and
  - 2. acceptance of his/her registration form by the Regional Commissioner or the Regional Commissioner's designated representative, and
  - 3. placement on a team by the Regional Commissioner or the Regional Commissioner's designated representative.
- H. The Regional Commissioner is responsible for assuring the eligibility of all team members on teams within the Region. Upon request of the Regional Commissioner or Area Director, a team member must present his/her birth certificate or other legal proof of age.
- I. An individual team member is limited to one AYSO primary season team.
- J. Boys and girls may play on the same teams where there is an insufficient number of registrants to establish separate teams with reasonable application of Article III.D. It is strongly recommended, however, that separate boys and girls teams be instituted and maintained wherever possible.

#### **IV. TRANSFER OF TEAM MEMBERS**

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A team member may transfer from one team to another within a Region, or from one Region to another, after the following three conditions have been met:

- A. Approval of both coaches of the teams involved.
- B. Approval of Regional Commissioner(s).
- C. Approval of team member and parent/guardian; parent/guardian approval is not required if team member is of legal age.

#### **V. DURATION OF REGISTRATION**

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The period of official membership shall be from August 1st through the following July 31st each year.

#### **VI. PROPER DRESS**

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- A. Each chartered AYSO Region shall provide for team members to wear a matching team uniform consisting of a jersey, shorts and socks. Such uniform shall be properly marked with the AYSO Traditional logo, described in **Exhibit "A"** of these *Rules & Regulations*, that is a minimum of three inches and a maximum of four inches in diameter located on the upper left front of the jersey and otherwise shall conform to the markings on **Exhibit "A."** Regions that purchase uniforms with a logo that is approximately three to four inches in height but that is smaller than the three-inch minimum (or larger than the four-inch maximum) may continue to use the uniforms after August 1, 2010, if the uniforms were purchased for use prior to the Fall season of 2010.
  - 1. The AYSO Traditional logo is not required on goalkeepers' jerseys but is highly recommended.



2. A pilot Region may use non-conforming uniforms which were purchased prior to the program becoming a pilot for their useful life but no longer than three years from the date of admission of the pilot Region.
3. **In connection with the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of AYSO, a 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo approved by the National Board of Directors (the "50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo") may be used wherever the AYSO Traditional logo is required or permitted to be used as provided in this Article VI or as reflected in Exhibit "A." The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo may be used on uniforms purchased for use beginning with the Fall season of 2013 through the 2014-2015 membership year. The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo may continue to be used after the 2014-2015 membership year if the uniforms were purchased for use prior to the end of the 2014-2015 membership year.**
  - B. The AYSO uniform, including goalkeepers' jerseys, may bear a manufacturer's name and/or logo. The manufacturer's name and/or logo must not be displayed more prominently than the AYSO Traditional logo or be larger than the size specified in Article VI.A. for the AYSO Traditional logo and it must not be placed on the upper left front of the jersey. In no event shall a manufacturer's name and/or logo appear in the area designated for the AYSO Traditional logo. Except as provided in this Article VI or as reflected in **Exhibit "A"**, no other markings may appear on the uniform without the prior approval of the National Board of Directors.
  - C. The AYSO uniform may bear an optional emblem representing Region, skills, sponsor or sportsmanship on the upper right sleeve and/or the lower right front of the shorts in accordance with **Exhibit "A."** Such emblems shall be no more than three inches in diameter (or equivalent diagonal) and shall be approved by the Regional Commissioner.
  - D. The AYSO uniform may also bear a sponsor emblem designated by the AYSO National Board of Directors immediately below the AYSO logo on the left breast of the jersey or such other location as the National Board of Directors may determine, as illustrated in **Exhibit "A."**
  - E. No AYSO uniform may bear a team member's name, or team name, league name, or program name.
  - F. The team member's uniform number shall appear on the back of the jersey in a color that contrasts with the jersey color, and (optionally) may be placed on the front of the uniform below the standard manufacturer's name and/or logo on the jersey or on the left side of the shorts. The number on the front of the uniform shall not exceed four inches in height.
  - G. The AYSO Traditional logo must appear in a color that contrasts with the player's primary uniform color. The AYSO Traditional logo must have a prominent appearance on the uniform.
  - H. No person may use any of the AYSO trade names, trademarks or logos for any use other than AYSO-authorized activities without the prior written consent of the National Office. This includes having the AYSO Traditional logo stamped on soccer balls, soccer shoes or other equipment, or used in association with the products or services of any person. Those types of activities weaken any national licensing program and may violate license agreements then in force. Any approved use shall require that an ® should be placed next to the AYSO registered trade name or trademark or, if the trade name is not registered, a ™ should be placed next to such trade name or trademark. These symbols serve notice that the trade names and trademarks belong to AYSO.
  - I. Regulation soccer shoes, gym shoes, or sneakers (with or without cleats) are permissible in all AYSO competitions subject to the referee's approval regarding their safety.



- J. Team members must wear shinguards that provide a reasonable degree of protection, and that are completely covered by their socks, to participate in any practice or game.
- K. Team members shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any game with any type of cast or splint. Removal of any type of cast or splint at the field or surrounding area in order to participate shall disqualify the team member from practice or game participation.
- L. Players shall not wear anything that is dangerous to either themselves or other players.

## **VII. OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT**

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The custodianship and disposition of equipment and supplies purchased by an individual Region shall be the responsibility of that Region.

## **VIII. INCIDENTS AND INJURIES**

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All incidents, injuries or property damage involving an AYSO participant or occurring at an AYSO event shall be reported to, and by, the Regional Commissioner or safety director on the AYSO Incident Report Form in accordance with the directive of the American Youth Soccer Organization (AYSO) National Office.

**Bolded and Underlined Text denote changes made by the Membership at the 2012 National Annual General Meeting**

### **Certification**

The National Rules and Regulations of the American Youth Soccer Organization which appear in the text of the preceding document were adopted pursuant to the National Bylaws Article 8, and other provisions of the Bylaws and California State law during the 2012 National Annual General Meeting in Seattle, Washington during the weekend of May 26-28, 2012 (the "2012 NAGM").

\_\_\_\_\_/s/ William Hummell\_\_\_\_\_  
William Hummell  
National Secretary

## Exhibit “A”

AYSO Traditional Logo 3” to 4” in diameter on upper left front of jersey per Article VI.A.  
Logo color must contrast with jersey color per Article VI.G.

Optional national sponsor logo as approved by the AYSO National Board of Directors per Article VI.D.

Optional logo (Region, skills, sponsor or sportsmanship on upper right sleeve and/or lower right front of shorts – no more than 3” in diameter or equivalent diagonal per Article VI.C.)



Number on back of jersey and (optionally) on right front of jersey or left front of shorts. Number color must contrast with jersey color per Article VI.F. (Optional numbers on front of uniform not to exceed 4” in height.)

Shinguards worn on both legs, completely covered by the socks per Article VI.J.

### NOTES:

- 1) The AYSO Traditional Logo must be a minimum of three and a maximum of four inches in diameter and must be worn on the upper left front of the jersey.
- 2) Except as indicated in Article VI or in the drawing, no other markings may appear without the prior approval of the National Board of Directors.
- 3) For clarification of proper size and location of AYSO and manufacturers' logos, refer to Article VI.
- 4) The AYSO Traditional logo is not required on goalkeepers' jerseys but is highly recommended.
- 5) Pursuant to Article VI.A.3., the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary logo may be used instead of the AYSO Traditional Logo whenever the AYSO Traditional logo is required or permitted to be used as provided in Article VI or as reflected in the drawing.



# Small-Sided Games Guide

## Introduction

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The AYSO National Referee and the AYSO National Coach Advisory Commissions have prepared this information as a guide to conduct small-sided games. The information contained in this guide is intended to support the specific recommendations of the AYSO National Coach Advisory Commission for small-sided play. Thank you for volunteering your time and talents as a referee and for helping young AYSO players learn to love and play the beautiful game of soccer.

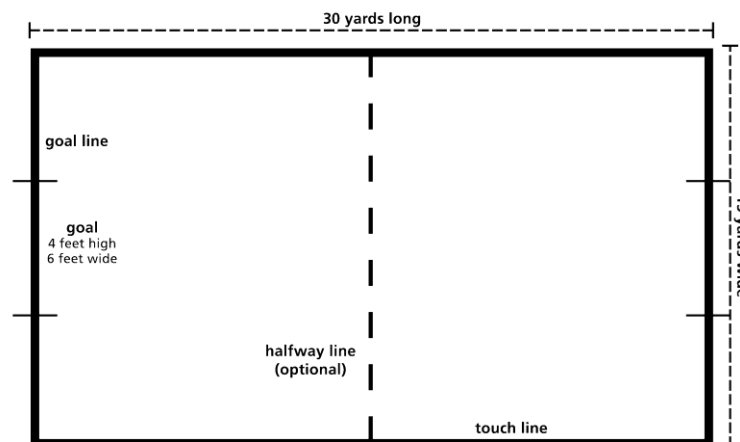
## Under-5 Guidelines

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The following guidelines include the only elements of the Laws of the Game that apply to the AYSO U-5 Division:

### The Field:

The recommended field size for U-5 games is 30 x 15 yards marked with lines or cones. See diagram.



