



Fargo Soccer Club



Fall 2017 RECREATIONAL COACHES HANDBOOK

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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for stepping forward and volunteering to coach your child's recreational soccer team. We know that for many of you, it may be your first time coaching soccer or you may feel a bit uneasy about what or how you should be coaching the players. We want to tell you upfront that we believe you can and will do a great job this year!

Remember...volunteers are essential to the success of FSC. Without you, there would be no recreational program. There are always volunteer opportunities. Without volunteers, FSC may have to limit player participation. And we don't want to deny a child the opportunity to play soccer!

FSC offers various training opportunities for the new coach as well as the experienced coach. Coaching clinics are offered for all levels of experience; even if you have never coached before. FSC makes every effort to provide you with the tools and skills you need to do a great job coaching. We will provide you with specific, age appropriate training for each age group as well as provide you with equipment that we can afford.

The important thing is to believe and work within the skills curriculum outlined in this handbook as this is the first step towards "player development". After all, we do want to develop the child's appreciation for the game of soccer as well as strive to help each player reach their full potential and be prepared to move to the next stage of development.

So don't put any pressure on yourself. No one should expect a winning season; just your best effort. No one should be expecting you to develop the next Messi or Ronaldo. No one should be expecting you to be an expert on the game of soccer. What we wish for you is the ability to create a fun environment for the kids to play soccer, teach soccer skills, teach sportsmanship, and have a blast coaching.

Lastly, the purpose of this handbook is to help answer as many questions as possible that arise from coaches new to FSC. This handbook will also help the more experienced coach to review some of the procedures as well as highlight changes to the program for the current season. In some cases, given the make-up and age group of the individual team, the hints or guidelines provided may not apply. Nonetheless, most of what follows should be of assistance as you begin this incredibly rewarding

Our best wishes to you and all of your players for a great fun-filled season!

Sincerely,

Matt Noah

Club President



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PRE-SEASON HOUSKEEPING...

There are a number of items that need to be addressed before the start of the season:

1. Contact Other Coaches – The first thing you need to do is contact your fellow coach if you have an assistant coach. His/her number is present on your online roster. Divide up the duties and check each other's schedule for the season. If you are the only coach, it is suggested that you contact the other parents to identify another parent to assist you.

Important: FSC has a "Times Two Policy". Coaches are responsible for ensuring that at least two adults are present at all team functions. You should never be left alone with children. The adults present can be any combination of coaches, managers, parents, board members, etc. It is suggested that the adults not be related. This policy protects both the child and the adult. Please explain this policy to the parents of players on your team. This policy extends to providing transportation to players who are not family members.

Important: FSC has a policy of screening volunteers of any kind, e.g. coaches, managers, board members, etc. The screening application is available in the Documents section of our website. Every coach, assistant coach, team manager must download this form, complete it and return it to the FSC at our administrative office; 4910 Meadow Creek Drive South, Fargo, ND 58104.

All coaches must also be registered online with FSC as a volunteer coach or as a parent. If you want to add someone as a coach to your team, they must be registered and have signed a volunteer screening application form.

2. Jerseys: It is common for parents to put the individual player's names on the jerseys. This helps the coaches learn everyone's name and allows the players and parents to learn their team members' names. Situations arise where two or more players have the same first name and so the use of a last initial might help. In rare instances, a parent may object to having the child's name on the shirts. This is their option. We recommend you use Scheels on 45th Street for lettering of the recreational jerseys since they know our specifications.

Contact the Club Administrator if you need additional players or if a player has dropped. Do not encourage unregistered children or their parents to just come and join your team. They are welcome to observe your practice or games just as any member of the public is welcome. Ultimately, they need club approval to join a specific team.

3. Contacting Players/Parents: It is also recommended to contact parents before the first scheduled meeting to introduce yourself and confirm that their child will be playing on your team. Mistakes do happen. It is better to know of the problem early and let the FSC Administrator know. Remind the parents and their players that each player should bring 1) a water bottle, 2) soccer ball, and 3) shin guards to every game and practice. Soccer socks go over the shin guards. Every child should bring a soccer ball to every practice and game because they need to touch the ball as many times as possible during your practices. You may want to have a couple of extra balls for when a child forgets their ball and to use as game balls.



