

Nashua Youth Soccer League Playing Rules

All US Soccer [playing rules](#) will apply with the following exceptions:

1. The Field of Play

Divisions below U14 play on short fields that are lined in yellow or blue. Short fields may not have separately lined goal and penalty areas.

2. The Ball

The following table specifies the ball sizes to be used in NYSL divisions.

Division	Ball Size
U-19, U-16, U-14	Size 5
U-12, U-10, U-8	Size 4
U-7, U-6	Size 3

3. The Number of Players

The following table specifies the minimum and maximum number of players allowed on the field of play in NYSL divisions. Non-competitive divisions, U8 and lower, must play with the same number of players on each side.

The last column specifies the maximum number of players allowed on a team.

Division	Minimum Players	Maximum Players	Maximum Players per Team
U19, U14	7	11	18
U12	6	9	16
U10 (7v7)	5	7	13
U8	4	6	15
U7	3	5	15
U6	3	5	15

All players must be registered by the NYSL registrar and placed on a team by the division director before the player is eligible to play in a game. The maximum players allowed on the field can be exceeded by one player if the mercy rule is applied.

Substitutions

U14/U19 divisions follow US Youth Soccer substitution rules, with the following constraint:

- For co-ed play, if there are substitutes, teams must follow the one+ rule. This means no more than 1 additional player of either sex may be waiting on the side line to play. For example, if a team has three substitutes, 2 girls and 1 boy can be waiting, or 2 boys and 1 girl, but not 3 boys or 3 girls.
- In divisions below U14, substitutions are permitted between periods only, except in the case of injury. If a player is injured during game play, the referee will stop the game. If the player is attended to on the field by the coach or designate, the player must leave the field for the current quarter.
 - In the U10 division, the coach is allowed to enter the field to assess the player without requiring the player to leave the game for the remainder of the quarter.
- If the injured player cannot continue or the player has been attended to by the coach or designate, the referee will waive in a substitute player. The player is not allowed to be substituted back in for the current quarter. The player will be allowed to play in the following quarter if they are able, if the injury is not a head injury,
- In all divisions, if the injury is head related, the player will not be allowed to play for the remainder of the game.

Division Specific Rules

U6/U7

FIFA requires a goalkeeper. Instructional divisions U6 and U7 may choose not to play with a goalkeeper provided both coaches agree before the start of the game.

U10

U-10 plays 7v7 format. Teams must have 5 players at the start of the game to avoid a forfeit. Coaches may field 5, 6 or 7 players during a quarter. Teams do not have to play even. Coaches should field players to maximize playing time for all players, while ensuring parity between the teams to avoid lopsided scores. In a 7v7 game, the mercy rule would allow the losing team to field an 8th player.

U14/U19

These divisions may play 8v8 games depending on the number of players assigned to the teams by the division director at the start of the season. This rule was put in place to allow these divisions to have 4 teams when there are not enough players in the division for full 11v11 games. If the division is designated as 8v8 at the start of the season, all

games will be 8v8 by default, unless both coaches agree prior to the start of the game to have a full 11v11 match.

These divisions will follow FIFA player substitution rules. Players must be at the center line to substitute and only enter the field when requested by the center referee. Players must enter and exit the field from the center line.

4. The Players' Equipment

Eyeglasses: Require a retainer. No exceptions.

Mouth guards: Required for all players with dental braces. No exceptions. Mouth guards are strongly recommended for all players U12 and higher.

Shirt and Socks: NYSL Uniform (shirt and socks) must be worn. Socks must fully cover the player's shin guards. Shirts must be tucked in.

Shorts: Soccer shorts or sweat pants are required. Players may not play in jeans or other types of pants that have pockets, chains, or loops.

Shoes: Soccer cleats or sneakers are allowed. Baseball style cleats that have a toe cleat or metal are not allowed.

Medical/Religious bracelets: These can be worn but they must be taped down.

Prohibited: Dangerous items, including belts, jewelry (of all kinds except as noted below), watches, suspenders, pins, clips and earrings. No hard casts made of plaster, fiberglass, or other inflexible materials of any kind are allowed. (No exceptions.) Soft casts are allowed with the permission of the director of referees or their designate. Knee braces must have sharp or hard edges covered and padded splints must be wrapped and taped to at least one adjacent finger. (See General Rule 11.4 for complete rule regarding attire).