### The Goals:

The goals in U-5 games should be a maximum of 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, or two tall cones set 6 feet apart. If goal structures are used, they must be properly positioned (centered on the goal line) and anchored securely to the ground.

### The Ball:

A size 3 ball is used for U-5 games.

### The Teams:

Each U-5 team should have a maximum of 4 on the roster. Games are played with 3 players per team on the field (3v3) and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters. Separate boys and girls teams are recommended at all levels.



### **Player Equipment:**

Shoes and shinguards covered by socks are mandatory at all practice and game activities. Soccer shoes, tennis shoes, or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

### **The Start of Play:**

To start the first and second halves, and following each goal, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the center of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game, and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

### **The Kick-off:**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least 5 yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent be a minimum of precisely 5 yards from the ball as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

### **Ball In and Out of Play:**

The ball is out of play when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line) either on the ground or in the air. In U-5 games, the game supervisors for the week will determine when the ball is out of play. When the ball goes out of play in U-5 games across the touch line (side line) or the goal line (end line) without a goal being scored, a throw-in is awarded at the point it crossed the line.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-5 games are twenty minutes and are played in two 10-minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **Throw-in:**

When the ball goes out of play in U-5 games across the touch line (side line) or the goal line (end line) without a goal being scored, a throw-in is awarded at the point it crossed the line. The throw-in is awarded to the team that didn't touch the ball last.

In U-5 games, when a throw-in is taken from behind the goal line, the thrower must not be between the goal posts.

Whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go...teach proper technique later. Again, let them play with minimum interruption. Keep the game moving and fun.

### **Method of Scoring:**

A goal is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone. In U-5 games, goals are not recorded to determine who wins, as everyone is a winner.

### **Fouls and Other Stoppages:**

Deliberate fouling should be rare in U-5 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U-5 games. If a player is "not playing well with others", or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin with a free kick or as may be appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it. Stoppages must not become a lengthy ceremony.

### **Free Kick:**

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in U-5 games. When this is necessary, correct the situation and then restart with a free kick for the deserving team. The opposing team should be at least 5 yards from the ball in U-5 games. All free kicks in U-5 games are direct free kicks which means, if you're lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick without the ball having to be touched or played by another player on the field.

**Under-5 Jamboree One-With-One Guidelines**

Each Jamboree session will end with a 20 minute small-sided game (3v3) where the same rules apply as described above. Most importantly, allow the players to play without coaching or teaching as this experience is designed to expose them to soccer, not to begin developing them. The two objectives of the program are to allow the players to enjoy the activities, and let the game be the teacher.

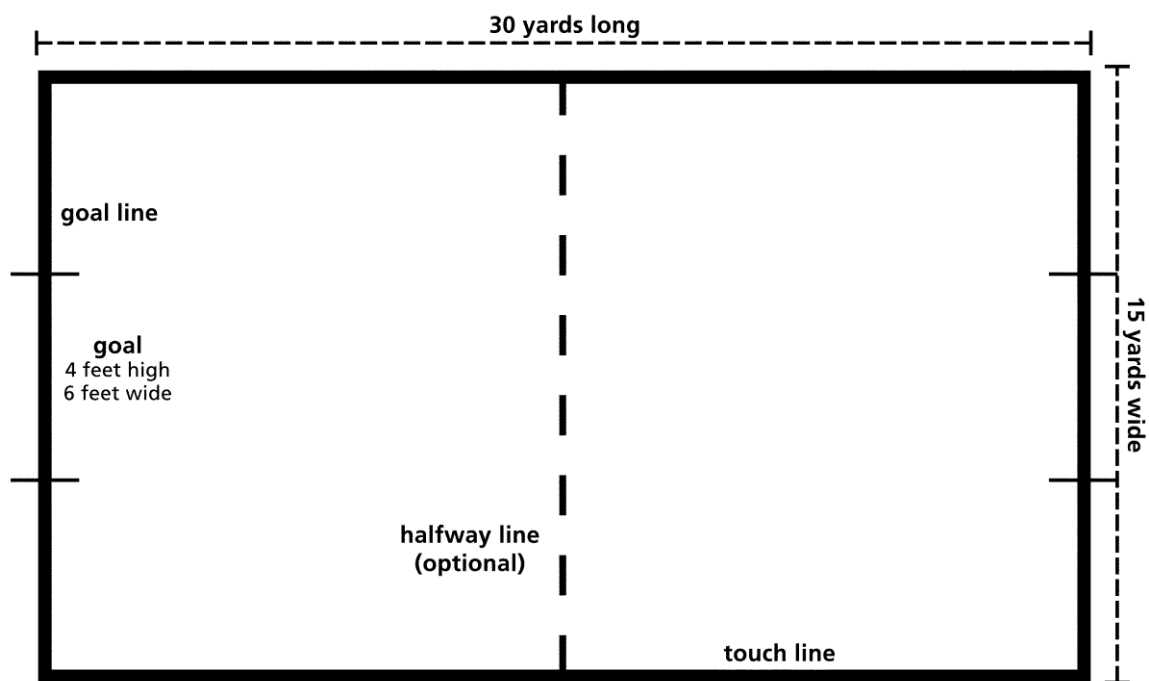
**Under-6 Guidelines**

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The following guidelines include the only elements of the Laws of the Game that apply to the AYSO Small-sided Games Program for U-6 games:

**The Field:**

The recommended field size for U-6 games is 30 x 15 yards marked with lines or cones. See diagram.

**The Goals:**

The goals in U-6 games should be a maximum of 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, or just use tall cones set 6 feet apart. If goal structures are used, they must be properly positioned (centered on the goal line) and anchored securely to the ground.

**The Ball:**

A size 3 ball is used for U-6 games.

**The Teams:**

Each U-6 team should have a maximum of 5 on the roster. Games are played with 3 players per team on the field (3v3) and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters. Separate boys and girls teams are recommended at all levels.



### **Player Equipment:**

Shoes and shinguards covered by the socks are mandatory at all practices and game activities. Soccer shoes, tennis shoes or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

### **Referees**

Certified referees are optional in U-6 games. Just as players at this age are discovering the game of soccer, this is a good opportunity for older siblings, family and friends to discover the enjoyment and rewards of volunteering, while also learning about the game. If certified referees/officials are not used in U-6 games, the coaches will manage the games. If certified referees/officials are used, the referees/officials must be trained and certified as U-8 Officials or higher.

U-6 games are intended to be an opportunity for very young players to experience the fun of playing with minimum interruption and maximum flexibility. Every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from unnecessary stoppages. Officials/referees in U-6 games should encourage proper play and sporting behavior and thus provide an opportunity for players, coaches, officials and spectators to have a positive AYSO experience. Let them play and enjoy.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-6 games are twenty minutes and are played in two 10-minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **The Start of Play**

To start the first and second halves and following each goal, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the middle of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

### **The Kick-off**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least five yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent always be five yards from the ball, as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

### **Ball In and Out of Play**

The ball is out of play when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line), either on the ground or in the air. The team that didn't touch it last gets either a throw-in (from the touch line) or, in U-6 games, a kick-in (from the goal line). The official in U-6 games will determine when one of these restarts is necessary and should then interfere as little as possible in the restart. It's their game; let them play. The coach can work on technique later.

### **Method of Scoring**

A goal is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone, but in U-6 games, they are not recorded to determine who wins. Everyone wins in U-6 games.

### **Fouls and Other Stoppages**

Deliberate fouling should be rare in U-6 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U-6 games. If a player is "not playing well with others" or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or throw-in as appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it. Exercise common sense, stand back and let them play.

### **Free Kicks**

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in U-6 games. A player may pick the ball up and start running with it or want to keep it away from the other players, or perhaps there is a pile of kids on the ground kicking at both the ball and each other. Stop play and correct the situation



then restart with a free kick for a deserving player. All free kicks in U-6 games are direct free kicks which means, if you're lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick.

**Throw-in**

When the ball goes out of play across one of the touch lines (side lines), a throw-in is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn't touch it last. The coach should let the player take the throw-in and whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go! Proper technique can be taught later. Again, let them play with minimum interruption.