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4. Team and Individual Photographs: Team photographs are scheduled for the Fall season but not for the fall season. We encourage you to capture this precious time on a team with your own cameras as well.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Coach Meeting/Education/Clinic: Check the website for date & location

On-field coach education. Be prepared to play soccer. Wear tennis shoes or soccer cleats, shorts or sweatpants, shirt or sweatshirt. Bring ball.

Uniform Distribution: Check the website for date & location

Individual parents pick up their child's uniform. The coach is not responsible for picking up uniforms.

FSC Recreational Program Begins: Check the website for date & location of games The season will begin either at the first practice or first game. You are responsible for deciding your practice schedule. In some cases the club will publish a practice schedule. If that happens you can request that it be changed to accommodate you and your teams. Once you have chosen a location, time and dates for your practices, email matt@fargosoccer.org with that information. It will then be posted on your team website. You should consult the parents of the players on your team so that a majority will find the practice dates, times and location convenient.

Equipment

If you received any equipment from the club you will need to return it after your last game. It is your responsibility to make arrangements to return the equipment if you do not return it after the last game. As a matter of practicality, the club does not provide coaching equipment for practices or games.

PROGRAM POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Program Goals

To provide youth players the opportunity to learn the skills, techniques and rules of soccer. The focus of recreational soccer is toward participation and fun over competition.

Equipment Needed

Shin guards REQUIRED for ALL players. Shin guards MUST be completely covered by long socks. Shorts or sweatpants may be worn. (Dress appropriately for the weather.) Tennis shoes or soccer shoes may be worn. Team jerseys, shorts and socks will be provided. ALL JEWELRY/EARINGS MUST BE REMOVED!

All players are encouraged to bring a ball to practice.

- Grades Pre-K – 2 use a size 3 ball (leagues that have kids in these ages use size 3)
- Grades 3 – 6 use a size 4 ball



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Practices

A team coach will notify each player regarding practice time and field. All practices will be outside, dress players appropriately for weather. Parents/Guardians should use their judgment on sending children to practice. Coaches or the FSC will notify players if practice is cancelled.

Game Day

Rosters and schedules will be made available on our website. Consult your schedule.

All games are played in bad weather (snow or rain) with the exception of other extreme conditions. Cancellations will be announced on the FSC website. If you are uncertain, please contact your coach or Club President.

Team Pictures

We will have photographers available for team pictures this Fall. Look for details on our website and in your emails.

FSC Recreational Program - Notes

Team Selection

Teams are selected primarily on school and geography but other criterion is used where applicable. FSC will generally accommodate special requests for teammates if made prior to the end of early-bird registration or roster announcements. Only reciprocal requests will be considered. Requests must be emailed [to matt@fargosoccer.org](mailto:matt@fargosoccer.org) for consideration.

Coach Selection

All coaches are volunteer coaches. Coaches with age appropriate licensing will have first priority for coaching opportunities. Training will be provided for ALL coaches every season.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers include coaches, assistant coaches, team managers, age group coordinators, and field preparation. All volunteers must submit a completed volunteer screening application form (see our website in the Documents section).



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REC LEAGUE CODE OF CONDUCT & EXPECTATIONS For Players, Coaches, Fans & Referees

Introduction

Soccer is a competitive sport, but the emphasis of the Rec League is on participation, development and just plain fun. This obviously applies to the players, but in many cases applies to the coaches, fans and referees as well, many of who are youth themselves or new to the game of soccer. The Rec League serves as a training ground for the future of soccer and it is essential that everyone have a positive experience. The Rec League Code of Conduct & Expectations describes expected behavior of players, coaches, fans and referees whose observance will enhance the soccer experience for everyone. The referees for pre-school soccer are the two opposing coaches. For all other grades, the referees are the coaches as well.

Players

Players are expected to exhibit good sportsmanship and behavior at all time to players, referees, coaches and fans of both teams. During the game, an active player may ask the referee to clarify, "What was called," but may not question the referee on rule interpretation, argue or express dissent, either verbally or by action. The referee should be addressed as Sir or Ma'am with courtesy and respect. However, realize that circumstances may not allow an immediate response from the referee. At the Pre-K, Kindergarten, First grade and Second/Third/Fourth-grade level, one coach from each team can be on the field to serve as both coach and referee. Coaches should only coach their team's players.