Allowed: Visor-less soft caps (ski hats) for players. Goalkeepers may wear a soft billed baseball type cap, knit gloves/mittens (no metal clips). Sweat shirts must be worn under the uniform with hoods tucked in.

Jewelry exceptions: Religious medals may be worn if they are under the uniform and taped down. Medical bracelets are allowed but they must be taped down in a way that would prevent another player from catching a finger on the bracelet.

5. The Referee

The top priority of the referee during the game is player safety. NYSL referees should read and adhere to the NYSL referee handbook. The handbook is available in the officials area of the NYSL web site.

6. The Assistant Referee

The assistant referee should read and adhere to the NYSL referee handbook. The handbook is available in the officials area of the NYSL web site.

7. The Duration of the Match

Regular Season Play

All matches U8 and higher will consist of four (4) periods. There will be a two (2) minute interval between periods and five (5) minutes at half-time. Teams will change ends at half-time.

The following table specifies the time of each period for a division. The referee may shorten the time of a period at their discretion with the agreement of both coaches.

Division	Time (minutes)
U19, U14	Two 30 minute halves
U-12	Four 15 minute quarters
U-10	Four 12 minute quarters
U-8	Four 10 minute quarters

The U6/U7 divisions rotate players during the game period at the coach's discretion.

Post Season Play

Goal differential must not be used to determine team standings for playoff positioning. NYSL does not condone running up the score in any match.

When playoff games are tied after regulation time has expired, divisions U-14 and higher will play two (2) ten (10) minute periods to completion (No golden goal).

The U-10/U-12 divisions will play two (2) five (5) minute periods to completion.

If the score is still tied after the overtime periods, FIFA rules will be followed for kicks from the mark.

Playoff Brackets

Playoff brackets are structured to maximize the number of teams participating in the playoffs. Playoffs will be the last two weeks of the season. Exceptions require approval of the NYSL executive committee.

# Of Teams	Playoff Brackets
4	Week 1 1v4, 2v3 w1 v w2, Week 2: l1 v l2

6	Playoffs are 25 minute games, 2 12.5 minute halves. Week 1: 1v2 (full game, bye) 3v6, 2v5 Week 2: 1 v w2 2 v w1, l2 v l3 (full game) w3 v w4, l3 v l4,
8	Two brackets of 4 teams based on division standings
12	Three brackets of 4 teams based on division standings
14	Top 8 teams use 4 team brackets, remaining teams use 6 team bracket
16	Four brackets of 4 teams based on division standings

Promptness

Matches are started as scheduled. The scheduled start time is the kickoff time. Teams that do not have the minimum number of players ten (10) minutes after the scheduled start time will forfeit. Referees are directed to start matches on time regardless of the fact that a team is missing players (See rule 11.17 in the NYSL General Rules). Non-Competitive divisions, U8 and lower, may borrow players from the opposing team in order for the game to be played. Players borrowed must use the color of the team they are playing on.

Playing Time

All players who are not being disciplined must play at least two (2) periods. All players must play three (3) periods before any player may play four (4) periods. Exceptions must be made known and have the agreement of the Division Director prior to the start of the match.

The following table shows the number of quarters a player will be on the field to conform to this rule, based on the number of players at the game.

Number of Players at Game	Player Playing Time		
	2 quarters	3 quarters	4 quarters

U10 Division (7 players on Field)			
7			7
8		4	4
9		8	1
10	2	8	
11	5	6	
12	8	4	
13	11	2	
14	14		

U12 Division (8 players on Field)			
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8			8
9		4	5
10		8	2
11	1	10	
12	4	8	
13	7	6	
14	10	4	
15	13	2	

U12 Division (9 players on Field)			
9			9
10		4	6
11		8	3
12		12	
13	3	10	
14	6	8	
15	9	6	

In playoff games, all players must play in at least one of the two overtime periods.

Weather

The Referee may allow free substitutions (USYSA Guidelines) during excessively hot weather. The Referee may shorten periods due to weather conditions with the agreement of both coaches.