**Kick-in:**

When the ball goes out of play across one of the goal lines (end lines) and a goal is not scored, a kick-in, in U-6 games, is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn't touch it last. As with the throw-in, the coach should let the player take the kick-in with as little ceremony or interference as possible. Keep the game moving and fun.

**Under-6 Jamboree Guidelines**

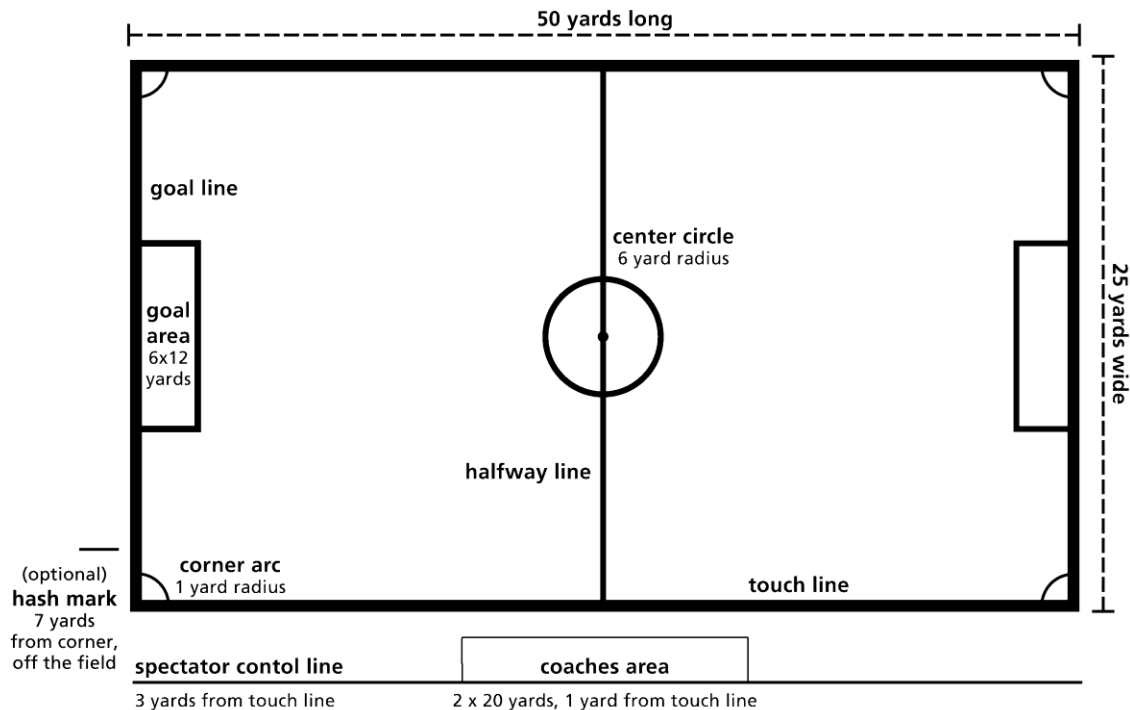
During the U-6 Jamboree 3 v 3 scrimmages, the same rules apply as described above. The "Master Coach" will instruct the volunteer coaches or parents how to keep the games going with as little interference as possible.

**Under-8 Guidelines**

The guidelines for U-8 games in the AYSO Small-sided Games Program are the same as for U-6 games and no other elements of the Laws of the Game apply, with the following modifications or additions:

**The Field:**

The recommended field size for U-8 games is 50 x 25 yards with the following field markings: Halfway line, 6 yard radius center circle, 1 yard radius corner arcs and 6 x 12 yard goal areas. See diagram.



**The Goals:**

The goals in U-8 games should be a maximum of 6 feet high and 6 yards wide.

**The Ball:**

A size 3 ball is used for U-8 games.

**The Teams:**

Each U-8 team should have a maximum of 7 on the roster. Games are played with 5 players per team on the field (5v5). Goalkeepers should not be used in U-8 games.

**Referees**

AYSO certified U-8 Officials or higher are required for U-8 games. The U-8 Official should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and encourage proper play and sporting behavior. As with all games, every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

**Duration of Game:**

U-8 games are forty minutes and are played in two 20-minute halves with substitutions allowed 10 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

**Kick-off:**

Opponents must be at least 6 yards from the ball during the kick-off in U-8 games.

**Fouls:**

The following, if deliberately done, are the fouls most likely to occur in U-8 games: kicking, tripping, pushing, holding, handling the ball and dangerous play. Do not stop play for trifling violations. It's a player's game, so keep the fun going and let them play.

**Misconduct:**

Misconduct should be rare in U-8 games. There is no need for the public cautioning and sending off of young players (leave your red and yellow cards home). Officials should work cooperatively with the coach when a U-8 player may need a "time out".

**Free Kicks:**

All free kicks in U-8 games are direct free kicks. Opponents must be at least 6 yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks. Free kicks awarded the attacking team inside the defending team's goal area are to be taken from the nearest point on the goal area line parallel to the goal line.

**Throw-in:**

A second throw-in should be allowed in U-8 games if the first attempt was improperly done. Following brief, corrective instructions, a second attempt should be permitted. If the second attempt is still done improperly, let it go. Proper technique can be reinforced later by the coach. Keep the game moving and minimize interruptions.

**Goal Kick:**

A goal kick is awarded the opposing team, in U-8 age groups and older, when the attacking team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area. The opposing team must be at least 6 yards from the ball when the goal kick is taken in U-8 games.

**Corner Kick:**

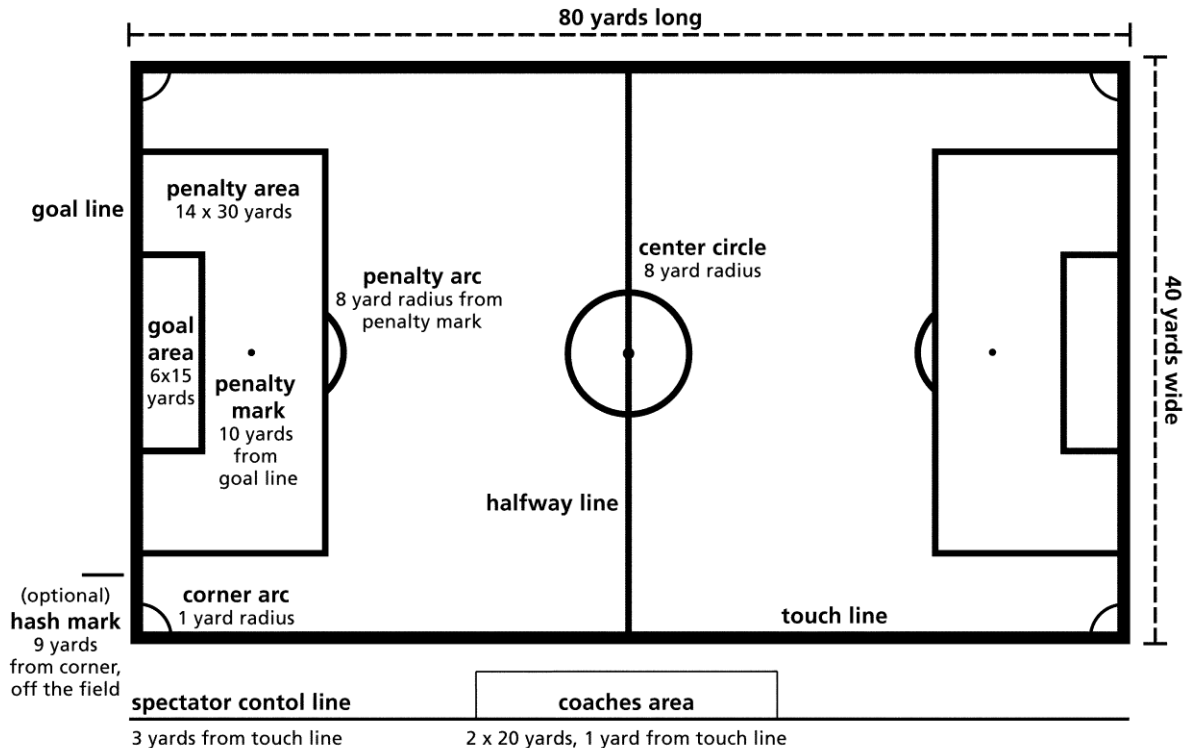
A corner kick is awarded the opposing team, in U-8 age groups and older, when the defending team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The opposing team must be at least 6 yards from the ball when the corner kick is taken in U-8 games.

## Under-10 Guidelines

The guidelines for U-10 games in the AYSO Small-sided Games Program are the same as for U-8 games and no other elements of the Laws of the Game apply, with the following modifications or additions:

### The Field:

The recommended field size for U-10 games is 80 x 40 yards with the following field markings: Halfway line, 8 yard radius center circle, 1 yard radius corner arcs, 6 x 15 yard goal areas, 14 x 30 yard penalty areas, a penalty mark 10 yards from each goal and penalty arcs extending 8 yards from the penalty mark. See diagram.



