



# **U9 Small Sided Competition Guidelines**

**Age and developmentally appropriate lacrosse  
competition for boys playing in the  
U9 Age Classification**

# Our Vision

We envision a future that offers people everywhere the opportunity to discover, learn, participate in, enjoy, and ultimately embrace the shared passion of the lacrosse experience.

## About Athlete Development

It is our sincere hope that by providing these competition guidelines to lacrosse coaches, parents, and program administrators, players across the country will have an opportunity to learn lacrosse in a way that is physically, cognitively, emotionally, and socially appropriate.

We believe that this increases both the learning and fun for young athletes. When kids are having fun, they are learning and when they learn they improve.

Age appropriate competitions will help young athletes reach their full potential, because they will...

**Learn Lacrosse Better**

**Love Lacrosse More**

**Stay in Lacrosse Longer**

# Philosophy of U9 Lacrosse

U9 lacrosse is many young athletes first experience with the sport of lacrosse. The children entering at this point have a vast difference in their physical and cognitive developments and the game they play should be designed to “level the playing field” providing opportunity for any and every child that wants to develop the fundamental technical skills for playing lacrosse. The emphasis at this age group is on instilling a love and excitement of playing, while developing the fundamental athletic skills that will be valuable in any future athletic endeavors.

Careful planning must be used to ensure that the environment is inclusive of all athletes, provides multiple opportunities for each athlete to “touch” the ball, encourages experimentation, and is a place that the athlete will want to come back to again and again.

With respect to the competition at this level, coaches, parents, and officials should emphasize:

- FUN
- Introduce basic lacrosse concepts
- Explore competition in lacrosse
- Basic rules of play
- Good sportsmanship

## Age and Eligibility

**Player must be 8 years old or younger on August 31 of the year preceding competition.**

It is recommended that when multiple teams exist within a program, teams should consider the physical size, skill, and maturity level when selecting teams. At no time should players younger than 7 years of age be permitted to play at the U9 level. Ideally, players should be playing in single age classifications.

## Playing Up or Down

It is not recommended that players participate outside of their age classification due to the vast differences in physical and cognitive development.

If program size allows, teams should be selected based on the physical size, skill, and maturity level of the athletes in a single age classification.

## Recommended Roster Sizes

Local administrators should strive to construct their teams with a player to coach ratio of 12:1. This ratio provides ample opportunity for all athletes to receive effective coaching.

**It is recommended that whenever possible teams do not have more than 15 or less than 12 players.**

# Coaches and Officials

Each team may have one coach roaming the field to instruct **ALL** players, and serve as an official. If certified officials are used, coaches are restricted to their sideline and may roam the entire length of the field.