Coaches

The coach sets the standard for acceptable behavior for both the players and the fans. A coach's positive attitude and behavior toward their team, the opposing team and the referees promotes a positive experience for everyone. A negative attitude or behavior can discourage the young players and referees we are there for. Therefore, the coach is held to the highest standard of behavior.

The coach is responsible for managing the sidelines including the players, fans and equipment.

- 1) For purpose of safety and vision, no person or equipment is permitted within 1 yard of the touch line. This area is reserved for the assistant referee (if applicable) in order to perform their duties. This area also acts as a buffer for field play.
- 2) While coaching, one coach may be on the field (for pre-k through grade 4). The assistant(s) shall remain within the coaching area that extends 10 yards on either side of the center line. No coaching is permitted outside this area. Up through grade 4, coaches also act as referees.
- 3) The coach should promote sportsmanship towards both teams and the referees (other coaches) and remember the developmental purpose of the Rec League.
 - a) For purpose of promoting a positive experience for developing referees, the coach shall not dissent or express negative comments about the officiating to players, parents or the referees during or after the game. Realize that the referee cannot see everything on the field. They should be impartial and they are doing their best.



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- b) No abuse or negative comments towards players of either team will be allowed. The coach should encourage sportsmanship and applaud good play for either team.
 - 4) The coach should not challenge or question a youth referee, either during the game or after a game. Questions may be addressed only to an adult referee or a field marshal in a calm quiet voice on questions of rule interpretation.
 - 5) The coach is to refrain from consuming alcohol, tobacco products, or illegal drugs prior to or during contact with players.
 - 6) The FSC has a zero tolerance policy to the use of profane language by any adult. Please report any violation of this to the FSC Club President. Realize that complaints may have to be substantiated in order for action to ensue.

Fans

Fans should exhibit good sportsmanship and provide encouragement to players, referees, and coaches of both teams. Simply stated, if you haven't got something nice to say, don't say it. Dissent, either verbal or by action, or harassment of referees or players will result in expulsion from the field. Do not enter the field of play at any time. Do not encroach into the assistant referee area (1 yard along touch line). Do not stand behind the goal area. Refer all comments and questions to the coach.

GUIDELINES & PRINCIPLES OF COACHING

COACHES CODE OF ETHICS:

Soccer is the player's game. The paramount concern of coaches is the holistic development, welfare, enjoyment and safety of their players.

1. Coaches bear responsibility for teaching players to strive for success while playing fairly, observing the laws of the game and the highest levels of sportsmanship.
 2. Coaches shall treat officials with respect and dignity, and shall teach their players to do the same.
 3. Our opponents are worthy of being treated with respect. Coaches will model such respect for opponents and expect their players to do likewise.
 4. In both victory and defeat, the behavior of the coach shall model grace, dignity and composure.
 5. Coaches shall adhere to the highest standards and the regulations of the institutions they represent: clubs, schools, sponsoring organizations and sports governing bodies.
 6. Coaches shall model good, moral behavior, actively supporting each player and his family while opposing all types of discrimination, including but not limited to racism and sexism, at all levels of the game.
 6. Coaches are responsible for taking an active role in education about, and prevention and treatment of drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse; both in their lives and in the lives of their of their players.
 7. Coaches shall refrain from all manner of personal abuse and harassment of others, whether verbal, physical, emotional or sexual, and shall oppose such abuse and harassment at all levels of the game.
 8. Coaches shall respect the declared affiliations of all players.
 9. Coaches shall refrain from any profane language or risk losing their coaching privileges.
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Coaches shall seek to honor those who uphold the highest standards and principles of soccer and shall use appropriate protocol to oppose and eliminate all behavior that brings disrepute to the sport - violence, abuse, dishonesty, disrespect and violations of the laws of the game and rules governing competition.

Principles of Coaching

The principles of youth coaching are guidelines developed as a foundation or a sounding board to assess the appropriateness of an activity or training session. The following six principles are presented so that youth players receive a healthy and positive youth experience.