### The Goals:

The goals in U-10 games should be a maximum of 7 feet high and 7 yards wide.

### The Ball:

A size 4 ball is used for U-10 games.

### The Teams:

Each U-10 team should have a maximum of 10 on the roster. Games are played with 7 players per team on the field (7v7) one of which is a goalkeeper.

### Referee:

AYSO certified Regional Referees or higher are required for U-10 and older games. Be a thinking referee who only interferes with play when necessary for the safety of the players and the good of the game. The game belongs to the players.

### Assistant Referees/Club Linesmen:

If available, qualified assistant referees who have completed Assistant Referee Certification or higher may be used to assist the referee. This is an opportunity for new assistant referees to begin getting experience. If qualified assistant referees are not available, Club Linesmen (untrained volunteers who



may be affiliated with one of the teams/clubs) may be recruited from the spectators to assist the referee with calling the ball in and out of play only. This is an opportunity for parents to get involved.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-10 games are fifty minutes and are played in two 25-minute halves with substitutions allowed approximately 12 ½ minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **Kick-off:**

Opponents must be at least 8 yards from the ball during the kick-off in U-10 games.

### **Offside:**

The Offside Law applies in U-10 and older games. Offside is a simple Law easily misunderstood by those new to the game. Refer to the Laws of the Game for more information regarding the Offside Law.

### **Fouls:**

For U-10 and older games, all fouls identified in Law 12 apply. Refer to the Laws of the Game for more information. Although there is now the potential for more fouls, referees must still remember that only deliberate breaches of the Law merit stopping the game and that constant whistling for trifling or doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of the spectators. Maximize playing time - minimize stoppages.

### **Misconduct:**

Misconduct should still be relatively rare in U-10 games. Coaches at all levels of play have the option of calling players to the touchline to receive a few words of “positive instruction” concerning the player’s behavior. A coach also has the option of telling a player to ask the referee for permission to leave the field and then, after getting the player under control, having the player request permission from the referee to reenter the game. The referee should permit these requests. However, substitution is not allowed for the player leaving the field in this situation.

### **Free Kicks:**

Opponents must be at least 8 yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks in U-10 games. Free kicks, in U-10 and older games, may be either direct (may score directly) or indirect (must be touched or played by another player before a goal can be scored). Refer to the Laws of the Game for further details.

### **Penalty Kicks:**

Penalty kicks may be awarded in U-10 and older games. A penalty kick results from a player committing one of the ten direct free kick fouls inside his or her own (defending) penalty area. The penalty kick is taken from the penalty mark with all other players outside the penalty area and behind the penalty mark (except for the opposing goalkeeper). Refer to the Laws of the Game for further details.

### **Throw-in:**

Second chances are not given for improper throw-ins for U10 and older players. An improper throw-in results in a throw-in for the opposing team. The referee must judge if indeed the throw-in violated the spirit of the Throw-in Law or if the violation was trifling and not worthy of stopping play. Keep the game moving and minimize unnecessary interruptions.

### **Goal Kick:**

The ball is not in play and cannot be touched or played by either team until it has been kicked beyond the penalty area into the field of play in U-10 and older games. The goal kick is retaken if the ball is touched or played by either team before leaving the penalty area.



**Corner Kick:**

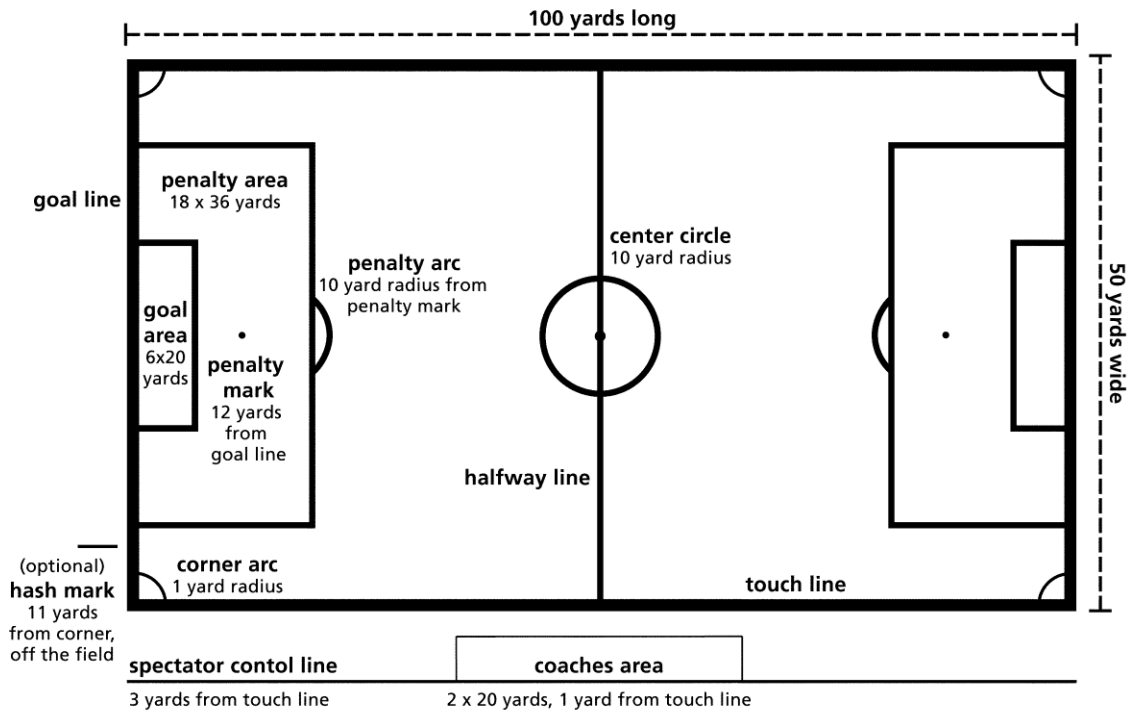
The opposing team must be at least 8 yards from the corner arc (9 yards from the corner) when the corner kick is taken in U-10 games.

**Under-12 Guidelines**

The guidelines for the AYSO Small-sided Games Program for U-12 games are as specified in the AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game and the AYSO National Rules and Regulations with the following modifications or additions:

**The Field:**

The recommended field size is 100 x 50 yards (maximum) for U-12 games with field markings as specified in the Laws of the Game. See diagram.

**The Goals:**

Official size goals (8 feet high and 8 yards wide) are used in U-12 games.

**The Ball:**

A size 4 ball is used for U-12 games.

**The Teams:**

Each U-12 team should have a maximum of 12 on the roster. Games are played with 9 players per team on the field (9v9) one of which is the goalkeeper.

**Duration of Game:**

U-12 games are 60-minutes in length and are played in two 30-thirty minute halves with substitutions allowed approximately 15 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes. With the exceptions noted above, all other elements of the Laws of the Game apply to U-12 games.



# Frequently Asked Questions

## Player Equipment

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### **Can players wear Medical Alert Bracelets?**

Children may participate in games and practices while wearing medical alert bracelets. It is important that this information remains visible. However, to ensure the bracelet does not present a danger to the player or other players it must be secured to the player with tape, a cloth wristband or something equivalent taking care to leave the information visible.

We must all recognize that if the bracelet is removed and lost or hidden in any way, the child might be put in danger, particularly if the parents are not present to ensure that the medical condition is known. We must also recognize that it is unlikely that a medical alert bracelet, when properly covered, will pose a danger to the other children who are participating. Medical alert sports bands with a snug-fitting soft, polyester ribbon band are available and should be permitted without modification.

### **May a player wear a cast or splint?**

The AYSO National Rules and Regulations paragraph VI.K. states:

“Players shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any game with any type of cast or splint.”

### **May a player remove a cast or splint in order to participate?**

The AYSO National Rules and Regulations paragraph VI.K. states:

“Removal of any type of cast or splint at the field or surrounding area in order to participate shall disqualify the player from practice or in any game.”

Removable casts are designed to facilitate personal hygiene and dressing; they are not designed to be removed so that a player may engage in contact sports.

### **Are players permitted to wear knee braces?**

AYSO The AYSO National Policy Statement 2.9 titled “Knee Braces” reads as follows:

AYSO will not prohibit the use of knee braces by players in AYSO events and programs, provided that the knee brace is adequately covered and padded in the opinion of the referee so as to eliminate the possibility of its use causing injury to other players on the field of play.