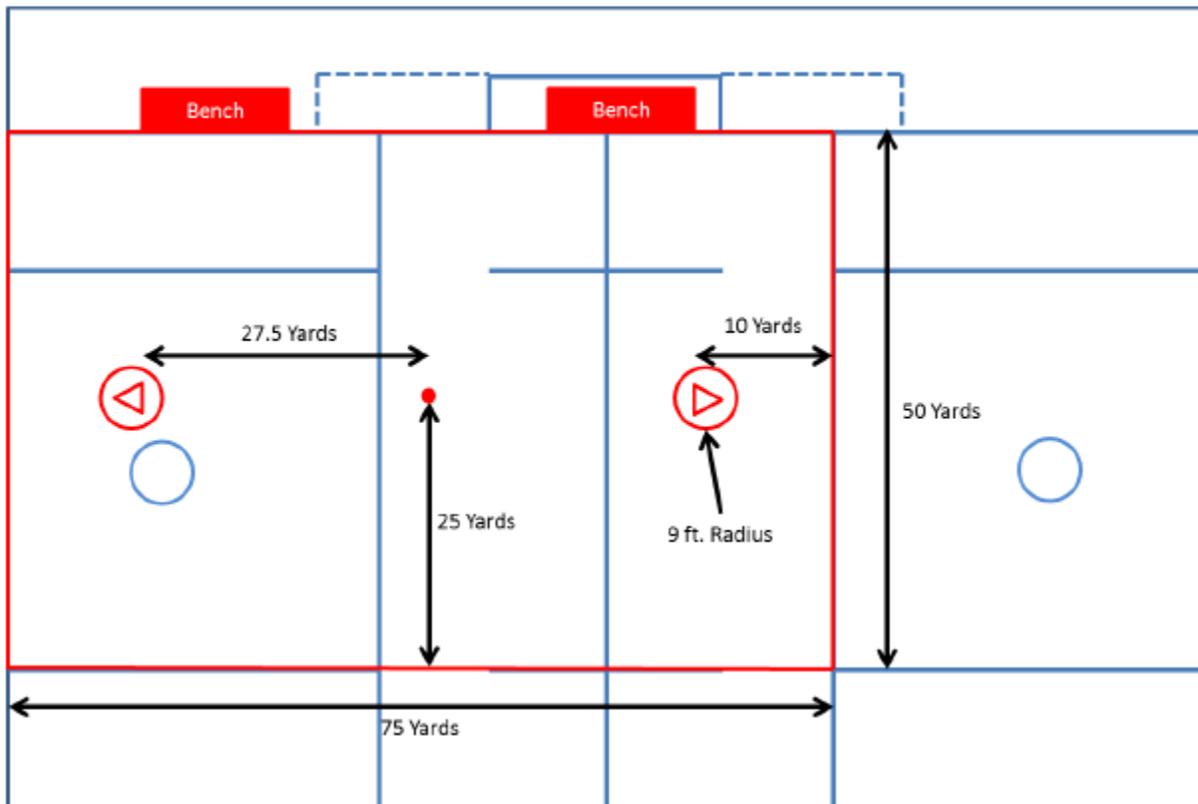
# The Goal

6x6 goals with securely affixed netting that will not permit a ball to pass through may be used. **A 2ft. drop net is recommended, to reduce the height of the goal opening to 4ft.** If a drop net is used it should be constructed of a material that minimizes rebounds to protect the goalkeeper. The goal shall be centered within the goal crease.

# The Goal Crease

The goal crease shall have a 9' radius in all competition scenarios.

# Field Dimensions and Specifications



## Field Markings

Given the multiple constraints that many programs encounter, no permanent or semi-permanent markings are required by rule. Programs may elect to use flat disc cones in part or whole to designate the playing area. Whenever possible, existing lines on a field may be used to define boundaries, provided the field does not exceed 75x50 yards.

## Field Players

A U9 competition is played by having 5 field players from each team on the field at a time and 1 legally equipped goalkeeper (6v6). The field players will play all positions, other than goalkeeper during the competition and may roam the entire field of play.

## Goalkeepers

Goalkeepers will be used at the U9 level of play. Additionally, no player other than a legally equipped goalkeeper (by USL Youth Rules and Guidelines) may intentionally assume the role of goalkeeper.

## Protective Equipment

Players are required to wear full protective equipment at this level, as outlined in the US Lacrosse Youth Rules and Best Practices Guidebook.

## Stick Specifications

Field Players	Goalkeepers
Length: 37"-42"	Length: 37"-54"
Stringing: 4-5 leather or synthetic thongs, 8-12 stitches or cross-lacing or mesh, max.	Stringing: 6-7 leather and/or synthetic thongs, 8-12 stitches or cross-lacing or mesh, max.
Pocket: Depth is legal when the top of the ball remains above the bottom of the heads wall when placed in the pocket of a horizontal stick.	Pocket: Depth is legal when the ball moves freely in pocket and stick meets specifications outlined in the boys rule book.

## Game Ball

To keep all players safe soft or “Pinkie” type balls are the only approved ball to be used at the U9 level.



## Competition Timing

A competition will consist of two (2) twelve-minute running time halves, with a four-minute halftime period.

## Timeouts

There are no timeouts permitted and the clock shall only stop in the event of injury. Injured players must leave the field until the next scheduled substitution. They may be replaced with another player.

## Scorekeeping

No score is to be kept at the U9 level of play.

## Overtime

Overtime shall not be played at the U9 age group.

## Scrum Situations

In the event that a loose ball cannot be quickly picked up due to multiple players in a “scrum,” the official shall stop play and award the ball via Alternating Possession rules.

## Substitutions

Coaches will conduct a whole-team substitution after each goal is scored. If a roster size does not allow whole-team substitution; the coach may keep 1 player on the field that was just on.

If there is an excessively long (>2 minutes) period of time without scoring, the game shall be stopped at the first available natural stopping point and substitutions are made.

The team entitled to possession of the ball at the stoppage will retain possession after the stoppage.

**There are no live ball or “on the fly” substitutions permitted.** This discourages specialization of positions and contributes to developing well-rounded lacrosse athletes.

## Starting the Competition

Prior to the start of competition, the two head coaches and one player from each team will conduct a coin toss. **The winner of the coin toss will start the competition with possession of the ball at the Center Spot.** The loser of the coin toss will have the first Alternating Possession.

The team on defense will give a 5yd cushion to all offensive players until the whistle is blown, at which time they are free to guard an offensive counterpart.

## Restarting After a Goal is Scored

**The team scored against will take possession of the ball at the Center Spot and begin play at the whistle.**

The team on defense will give a 5yd cushion to all offensive players until the whistle is blown, at which time they are free to guard an offensive counterpart.

## Off-Sides

**There are no off-sides restrictions in this competition.** All players are free to roam the entire length and width of the field.

## Technical Fouls

### Raking the Ball

At no time may a player use the back of their stick to cover or rake the ball backwards. They may only use a forward scooping motion to attempt to gain possession of the ball.

**Penalty:** Immediate stoppage of play and possession is awarded to the offended team.

### Covering the Ball

Players are not permitted to cover the ball under any circumstances.