- **Developmentally Appropriate** – Is the activity age appropriate?
- **Clear, Concise and Correct Information** – Provide enough information to get the activity started and then add new challenges.
- **Simple to Complex** – Are the activities presented in a way that allows for ongoing modifications and new challenges to meet the players' interest and abilities?
- **Safe and Appropriate Training Area** – The training environment should be physically and psychologically safe.
- **Decision Making** – Opportunities for players to make decisions should be present in all activities, including spatial, temporal and kinesthetic.
- **Implications for the Game** – The activities presented in your training session must in some way reflect the demands a player faces in the game.

Eliminating lines, laps and lectures...

Having players stand in lines waiting for their turn generally indicates an inappropriate activity. If players are standing and not moving, the activity will not keep their interest. Running laps, especially without a ball is a waste of time. All practices should take place on the field, preferably with a ball. Lectures should be left for the classroom. Children come to practice to be active and participate, not to be talked to for extended periods of time.

Often, coaches design activities that focus on determining a winner. These activities typically involve elements that lead to players being eliminated from the activity. Those eliminated first players are players who usually need the most work on technique and decision-making. Design activities that keep all players engaged throughout the length of the activity. Eliminate elimination games!

Punishment

The use of physical activity such as laps, push-ups, sit-ups etc., as punishment for misbehavior is an inappropriate method of discipline. Players will come to believe that physical training is actually a form of punishment. Players need to understand the importance of fitness and making them run when there is a behavior problem is counter to what you develop. When the consequences warrant, a short-term exclusion from the activity will often get a positive reward.



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Game/Activity Classifications

Game/activities are organized into three separate categories. It is important for coaches to select games/activities from each category that are age group appropriate. The categories are:

Body Awareness – activities emphasize the use of body parts, motion, coordination, and balance with and without the ball.

Target Games – activities that involve solving the objective by going from “point A to B”. In contrast to Maze Games, these activities are more directionally defined and can be done both with and without the ball.

Maze Games – activities in which the player has the opportunity to move in a 360 degree or circle environment with and without the ball. Even though the area is defined, it does not necessarily have a specific target or boundary to go to. These activities allow the players to make decisions while moving in all direction.

There are times when the concepts of each of these three types of activities may be utilized in a single activity.

Drills versus Game/Activities

Drills are generally an absence of thought. An individual repeats the same movement or patterns exactly the same way each time. This approach with regard to youth soccer has several limitations.

During a soccer game the environment is constantly changing, therefore activities must also reflect this ever changing competitive environment. Children are drawn to games and activities like opposite poles of a magnet, whereas drills repel them and decrease their interest. A game/activity approach creates an environment that allows techniques, tactics, fitness and creativity to develop in harmony. Below is a simple illustration of the difference between “Drills” and “Game/Activities”. Which do you think best fits the developmental need of the children?

Learning Through Game/Activities

Characteristics of Drills

- Static
- Military
- Lines
- Boring
- No thought
- Age Inappropriate

Characteristics of Game/Activities

- Dynamic
- Organized but unstructured
- Free movement
- Fun
- Decision making
- Age appropriate

The game activity approach is a dynamic instructional method that allows the participant to fully experience the sport. It is not the “just let them play,” approach. Proper technical execution is not important. Technique will improve with practice and experience. Children



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need to make decisions, exert themselves physically, perform technical skills and, most importantly, have fun. The checklist below provides a measuring stick to evaluate practice activities.

Game/Activity Checklist

- Are the activities Fun? Are they enjoyable to perform and will it keep their interest?
- Are the activities organized? Are the objectives clear? It doesn't need to be highly structured or without any rules, but the purpose and guidelines of the activity need to be understood.
- Are the players involved in the activities? Is there a maximum participation of all players, or are some more active than others?
- Is creativity and decision making being used? Are their decisions to move to employ a particular skill ever changing, or are they just repeating the same movement without thinking?
- Is the space appropriate for the age group and number of players? If they can effectively move without colliding into each other as well as not becoming too exhausted from trying to cover too much ground, it is probably a sufficient area. Is the space allowing for the objectives of the activity to be realized?
- Is the coach's feedback appropriate? For younger players, feedback should be positive and frequent. Players up to around nine view effort and ability as synonymous. If they try hard, they believe they are really good. Coaches should try to combine feedback with the player's first name. It leads to a more personalized approach and players tend to focus on the feedback better.
- What are the implications for the game? Are the objectives of the activity related to the demands they will face in a game? The younger the child, the broader and less clear the activity objectives may appear in relation to game. But a closer examination may reveal key building blocks. These blocks may be in any one or all three of the learning domains (psychomotor, cognitive and psychological).