The difference between casts or splints and knee braces is that a cast or splint is used for the treatment of a temporary injury to provide for healing. The use of a knee brace is different in that it is used to provide support and/or flexibility. Knee braces are designed to allow for flexibility of movement, while conversely, a cast or splint is designed to restrict mobility.

### **Are players permitted to wear any other kind of medical devices?**

If the device is needed to restrict mobility, protect an injury or support proper alignment to expedite the healing process of a temporary injury and is hard (cast, splint, etc.) then this is not allowed. If, on the other hand, the protective device is used to provide support, flexibility or enable an otherwise healthy player to function normally such as a knee brace, prosthesis, hearing aid, insulin pump, etc. then this would be allowed provided the device was sufficiently padded to prevent injury to other players. The Laws of the Game specify that “A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player.” The referee is the sole judge of whether or not the individual item in question is permissible to wear in the game.



### **May players wear glasses?**

Players who require prescription glasses are to be allowed to wear them during practices and games. For the greatest safety, retaining straps should be worn or rubber bands may be used for this purpose. Prescription goggles, such as the type used by racquetball players, are also permitted subject to the approval of the referee prior to the start of the match. Spectacle guards made of plastic or other hard material are not permitted.

### **May players wear hearing aids?**

Players who normally wear hearing aids are also allowed to wear them during practices or games.

### **Are players permitted to wear mouthguards?**

AYSO does not prohibit the use of mouthguards. Parents are encouraged to consult their child's dentist or orthodontist to determine what, if any, mouthguard is appropriate for their child. Players wearing mouthguards should not be prevented from participating in practice or games.

### **Are players permitted to wear jewelry, earrings or studs?**

Jewelry, including earrings, of any kind worn in any visible body piercing or any hard replacement stud used when the jewelry is not being worn must be removed before the player is allowed to participate in a practice or game. Covering the jewelry or hard replacement stud with tape, padding or bandage is not sufficient; the jewelry or hard replacement stud must be removed before playing. Subject to approval of the referee, various soft, flexible materials that present no danger to the player or other players may be used to keep recent body piercings open for participation during games.

In the case of visible taped-over or bandaged suspected piercings, referees must not ask players to lift or remove articles of clothing or bandages. It is acceptable however, to ask a player if the tape or bandages is covering an earring. The referee must accept the answer provided, regardless of suspicion and if in the opinion of the referee, the item is deemed to be dangerous, the player will not be allowed to participate on that day.

Since it is rare that an earlobe or eyebrow is taped as the result of an injury, the referee should suspect that a player is using tape or other covering to hide jewelry or a hard replacement stud. It is the responsibility of the referee to ask the coach whether or not the player has been injured or is hiding jewelry or a hard replacement stud. This should be done in a cordial manner and in the presence of the player. An assistant referee or other official must also be present. Coaches have the responsibility of not allowing players wearing jewelry to participate in practices or games.

If the coach confirms that it is an injury being covered, the referee may not prohibit the player from playing because of the tape or covering. In either case, the referee must indicate in his or her game report which players and coaches were questioned and their responses.

Coaches and referees are role models and should avoid wearing jewelry, earrings and hard replacement studs during practices or games.

### **Are players permitted to wear hats for medical or religious reasons?**

The Laws of the Game specify that "A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player." The referee is the sole judge of whether or not the individual item in question is permissible to wear in the game. The referee has the obligation and the right to allow or disallow players wearing additional equipment depending upon the referee's best judgment.

Players are generally not permitted to wear hats, but items used to secure hair such as sweatbands, bandanas, scarves, etc., are sometimes permitted. Players may be allowed to wear soft hats or caps without hard brims if the weather is inclement. Goalkeepers may wear a soft brimmed hat or cap. In addition to the above requirements the brim must also be made of a soft material and must be approved by the referee. Baseball-style caps with hard brims are not acceptable even if worn backwards. These items should be a neutral color free of inappropriate design, logo or meaning. They must not constitute a danger to the player or to other players and must be approved by the referee.



Referees may allow a player to wear a hat with a soft brim and otherwise not dangerous to the player or other players if, indeed, the player is known to be unusually susceptible to skin cancer from exposure to the sun or the head garment is required by the player's religion.

**Are there any special requirements in regard to player fingernails?**

There is no official AYSO or USSF position on the length of players' fingernails. Players are not allowed to "wear" anything that is dangerous to themselves or another player. The acceptable length and shape or adornment of fingernails is up to the good judgment of the referee. In general, long or fake fingernails are not to be considered dangerous by themselves. However, the use of such as a deterrent should be sanctioned according to the severity of use.

**Are there any special requirements for soccer shoes and shinguards?**

Soccer shoes and shinguards made by any established soccer equipment manufacturer are acceptable. Other shoes are acceptable if, in the opinion of the referee, they are not dangerous to the player wearing them or to another player and the shinguards afford the player a reasonable degree of protection. A piece of cardboard, rolled up newspaper or similar makeshift items do not constitute proper shinguards. The referee must inspect all cleats to ensure there are no sharp edges; this is especially important for aluminum and nylon cleats.

Shinguards must be completely covered by the player's stockings. Players are not allowed to wear their shinguards over their stockings and then roll the stockings down over the shinguards. The shinguards must be worn completely under the stockings.

**Are toe cleats illegal on soccer shoes?**

It has been perpetuated that toe cleats are illegal in soccer. This may have developed from the fact that some players new to the game felt they should wear cleats for soccer games and showed up in baseball shoes which often have cleats on the toe. Many styles of soccer shoes are now on the market and some of them have cleat configurations that wrap across the toe. A blanket statement that toe cleats are not allowed is too narrow. The myth that metal cleats are not legal is also not uncommon. Metal cleats (usually aluminum) are acceptable, but the referee must inspect all types of cleats on shoes to ensure that there are no burrs or sharp edges and, if they exist, burrs or sharp edges must be removed before the player is allowed to participate. The referee must examine the particular footwear in question and determine if it presents any unreasonable danger to the participants.

**Are players permitted to wear sleeveless jerseys?**

Although Law 4 International Board Decision 1 states that jerseys must have sleeves, it is still the position of both USSF and AYSO that no individual or team should be kept from playing because their jerseys do not have sleeves. Since this is not a safety issue, the only action referees should take is to indicate on the game report that a team has, or players have, sleeveless jerseys. Players are also not prohibited from rolling or tying up jersey sleeves provided it is done in a safe manner.

**May players wear additional protective equipment?**

The Laws of the Game specify the following regarding Non-Basic Equipment:

- A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself/herself or another player
- Modern protective equipment such as headgear, facemasks, knee and arm protectors made of soft, lightweight, padded material are not considered to be dangerous and are therefore permitted
- New technology has made sports spectacles much safer, both for the players themselves and of other players

AYSO neither endorses nor refutes the claims of companies which produce products intended to increase player safety. It is the responsibility of the referee to examine the specific piece of equipment in question and then make a decision regarding whether or not it presents any danger to the player themselves or to other players. The referee has the obligation and right to allow or disallow players wearing the item depending upon the referee's best judgment.



Face masks similar to the type hockey goalies or football players wear are not allowed for goalkeepers or field players because they are constructed of hard material and would pose a danger to other players.

Players may be allowed to wear soft hats or caps without brims. They must not constitute a danger to the player or to other players and must be approved by the referee. Goalkeepers may wear a brimmed hat or cap. In addition to the above requirements the brim must also be made of a soft material and must be approved by the referee. Baseball-style caps with hard brims are not acceptable even if worn backwards.

**May players wear sweatbands, bandanas, scarves or other items to secure hair?**

The referee is the sole judge of whether or not such items may be worn based on the referee's assessment of the particular item and its function. Supplemental items worn for adornment are generally not permitted. Items the referee believes are not dangerous to the player or to other players and serve the purpose of hair control, perspiration absorption or to conform to religious requirements are permitted. These items should be a neutral color free of inappropriate design, logo or meaning.

**May players wear gloves?**

Goalkeepers are traditionally allowed to wear gloves. Other players may also wear gloves if, in the opinion of the referee, the equipment poses no danger.

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## **Referee Equipment**

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**What is the uniform dress code for referees?**

Although there is nothing in the Laws of the Game or the AYSO National Rules and Regulations that requires referees to wear any special uniform, the AYSO National Referee Program (NRP) strongly encourages referees and assistant referees to follow the uniform standards for match officials established by USSF. Throughout the soccer community, referees and assistant referees (ARs) are identified by their uniforms. Manufacturers may market soccer referee uniforms that do not conform to uniform standards for match officials established by USSF, but AYSO has not endorsed any referee attire other than the official uniform options recommended by USSF.