**Penalty:** Immediate stoppage of play and possession is awarded to the offended team.

## Goal Crease Violation

No player from either team may enter the crease at any time, other than a legally equipped goalkeeper. A player may reach his stick into the crease for the sole purpose of collecting a loose ball. If the ball becomes ensnared in the outside of the goal, the official will blow the whistle and award the ball to the defensive team.

**Penalty:** Immediate stoppage of play and possession is awarded to the offended team.

## Stalling

There are no “counts” to be used for clearing the ball from one end of the field to the other once possession is gained. Coaches **may** opt to enable a 5 second count to encourage players to utilize their teammates. If used, a player in possession of the ball has 5 seconds from when he first possesses the ball to attempt a pass or shot.

**Penalty:** If the 5 second count is violated, the whistle is blown and the ball is given to the offended team. This rule can be enacted prior to or during competition if both coaches agree.

## Minimum Passing Requirement

Teams are not required to complete a minimum number of passes before going to goal. Coaches should stress the importance of teamwork and utilizing all players. A coach may choose to enforce a minimum requirement on his or her own team.

## Goalkeeper Counts

In the event of the goalkeeper gaining possession of the ball within his crease during a live-ball situation, the goalkeeper has 4 seconds to either exit the crease or pass the ball out of the crease to a member of his team.

**Penalty:** If the 4 second count expires, the ball is awarded to the other team lateral to GLE, 5yds in from the sideline, with the on-ball defender giving a 5yd. cushion until the whistle blows to restart play.

## Goalkeeper Interference

With both feet inside of his crease, the goalkeeper is protected from stick checking of any type.

**Penalty:** If a goalkeeper is checked while in possession of the ball, with both feet inside of his crease, his team will be awarded free possession at the Center Spot.

# Personal Fouls

## Slashing

A defender may **LIFT** the ball carrier's bottom hand when it is in contact with his stick in a vertical position and it is below the entire "numbers" area of his jersey. A player may have his stick lifted when the head of his stick is below the entire numbers area of his jersey or when in the act of scooping a loose ball.

**Penalty:** Slashing – Player committing the foul must exit the field and be substituted for. He may not re-enter the field of play until the next substitution.

## Body Checking

Legal holds, pushes and incidental contact (boxing out) is permitted.

**Penalty:** Unnecessary Roughness - Player committing the foul must exit the field and be substituted for. He may not re-enter the field of play until the next substitution.

## Unsportsmanlike Conduct

Players are expected to uphold the highest levels of sportsmanship at all times.

**Penalty:** Unsportsmanlike Conduct fouls will result in an immediate stoppage of play, with the foul being explained to the player. The player shall be taken off the field and substituted for. The ball is awarded to the offended team. At no time should either team be playing with less players than their opponent.

# About Coaching U9 Athletes

## KEY OBJECTIVES FOR SUCCESS

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**Focus**—Where we spend most of our time:  
Fundamental Technical Skills

**Goals for this stage of development**—What we are trying to achieve:  
To develop agility, balance, coordination, and speed for success in learning fundamental technical lacrosse skills.  
Getting as many touches of the ball as possible.

**Player-centered environment**—What it should look like:  
Fun, constant active engagement (kid + ball =fun), relaxed, inclusive, positive with as emphasis on learning new skills. Lots of enjoyable games that reinforce skill learning. Predictable routines. Focus on effort and trying their best. Activities are designed for success.

## PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

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### **Athletic Development Agility**

Dynamic balance, bilateral coordination, skipping, hopping, throwing/tossing and catching away from the body with either hand. Flexibility and strength.

### **Technical (Skills) Development**

Proficient at stick grip and scooping. Exploring and developing other fundamental lacrosse skills – catching, passing, shooting, cradling, and dodging.

### **Tactical (Strategy) Development**

Developing 1v1 and 2v2 offense and defense concepts.  
Exploring 2v1 offense and defense concepts. Riding and clearing.

### **Psychological Development**

Working to support athletes in these areas: Concentration, teachability, learning to make choices, respect, understanding rules, how to cope with winning and losing. Learning to solve problems.

### **Social-Behavioral Development**

Know that at this age they are:  
Learning to cooperate and help others. Learning to consider other people. Learning through familiar activities. Want to do their best. Can show responsibility through completing tasks and requests.

## **PRACTICE**

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### **Practice to Competition & Competition Specific Training Ratio**

In-house instructional (embedded in activity sessions)

### **Primary Objective of Practice**

To develop physical literacy and introduce fundamental sport and lacrosse skills. Achieved through stations, games, and activities. 1:1 player to ball ratio with 2:1 activities also blended in. Include periods of free play

### **Max Recommended Ratio (player:coach)**

10:1

### **Length of Sessions**

45-60 minutes

### **Frequency**

2x a week, 8-12 week season

### **Multi-Sport Participation**

Encourage sport and physical activity diversification.

Sport specific training twice a week during one specific season. Participate in other physical activity or sport 4-5 times per week. Gymnastics and movement education highly recommended. Ensure time period in the year when there is a several week rest from all organized sport.