Developing Practice Procedures

Equipment – Every player must have a ball to use at every practice. So much more can be accomplished if everyone can be engaged in play at the same time. Players who have to wait their turn will often become bored and disenfranchised with the activities. Cones and disks help organize playing spaces and be used to designate boundaries, goals or a target area. It is also important to keep equipment in one designated area and to teach players the procedures for getting and returning equipment. This will help keep your practice space organized and will help you keep track of equipment.

Instant Activity– When children arrive at soccer practice, they are ready to play. They often arrive at different times and wait until a coach determines when practice will begin. Prepare

activities in which the children can engage immediately upon arrival. They can play with a ball by themselves, engage in practice with a coach, play 1v1 with a teammate, or get in a group and begin to play. By the time everyone arrives, they are all playing and you can sit back and watch for a few minutes. They come to play; let them.

Start & Stop Signals – It will be important for you to devise starting and stopping signals that the players can see or hear. How do you want to begin or stop? These basic concepts need to be taught so players understand exactly what the signal means. The word “freeze” is a common stop signal and players should immediately stop when they hear the word. Avoid using a whistle. Players need to hear voice commands.

Forming Groups – How do players get partners? What do you do when you have an odd number of players and the number doesn't fit the activity you want to do? A coach needs to solve this problem. No player should be eliminated or have to wait their turn. Players are taught how to quickly get a partner (it doesn't have to be their best friend every time), or to get in groups. If there is an odd number, the players need to sort it out by forming one or two different-sized groups that will adapt to the activity the coach has implemented. Everyone is accepted; no one is rejected.

“Fun Activities” Curriculum

Week 1 small-sided games (basic rules, etc)

Week 2 dribbling

Week 3 dribbling and turns

Week 4 receiving and passing

Week 5 small-sided games

Week 6 beating a player

Week 7 finishing games

Week 8 small-sided games (street soccer)



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“Practices” OR “Fun Activities” >

What's the difference?

- They are one in the same, or at least they should be! >

Why the spin on the name?

- Because of the concern expressed by coaches that the players do not like coming to practices without playing games all of the time

> Will the name work?

- Only if we implement the “FUN” into practices! Let's continue calling practices “fun activities” if for no other reason, it keeps the #1 focal point of practices in the forefront of our minds.

> Can I still call it a practice?

- Yes, only if you make sure it involves “fun activities” and the players leave each session saying, “gee, that sure was fun”!

“Fun Activities” Guidelines

- > Follow the suggested format
- > Try to make sure to do some pre-planning (focus on the topic) for the entire session
- > Coach individual skill techniques, not tactics
- > One session equals one skill taught
- > Always finish your session with at least a 15-20 minute scrimmage with preferably your own team or opposing team
- > Keep it fun
- > If you need help or more ideas, don't be afraid to ask us

Small-Sided Games

For small-sided games, simply allow your players to play 3v3 (for the pre-k and kindergarten age groups) or 4v4 (for all other age groups). Simply scramble your players to form teams and give each game a theme or make a mini-tournament out of it. Remember to make it fun! The objective is to have minimal standing around and allow the players and yourself to get a feel for the game, especially for the first session. For the last session, simply play other teams to prepare for the year-end Jamboree!