**Official USSF Referee Uniform**

- Gold jersey with black stripes, black collar, black cuffs (long sleeve) or no cuff (short sleeve); black shorts; black socks with three stripe white top; black shoes

**Official Alternate USSF Referee Jerseys**

- Black jersey with white stripes, black collar, black cuffs (long sleeve) or no cuffs (short sleeve)
- Red jersey with black stripes, black collar, black cuffs (long sleeve) or no cuffs (short sleeve)
- Blue jersey with black stripes, black collar, black cuffs (long sleeve) or no cuffs (short sleeve)
- Green jersey with black stripes, black collar, black cuffs (long sleeve) or no cuffs (short sleeve)
- The blue or green jersey may be worn when the gold, black or red jerseys will not provide a clear contrast to either team's shirt colors.

Uniformity on the part of referees establishes initial credibility for them as a team. The referee and ARs should wear shirts of similar color and style. If the referee wears an alternate jersey of a color that the ARs do not have, the ARs' jerseys, whenever possible, should match each other.

**What is the appropriate referee badge for AYSO referees?**

The only badge appropriate for referees to wear during AYSO games is the current AYSO referee certification level badge earned by the referee. Exceptions: An International Referee may wear his or her FIFA badge; and, if provided, special referee tournament badges may be worn by referees during that tournament's games.



### **Are referees permitted to wear a cast or splint while refereeing?**

The AYSO National Rules and Regulations prohibit players from participating in practices or games while wearing a cast or splint (even with a doctor's permission). However, there is no such prohibition for referees to officiate while wearing a cast or splint even if they are youth referees. The likelihood of an injury to players occurring from contact with the referee's cast or splint is very remote. Some padding on the cast may add a measure of protection.

### **May referees wear hats or sunglasses?**

Soccer referees have not historically needed to wear hats or sunglasses and AYSO referees are discouraged from doing so. Hats, in some cases, may be desired for sun-protection health reasons or if the head garment is required by the referee's religion. Use of hats on cloudy days should be avoided. Hats should not be worn for night games.

Hats, if worn, should be solid black or predominately black with white trim, or solid white or predominately white with black trim. Hats should bear no logos or slogans other than AYSO logos (traditional, promotional, regional or tournament) and National corporate apparel sponsor logos.

Sunglasses are likewise discouraged for referees as this restricts communication through eye contact with players and are generally considered unnecessary adornment.

## **Procedures**

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### **Who is responsible for the players' Player Registration Forms?**

It is the coach's responsibility to be in possession of the Player Registration Forms at all practices and games. Referees are not required, nor recommended, to ask coaches to prove that they have players' Player Registration Forms in their possession at games. Referees should not require coaches to produce the forms at matches as this would, in effect, put the referee in the position of assuming a responsibility that properly belongs with the coach.

### **Are referees required to see a "Participation Release Form" before allowing a player to participate in games following a known serious injury (example: concussion per State regulations) or sickness which required professional medical attention?**

No, this is not the referee's responsibility.

### **Are coaches required to see a "Participation Release Form" before allowing a player to participate in games following a known serious injury or sickness which required professional medical attention?**

Yes, it is the responsibility of the coach to see and provide the Regional Safety Director and/or Regional Commissioner with a copy of the "Participation Release Form" signed by a parent or guardian before allowing a player to participate in practices or games, following a known serious injury or sickness which required professional medical attention.

### **What is the recommended way to deal with player violence?**

Many possible scenarios of violence exist. The referee must assess each situation and determine appropriate action considering personal safety, player safety and game control.

The Law does not require anyone to place themselves in peril and AYSO referees should not subject themselves to undue personal risk. However, violence needs to be stopped if it erupts and referees need to assist in controlling it when it can be done without unduly risking personal safety.

Recommended procedures for referees:

- Move quickly to the location of the problem.
- Blow the whistle loudly in the vicinity of the fracas to distract the "combatants".



- Assess the risk to your personal safety by further intervention and do not attempt to intervene if you determine it is unsafe. Referees are not required to put their personal safety at risk.
- Consider intervention only if possible without undue personal risk. A referee who intervenes during player violence must:
  - Remain in a “passive role.”
  - Refrain from physically “manhandling” any players or other persons involved.
  - Endeavor to form a barrier between “combatants”.
  - Urge the coaching staffs to assist.
  - Endeavor to contain the fracas.
  - Be aware of the reactions of other players and discourage them from joining the fracas.
- Provide a detailed report of the facts of the incident in the game report for reference.

Addressing violent conduct is everyone’s job. Regional staff should be proactive in taking steps to address the issue with programs such as AYSO Safe Haven and AYSO Kids Zone.

Prompt disciplinary responses are encouraged if violence occurs during games.

**Are there any additional penalties for players who are sent off (red card) or coaches or spectators who are asked to leave the vicinity of the field because of misconduct?**

A mandatory additional one game suspension is required for any player, substitute or substituted player sent off (red card).The governing body of the competition may impose additional disciplinary action against any person (including coaches and spectators) guilty of misconduct.

The referee is required to:

*“provide the appropriate authorities with a match report, which includes information on any disciplinary action taken against players, and/or team officials and any other incidents that occurred before, during or after the match”.*

It is the governing body's responsibility to review the referee's match report and to take whatever additional action they feel appropriate.

**May players drink water during the game?**

Players are permitted to drink water during a stoppage in the play but only on the touchline; they may also do so during play on their own touchline if they don’t intervene with active play. It is not permitted to throw water containers onto the field.

**If the referee allows a coach, parent, or other responsible adult to enter the field to assess an injured player, must that player leave the field and, if so, when may the player reenter?**

Law 5 requires the referee to stop the match if, in his or her opinion, a player is seriously injured. Law 5 also requires the referee to ensure that the player leaves the field of play.

The determination of what constitutes a ‘serious injury’ should take into account the player’s age. The younger the player, the quicker the referee’s whistle to stop the game. The referee should then beckon the coach to come assess the injured player.

If the referee believes the player is only slightly injured, play should be allowed to continue until the ball is out of play. In this case the injured player is not required to leave the field of play unless someone has entered to assess the injury.

As soon as it is safe to do so, the person responsible for checking the injured player’s condition must escort the player off the field of play. This allows time for determination of the player’s ability to safely continue playing.



If a goalkeeper is injured but not being substituted, he or she may be treated on the field of play and is not required to leave. Injuries involving a goalkeeper and another player and any severe injury to a player such as a concussion, broken leg, swallowed tongue, etc., may also be treated on the field of play.

Before an injured player may return to the field of play, the match must have restarted and the referee signaled permission for the player to return. If the ball is in play, entry must be from a touch line; if the ball is not in play entry may be from a goal line or a touch line.

It is important that the referee and the assistant referees remain alert as to when the player is ready to return and give permission by the referee at the earliest opportunity so that the player's team is returned to full strength.

### **What procedure should be followed regarding electrical storms?**

#### **Thunder and Lightning Storms**

A lightning safety plan should be an integral part of the planning process for any outdoor event. Do not wait for storm clouds to develop before considering what to do should lightning threaten! An effective plan begins LONG before any lightning threat is realized.

The key to an effective lightning safety action plan lies in answers to the following questions:

1. Where is the safest lightning shelter?
2. How far is the group from that location?
3. How long will it take to get the group there?

Knowing the answers to these questions and formulating a plan of action accordingly will likely reduce the chances of anyone being struck by lightning.

\*If a Region has frequent thunderstorms, that Region should consider posting a safety policy on the Region's Website, discussing it in AYSO Safe Haven® courses, emphasizing at all coach, referee and team parent orientation meetings and putting it in the Region Handbook distributed to participating families.

\*In tournament play or other special events, if there is a possibility of thunder and lightning storms, a pre-event meeting to discuss guidelines, safety procedures, duties and responsibilities of all event staff and participants should be conducted. A communication plan should also be considered so this information can be given to all participants and volunteers in order to execute emergency planning procedures.

\*Event officials will consult and determine the course of action – give the “all clear” sign for games to resume, cancel the balance of ongoing games or cancel games for the day. Event administrators, Regional Commissioners or their designees, including Coach Administrator, Referee Administrator or Referees, should have the authority, as so designated, to delay the start of play, call a halt in play or suspend/terminate a game due to severe weather conditions.

Most people are struck by lightning before and after storms have peaked, not at the height of a thunderstorm. Lightning often strikes miles from the area of rain. Please be aware of how far lightning can strike from its originating thunderstorm.

#### **Recognizing the Danger – And Knowing What to Do**

Many communities and parks systems have lightning detection and tornado warning systems in place. Obey the rules established at these facilities. When storm warning systems indicate severe weather danger, usually by siren, cease all field activities and seek shelter immediately.

Ø  Know how to use the warning systems in place and heed all warnings even if you are told there is a possibility of a false alarm.