The referee will suspend the match for lightning and/or thunder and may suspend for weather and/or if field conditions are deemed unsafe. In both regular season and post-season play, if the first half is completed then the match is official. If the first half is not completed, then the match will be replayed in its entirety. In post-season play, if the score is tied when a match is suspended, and is rescheduled, the match will be replayed in its entirety.

Terminated Matches

The referee may terminate a match due to problems with players, coaches, and/or spectators. The league will determine the results of the match and any sanctions to be imposed.

8 The Start and Restart of Play

The Kick-off

Possession of the ball for kick-off at the start of a period will alternate between the teams at the halfway point in the game.

The Penalty Kick

The U12 division must be a minimum of 8 yards from the penalty mark until the ball is in play during a penalty kick.

For U10 and lower divisions, all players other than the goal keeper and the player taking the kick must be on the opposite side of the halfway line from where the kick is taken until the ball is in play. The penalty shot is taken from the blue line.

Restarts from the Penalty Area

For divisions U10 and lower, balls that are cleared by the goalkeeper on his/her throw or punt, goal kick or any free kick (direct or indirect) by a defensive player from within the penalty area must first touch the field or **any** player before crossing the midfield line. For an infraction of this rule, the opposing team will be awarded an indirect free kick where the ball crossed the halfway line.

For U12, any kick from the penalty area must touch the ground or a player before crossing into the opposing penalty area; otherwise the opposing team will receive an indirect free kick where the ball crossed into the penalty area.

9 Ball In and Out of Play

All FIFA rules apply in this section.

10 The Method of Scoring

All FIFA rules apply in this section.

11 Offside

Divisions U10 and lower do not enforce Offside.

12 Fouls and Misconduct

Slide tackles:

Slide tackles are not allowed in divisions U10 and lower. The referee will treat the slide tackle as a dangerous play. The opponent will be awarded an indirect free kick from the point of the foul.

Heading the ball:

Intentionally heading or attempting to head the ball is not allowed in divisions U12 and lower. The referee will treat heading the ball as a dangerous play. The opponent will be awarded an indirect free kick from the point of the foul.

Ejections: Any player *sent off* (red card) shall not be eligible for the next scheduled match. A deliberate, serious foul, or any violent conduct by a player may result in additional sanctions by the league.

Cautions: Any player receiving a third caution (yellow card) in one season will be automatically suspended from his/her next scheduled game.

Appeal Process: Game suspensions may be appealed using the following process.

The coach must write to the division director explaining why the game suspension is not warranted. If the division director agrees, the division director must send the justification, along with any additional feedback, to the NYSL chair and the head referee. If both the chair and the head referee agree that the game suspension should not be enforced, the division director must notify the coaches in the division to explain the decision before the next scheduled game.

13 Free Kicks

Defensive player distance from the ball at the time of the kick

Field Size	Distance (yards)
Full size (U-19, U16, U14)	10
Short fields (U12 and lower)	8

14 The Penalty Kick

Penalty kick ball placement

Field Size	Location
Full size (U-19, U16, U14)	The penalty mark is 12 yards from the middle of the goal line.
Short fields (U12 and lower)	The penalty mark is 10 yards from the middle of the goal line.

15 The Throw-In

For divisions U10 and lower, the player may be given a second opportunity to perform a proper throw-in. This is at the discretion of the referee, but must be done consistently for the entire match.

16 The Goal Kick

Placement of the ball during goal kicks

Division	Location
U-19, U16, U14, U12	Anywhere within the goal area
U10 and lower	Anywhere within the penalty area

The ball must go out of the penalty area before it is in play. If another player touches the ball before it leaves the penalty area, the goal kick is retaken.

17 The Corner Kick

Defensive player distance from the corner arc at the time of the kick

If the corner arc is not present on the field, distances specified are from the ball.

Field Size	Distance (yards)
Full size (U-19, U16, U14)	10
Short fields (U12 and lower)	8

18 Coaches Responsibilities

The coach should ensure that spectators are on the proper side of the touch line prior to the start of play. This is the side of the field opposite from the coaches and the players.