“Fun Activities” Sessions

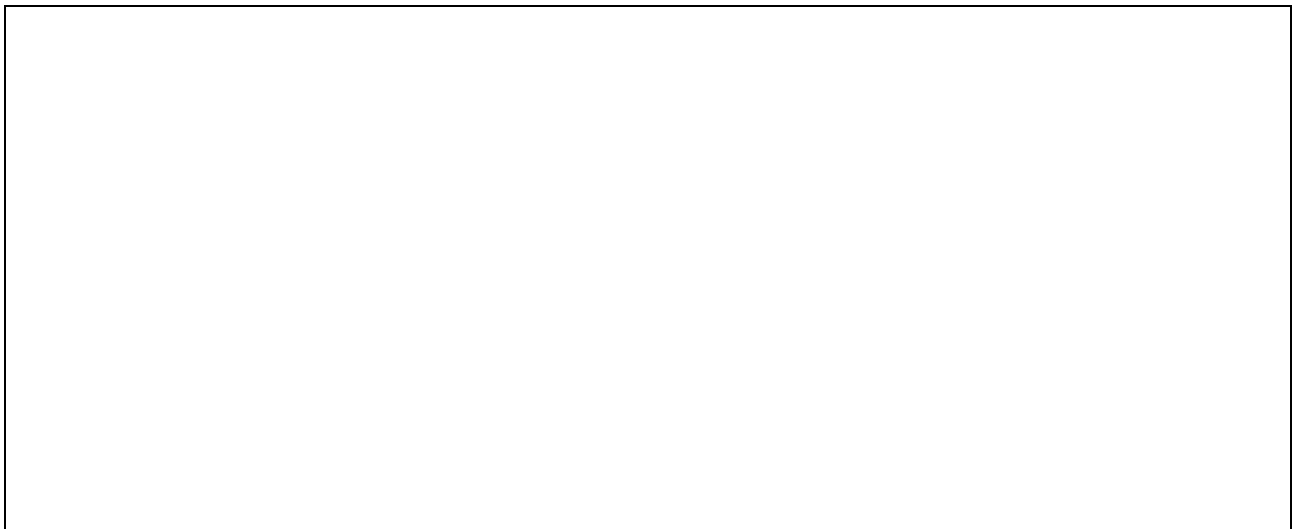
Since we do not “pre-assign” practice fields, there may be some confusion as to exactly where to meet each week at the fields. Here are some suggestions: Go to the general location and create a system for connecting with your team. Be creative and have fun with it. Make a sign, shout out like a carnival barker, wear your team colors, or wear something unusual and distinctive. Find an open “green spot” appropriate for your age group and have fun with your players. Meet at the same spot every week!

COACHING EDUCATION

By improving the level of coaching expertise at all levels of play, we can positively influence the environment for player development. Certificates and licensures provide a consistent methodology for teaching the game that is embraced throughout the United States. Coaching education not only provides instruction on creating age-appropriate training environments that minimizes the risk of injury, but also provides information on the prevention and care of injuries. Education and licensing levels reduces liability and the risk of claims against negligence.

RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

See www.fargosoccer.org in the Links and Documents Sections



U6 (Under Age 6) Sample Game/Activities

Game 1: Ball Retrieve (Body Awareness/Target Game)

The coach stands in the middle of the training site and collects all of the balls. The coach then explains that he will throw the balls in different directions and the each player must bring the ball to the coach as quickly as they can. The coach puts various conditions on how they retrieve the ball (an example: with one hand; one hand with the ball touching the forehead; both hands and the ball touching their belly button, etc.). Once the children show comfort wit the exercise, they are asked to maneuver the ball with their feet. Once a comfort level is reached again, the coach then creates a different challenge for the players to solve.

Game 2: Body Part Dribble (Body Awareness)

Each player has a ball in an area such as a 20x20 yard circle or square. Players dribble their ball in the space and avoid touching other players. While they dribble, the coach or leader calls out a body part, such as a "forehead," "elbow," "chin," "knee," etc. Simon says is a good variation of this activity. After the player has touched the body part to the ball, the player should then immediately continue to dribble. This activity promotes listening skills and reinforces the knowledge of body parts. Very young players do not understand left or right direction. If you say "left elbow", don't expect compliance from the player.



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Game 3: Glob (Target Game)

Players like this so much they would likely perform this activity for the entire period if permitted. Begin without a ball. Use cones to outline the sidelines and the finish line (a 20x20 yard space should be adequate). Stand in the middle of the area and talk and act like a Glob, challenging the players to TRY to run (without the ball) across the space without being caught (tagged) by the nasty Glob. Ham it up a bit and have more fun. Then, have them try to get across Glob Country by dribbling their ball while the coach tries to touch their ball out of bounds. Their re-entry back into the game can be done in many ways, (i.e. three foot taps on the ball, throw the ball in the air, clap twice and catch it, etc). This is not an elimination game.