Ø☐ When thunder is heard, it is within striking distance. Seek shelter immediately. Do not wait for the rain to start before seeking shelter, and do not leave shelter just because the rain has ended. Enact the safety plan now!

Restart games after no thunder has been heard for 30 minutes, or if there is a warning system in place, the community ALL CLEAR SIREN has been sounded

**Why doesn't AYSO teach or approve of referees using the Dual Referee System?**

The AYSO National Referee Program does not support the dual referee system. We have no approved instruction or supporting materials regarding the dual system. Referees using this system are in violation of the FIFA Laws of the Game.

The Laws of the Game, under which we operate, specify in Law 5 that, "Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the match to which he has been appointed". FIFA Law (Law 5) clearly designate one referee "controls the match in co-operation with the assistant referees..." and Law 6 further specifies that, "Two assistant referees are appointed..." One referee with a whistle and two assistant referees with flags is the way it should be done.

The reality of life in AYSO is that we often do not have enough trained and qualified referees to have a referee with two assistant referees "on the line" for all the games. Nevertheless, it is still far better, when only two qualified referees are available for a game, to assign one as the referee and the other as a qualified assistant referee for one side of the field and, if possible, recruit an additional "club linesman" for the other side. If no "club linesman" is available the referee should assume the duties of the one missing Assistant Referee. This will make the best of the situation and provide opportunities for practice doing it right and to possibly recruit a new referee candidate.

Using the dual system (two referees on the field each with a whistle) actually develops poor officiating habits as the two referees attempt the impossible task of remaining close to play and at the same time being in position to accurately call offside infractions. There is also a tendency in the dual referee system for the two referees to hesitate in making decisions while they attempt to see if the other referee is going to make the call or worse they both make the call and signal in opposite directions. The end result of this hesitancy and reluctance to want everyone to know they do not agree with each other is that calls are not made consistently. The dual referee system usually ends up looking like two assistant referees remaining near the touch line just calling the ball in and out of play and most times, no one covering play in the middle of the field.

As the late Ken Aston often said, "The responsibility for the flow and control of the game cannot be shared". One whistle, one interpretation, one opinion, one decision.

**Does AYSO require additional penalties for players who receive cautions (yellow cards) in a series of games?**

FIFA Law requires that players receiving a second caution (yellow card) in the same game be sent off (red card). Many AYSO Regions, Areas, Sections and tournaments institute procedures, established and published in advance, whereby additional disciplinary action may be taken against players receiving a specified number of cautions (yellow cards) in a series of games. Oftentimes a minimum additional one game suspension may be imposed for an accumulation of yellow cards.

**Does AYSO allow service animals at its fields?**

AYSO is obligated to observe and respect existing regulations and laws regarding the presence of service animals at our fields. Service animals are defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as only dogs or miniature horses that have been trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability. Other animals, whether wild or domestic, do not qualify as service animals.



AYSO officials may not request or inspect paperwork certifying the status of a service animal, but may ask two questions of the handler: Is the dog or pony a service animal which is required because of a disability, and what work or task has the animal been trained to perform? No inquiry about the nature of the disability is allowed.

The handler can be asked to remove the animal from the field if it is out of control and the handler does not take effective action to control it.

## Miscellaneous

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### **May Regions adopt local playing rules outside of FIFA and AYSO rules?**

The very first line of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations states, "All AYSO games shall be conducted in accordance with the current FIFA Laws of the Game and decisions of the International Board..." The bulk of the remaining content of the AYSO National Rules and Regulations clarifies the kind of specific exceptions which are permitted. In the beginning of the FIFA Laws of the Game under "Modifications" it states, "Subject to the agreement of the national association concerned and provided the principles of these Laws are maintained, the Laws may be modified in their application..." and then specifies the kinds of modifications that are permissible. These statements endeavor to make it clear how AYSO games should be played and who, how and to what extent the Laws may be modified.

Making a local rule in the presumed interest of player safety may appear well intentioned on the surface but careful consideration must be given to the overall effect of the rule and whether or not it is permissible or, in fact, beneficial. Accidents happen in soccer and if we tried to make a rule to prevent all of them we would be overrun with rules that don't make sense. Running, jumping, kicking, heading, dribbling, tackling, shooting, and goalkeeper efforts to prevent goals all have potential to cause injury. Soccer is a contact sport and injuries are possible. It is impossible to avoid. Players and parents must recognize there is risk involved in playing sports. Reading the waiver carefully on the player registration form, which all parents are required to read and sign, makes this point very clearly.

It is the job of coaches to teach players correct technique to help them avoid injury to themselves and to others. It is the job of referees to learn to recognize when skills are executed correctly or not. Players should develop, coaches should teach and referees should learn to recognize the skills that are a part of the game of soccer. When we make a local rule that takes away one or more of the skills used in playing the game this lessens the opportunities for players to learn to execute the skill correctly, coaches to teach the skill and referees to recognize the skill performed legally. An argument could be made that such local rules actually may cause more injuries than they prevent because coaches will be discouraged from teaching correct techniques to the players since there is a local rule prohibiting the skill.

### **Does AYSO have special rules for playing Indoor Soccer?**

AYSO does not have any formalized recommendations regarding rules for indoor soccer. The primary reason for this is the tremendous variation in types, sizes and conditions of the facilities available in the 1000+ AYSO Regions across the country. Some Regions have access to indoor facilities specifically designed for indoor soccer whereas others must use gymnasiums of various sizes and configurations. Some Regions allow playing the ball off dasher boards or walls and some would rather not allow this and prefer to play using touch lines and goal lines as outer boundaries like outdoor soccer.

FIFA has published rules for Indoor Football (soccer) called "Five a Side Football" which are very similar to the rules (Laws of the Game) for outdoor soccer. Their web site is [www.FIFA.com](http://www.FIFA.com). The United States Soccer Federation (USSF) has published some information regarding suggested rules for indoor soccer and techniques for training referees to do indoor games. Their web site is [www.ussoccer.com](http://www.ussoccer.com).



**Does AYSO have any “Mercy Rules”, “Slaughter Rules” or “Blow Out Rules”?**

There are no such rules in AYSO to deal with games where one team is dominating the scoring. In any competition, there is the chance that the score will be lopsided. We believe such things as “Blowout Rules”, “Mercy Rules”, “Slaughter Rules”, etc., that end a game prematurely or “play short” rules that requiring the winning team to play with fewer than the allowable number of players or rules that require teams to somehow stop scoring goals only penalizes a team for accomplishing what it has been trained to accomplish (score goals) and sends the wrong message to the losing team.

A major part of sport is enjoying the process of playing by the players - not just who ultimately wins. The message we want to send is "keep on trying" - not to give up just because it is difficult. Losing, when dealt with appropriately, builds character and resolve to improve. Mercy Rules, play short rules or similar such rules potentially build a willingness to give up early or to want rules in place to give teams an unfair advantage just because they are losing.

Each team is entitled to start and play the game with the maximum number of players allowable. Nowhere in the Laws of the Game or in the AYSO National Coaching or Refereeing Program is it suggested or required to have a winning team play with fewer players than the losing team or for the game to end early or similar rules because the score is lopsided. The AYSO “Balanced Team” concept refers to making an honest attempt to balance the skill level of teams within an age group when teams are formed prior to the beginning of the season.

In situations where one or both teams are short a significant number of players, a “friendly match” could be organized by combining/sharing players from one or both teams. Where won/loss standings are recorded, the outcome of the “friendly match” would not affect the standings. It should be predetermined and agreed upon in advance how the official outcome of the regularly scheduled game is to be recorded. Regions should not adopt local rules and referees should not interfere with games because of lopsided scores. It is a player's game and they should be given the full playing time without undue interference to enjoy and learn from the process.

**May Regions elect to pay their referees?**

National Policy Statement 2.5 (Region Boards) addresses payment for services:

AYSO remains committed to the belief that volunteers deliver a high quality experience for their participants. Due to a scarcity of volunteers in many communities, the NBOD modified AYSO National Policy Statement 2.5 allowing AYSO Entities (Sections/Areas/Region) some flexibility in paying for services so high standards of program delivery are maintained.