Coaches are required to remain within their technical areas during the match. If a technical area is not explicitly marked on the field, it is defined as 10 yards from the spot where team members have placed their gear. This must be at least 2 yards back from the touch line. Coaches should not enter the field of play without the Referee's permission. Coaches should never encroach on the other team's half of the field.

If a player is injured during game play, the coach must fill out an injury report. See article 10.11 in the NYSL bylaws.

Coaches must bring player registration forms and a first aid kit to the games. If contents of the NYSL supplied first aid kit are depleted, replacements should be requested from the division director.

Coaches are encouraged to rotate players to different positions, especially in the instructional divisions. We are attempting to create well-rounded players that have experience in a variety of positions. It may seem counter-intuitive to put a player in offense that is not aggressive; however, players develop inconsistently and at different rates. A player that shows little interest now in playing forward may well develop the skill necessary, such as playing with their back to the goal, looking for pass-threading opportunities - in short, playing in those positions that force them to develop those skills. Even when those players don't go into those positions later, they play significantly better because they know what a player in that position is expecting.

Coaches shall follow the rules of article 10.11 of the NYSL bylaws.

Dissent Rule

The majority of NYSL referees have 2 years of experience or less. Coaches should expect some missed or incorrect calls to happen during the course of the game. It is not acceptable to confront or challenge a referee during the game when the coach feels the referee missed a call or made an incorrect call. Any questions should be directed to the senior referees who are at the game location. If a coach has a player safety concern, a member from the team who is waiting to play should be sent to find the senior referee who is mentoring at the location.

The director of referees for the NYSL is provided with written reports of referee progress from the senior officials at the field each week. Part of this report covers coach conduct. Coaches who verbally confront or challenge a referee's calls during the game, at the discretion of the director of referees and the chair, may be taken to the discipline committee. The director of referees and the chair may also impose a 3 point penalty on the coach's team per violation (this is equivalent to taking away one win), which can impact a team's standings for the playoffs.

Mercy Rule

The NYSL is using a 5-goal up mercy rule. The goal of this rule is to try to balance the teams when one team is much stronger than the other by adding an additional player to the field of play on the losing team.

If a team hits a goal differential of 5 goals over their opponent, the following rule automatically goes into effect. Coaches do not have the option to waive the application of this rule:

- The winning team must remove a player from the field of play if the losing team does not have a player on the sideline to add.
- In games where the losing team has a player available on the sideline, the losing team will add a player.

If the goal differential is reduced to 3 goals after the mercy rule has been put into effect, the player counts return to what they were before the rule was applied.

Once a team reaches a 4-goal differential, coaches should employ some or all of the following tactics to prevent the mercy rule from being applied:

- Put the weakest scorers up front (use this as an opportunity to let them be forwards).
- Try someone new in goal or at fullback
- Pull a player off the field and play short at the next quarter. If it is still a mismatch, pull off another player at the subsequent quarter.
- Ask the players to complete 5 (or more) consecutive passes before shooting.
- Ask the player to only take shots from outside the Penalty Box (i.e., practice chip shots, lofted shots at the top of the goal mouth, or power shots).
- Tell the players that ONLY a certain player will be allowed to shoot on goal.

Division directors will monitor reported scores and coaches will be contacted for explanations if an extremely lop sided score is recorded. When the coach involved is the division director, the coach will be asked to explain the lopsided score to the NYSL Chair.

Game Reporting

The coach will indicate, on the score sheet, the names and numbers of all players attending the game and the quarters in which they have played. Coaches will deliver referee signed game sheets to the divisional director or his/her representative on the day of the game. The referee's signature indicates only the accuracy of the score. Players may be held out of play for disciplinary action provided that this action is noted on the score sheet, and that prior notification is given to the Division Director.

19. Protests

The NYSL is a recreational league that wants the spirit of the laws to prevail. Referees are expected to officiate the game to the age of the participants. Learning the laws is part of player development. Protests concerning judgment decisions by referees will not be permitted. The reasons listed below will be considered:

- Non-roster players participating in game
- Intentional falsification of score sheet
- Eligible players not receiving mandated playing time
- Any unique occurrence that may warrant the attention of the operating committee.

The above is a summary of the playing rules and supersedes all previous editions.