These Directives and Procedures were developed by the AYSO National Office at the request of the AYSO National Board of Directors (NBOD) to assist Regions, Areas or Sections (individually, an “AYSO Entity”, collectively, “AYSO Entities”) to comply with Federal and State laws regarding payment for services, including some services traditionally provided by AYSO volunteers. These Directives and Procedures, and the underlying policy, do not apply to a transaction with an individual or a vendor to provide facilities, products, materials or other commodities. They apply largely to situations where an individual person, a company or an association, operating in their normal business capacity, is paid for providing a service of some kind to an AYSO Entity in the operation of the AYSO community program

When paying an individual or an entity for services, care must be taken to ensure that an AYSO Entity's practices are in compliance with local, state and federal tax, employment and compensation laws. Compliance is more likely to be achieved when a true, independent contractor relationship is established. Failure to do so could expose the AYSO organization as a whole AND THE INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBERS WHO CONDONED OR OTHERWISE APPROVED SUCH PRACTICES to liability claims and significant monetary penalties. Additionally, AYSO entities must use appropriate good business procedures, to include competitive bidding and approval of all arrangements by the AYSO Entity's governing board, so as to remove any impression of self-dealing or conflict of interest. Regions that pay for services must comply with AYSO's own IRS 1099 Reporting Policy to ensure that proper tax notification is filed. Lastly, no practice should be employed that violates any of AYSO's guiding principles or shows blatant disrespect for those who do volunteer.



There are alternate ways referees can be recognized. Regions often provide their referees with uniforms, referee bags, warm-ups, free food and drinks from the concession stand and other incentives to show their appreciation. Additionally, we have a publication called "Recruiting and Retaining Referees" which contains useful information regarding developing volunteer referees.

AYSO has what has been referred to as the best amateur referee training program in the world. Recruiting volunteer referees may not be easy but it is successfully done in AYSO Regions all across the country.

Research has shown that there is no correlation between paying referees and quality or quantity. It has been our experience that individuals motivated to referee because they want to help the kids or the program, rather than to make money, produces a quality referee. With a strong recruiting, training, and retaining program, Regions across the country are able to maintain a sufficient volunteer base to operate their programs.

### **Are coaches and referees required to be certified in AYSO?**

In AYSO, all referees and coaches are required to be trained and certified. AYSO requires all its volunteers to complete, sign and submit a Volunteer Application form each year and to act within their job descriptions and the scope of AYSO Policies, Procedures and Guidelines.

For the benefit of our children and volunteers, AYSO further requires that all coaches and referees and certain other volunteers:

- Complete AYSO Safe Haven certification;
- Complete CDC Concussion training per State regulations;
- Be properly trained in their jobs; and
- Be authorized to do their job (by Region, Area or other AYSO authority).

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 was passed by Congress to protect volunteerism. This law grants immunity from liability for damages for volunteers who meet its requirements."

Regions should ensure that all volunteer coaches and referees annually submit a volunteer or youth volunteer application form to the Child and Volunteer Protection Advocate (CVPA). The CVPA should then determine whether or not the volunteer should be recommended to the Regional Board of Directors for approval and appointment as a Regional volunteer for that year. Before these volunteer coaches and referees are allowed to perform their jobs, Regions should first ensure that they have attended the Safe Haven Certification Course, they are properly trained in their jobs and are authorized to do their jobs by the Regional board. These requirements are clearly stated in various AYSO documents.

When individuals are asked to perform the duties of coach or referee without first undergoing these requirements, this is contrary to AYSO policy and, more importantly, does not provide the minimum level of protection for either the volunteer or the children for whom we are responsible.

### **May a game or practice proceed in the absence of an AYSO certified and trained coach or referee?**

In AYSO, all referees and coaches are required to be currently registered, trained and certified. AYSO practices and games are not permitted without a certified and trained AYSO coach. AYSO scheduled games are not permitted without a certified and trained AYSO referee, except: in U-5 divisions in which referees are not used; in U-6 divisions in which referees/officials are optional and, if not used, certified and trained AYSO coaches will manage the game; and during certain events involving non-AYSO teams in which competition rules will apply. Practice scrimmages do not require a certified and trained AYSO referee.

### **Is there a minimum age requirement to be an AYSO instructor?**

The minimum age for AYSO instructors is 18.



**Are there any minimum age requirements for referees to referee in the various age groups?**

AYSO certified U-8 Officials are only authorized to referee games with players under the age of 8. The minimum age for this level is 10 years old. Higher certification levels have different age limitations. Consult the National Referee Program manual for specific details.

As a general guideline, it is usually a good idea for the referee to be older than the players he or she is refereeing. However, there are some exceptional young referees who can manage games with player older than they are. A general rule of thumb has been suggested that the referee should be at least 2 years older than the players they are refereeing but this is just a suggestion and not a requirement.

It is also expected that reasonable and experienced adults are either scheduled to work with youth referees in games or that they are nearby watching the young referee and available to assist in cases where adult intervention may be needed. There is a delicate balance between allowing a youth referee the freedom and independence to perform the referee's duties and knowing when a youth referee may need a responsible adult to step forward and provide assistance.

**What are referees authorized to do when subjected to abusive or negative comments from spectators or coaches?**

The Laws of the Game, AYSO National Rules and Regulations and the AYSO Kids Zone Program make it clear that the referee has the authority and should take action to deal with inappropriate spectator or coach behavior. Exactly what to do in these situations or how it should be done is left to the judgment of the referee. Referees should request the assistance of coaches when dealing with inappropriate spectator behavior but ultimately it is the referee who is responsible and must take action. Referees may require spectators or coaches to improve their behavior and may request they leave the area or even suspend or terminate the game if the individual is unwilling to comply. Interpersonal skills and common sense are the referee's tools to accomplish the task.

**What happens when a match is abandoned?**

According to the Laws of the Game "An abandoned match is replayed (completely) unless the competition rules provide otherwise". Referees should not declare who the winner is when a match is abandoned. The referee simply records the circumstances surrounding the reason the match was abandoned and it is then up to the governing body to determine the appropriate action according to the competition rules.

**Is a female player allowed to use her hands to protect her chest?**

All players (male and female) may PROTECT themselves from being hit by the ball by using their hand or hands. This may happen unexpectedly during play or from a free kick when they are positioned as defensive players in a wall (commonly seen at upper levels of play). Self defense is not a foul; however, DELIBERATE use of the hands to CONTROL the ball or otherwise alter its path, is a foul.

Referees are charged with determining whether or not the contact of ball and hand was deliberate to control the ball or self protection. Coaches should not be teaching players to use their hands to control the ball unless they are goalkeepers or to take a throw-in. Female players who use their hands or arms to CONTROL a ball which is about to hit them in the chest are guilty of deliberately handling the ball. The same would be true for male players who used their hands or arms to CONTROL a ball which was about to hit them in the groin area.

**Is there an official minimum number of players needed per team for short sided games to proceed in AYSO?**

The short answer is: there is no AYSO official minimum number of players needed for short sided games to proceed in AYSO. The longer answer depends upon the circumstances and common sense.



When one of the teams does not have the minimum number of players recommended per side for short sided play in AYSO, every effort should be made to allow the game to proceed and for the players in attendance to have the maximum amount of playing time possible. If win/loss standings are important for determining division winners, tournament standings, who gets trophies, etc., then the official rules established for the competition should be followed (forfeit, reschedule game or whatever the rules state). More importantly, once the decision is made regarding the “official” outcome, the question is, “Is there a way to let the kids play anyway?” Of course there is, and that is when a “friendly” game is in order.

A “friendly” game is one where the outcome has no bearing on standing, trophies, etc. but is played simply for the enjoyment of playing – similar to a scrimmage between two teams during practice. When one team is short players, players from the opposing team can be shared or players from both teams can be divided into two new teams and a “friendly” game can proceed. The coaches are there with the medical release forms if needed, the referees are ready, the field is ready, the spectators are ready and the players want to play, so... let 'em PLAY!

**When are substitutions allowed in AYSO U-16 and U-19 games where Monitored (free) Substitution is being used rather than the normal AYSO substitution at “quarters”?**

Monitored Substitution is allowed in AYSO U-16 and U-19 age divisions *“...only if it is handled in a manner which will ensure that every participant plays at least one half of every game by requiring a separate time monitor, independent of either team or coach, who checks each player in or out of the game.”*

Where Monitored Substitution is being used in AYSO U-16 and U-19 games, substitutions will be permitted with the referee’s permission during any stoppage in play as specified in the FIFA Laws of the Game, Law 3 (The Number of Players) as well as in the section titled “Interpretation of the Laws of the Game and Guidelines for Referees”. Substitution rules used in High School, College or other soccer organizations do not apply to AYSO games. The substitution procedures used in games played according to the FIFA Laws of the Game will be in effect. Namely, when a substitution is requested (the assistant referee signals a substitution has been requested), the referee will determine when there is an appropriate stoppage in play and will then allow the substitution to occur as outlined by the Laws of the Game.

Stoppages in play include the eight identified restarts plus other stoppages where, in the opinion of the referee, the substitution will not unfairly interfere with play, e.g., injury stoppages, outside agent stoppages, stoppages to administer misconduct sanctions and free kicks where the team taking the kick has not elected to take a quick kick. Referees should be aware of substitution frequency to ensure that time wasting tactics are not being used.