Game 4: Everybody's It (Maze Game)

This activity borders on the edge of controlled mayhem. In an appropriately sized space (approximately 20x20 yards), develop boundaries. Each player runs around, staying inside the boundaries, trying to tag as many other players while at the same time trying not to get tagged themselves. Give a signal of when to begin and let them play for 30-45 seconds. It's a game of total vision, requiring the players to have full awareness of what's around them. They need to learn how to move into spaces to attack (tag), and out of space to retreat (avoid being tagged).

Game 5: Gates (Maze Game)

The coach places cones throughout the training area (20x20 yards) in pairs about three feet apart. Upon command, players dribble a ball through as many "cone gates" in the time specified by the coach. Sixty seconds work well. Parents should help the players count how many times they pass through the gates as the ability to dribble through gates and count is difficult at this age. Each player gets a chance to repeat the exercise to try and beat their own score. It is appropriate for younger players to compete against themselves, not other players.

**In all the games, start first without a ball. After the players understand the objective and the rules of the game, introduce the ball.*

U8 Sample Game/Activities

Game 1: Math Dribble

Every player has a ball and works within a confined area. Players dribble to keep control while avoiding others. While they dribble, coach or leader calls out a math problem. The players immediately solve the problem by forming the appropriately sized group. This activity organizes groups without asking players to choose a partner or counting off. For example, if your next activity requires partners, call out 1+1 or 31. The activity encourages dribbling in a confined area, changing direction and changing speed. Quick reaction to cues, awareness of other players, problem solving and listening skills are stressed.

Game 2: Ball Retrieve in Pairs (Target Game)

Work with one ball between two players. Using general field space, start from the middle of the field. One pair of players hands the coach a ball who tosses it away and calls out a number from 2-10. Whatever number the coach calls, each player must return the ball to the coach by passing the ball with their feet in exactly the asked number of touches. The players decide how to solve this problem.



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The coach should rapidly toss balls away to keep the activity flowing. The coach can also move to a different space after the ball has been tossed so that players must be aware of where they are going. The activity encourages working in pairs, pacing of passes, playing to a target, and keeping their heads up to scan the environment.

Game 3: Gates in Pairs (Maze Game)

Using pairs of cones, the coach constructs 8-12 randomly spaced goals that are placed approximately three yards apart. Each pair of players should have one ball. After a signal from the coach, pairs of players attempt to play as many passes to each other as possible through the gates in 60 seconds. Players cannot play a ball through the same gate on consecutive passes. At the end of 60 seconds, challenge players to improve on their first score. This activity encourages problem-solving, speed of passing, changing direction, receiving and passing to feet, communication and cooperation.

Game 4: Pac Man (Maze Game)

Each player has a ball in a confined area of approximately 20x20 yards. Adjust the space to accommodate the number of players. All but two players place their ball outside the area. The two players with the ball are the Pac Men. Pac Men dribble their balls and attempt to hit other players below the knee with a pass. Players try to avoid being hit by running, dodging and jumping. Once a player is hit, he/she gets their ball and becomes a Pac Man. The game continues until all players have been hit and have their ball. The activity encourages dribbling and passing to a moving target, decision making, changing direction, cardio-respiratory endurance, and allows all ability levels to play equally. If players are hit early, they will have more opportunity to dribble. If they manage to avoid getting hit until the end of the game, their challenge increases greatly.

Game 5: Boss of the Balls

This is a small-sided game of 4v4 to two small goals and is played in an area of approximately 20x30 yards. The coach is standing at the midline with all of the balls. Ball one is put into play and the game begins. As soon as a goal is scored or a ball goes out of bounds, the coach tosses or kicks in another ball. When the coach runs out of balls, the players run to collect and return all of the balls and the game can begin again. Note to Coaches and Parents: don't retrieve balls! The game must have a natural ending point. When a coach runs out of balls, players must gather them up if they want to keep playing.

U10 Sample Game/Activities

Game 1: Ball Retrieve – Groups of Four

Players are in groups of 3 or 4 with one ball in general space, about half of a soccer field. The coach tosses or plays the ball away and players must return it to the coach with each player touching the ball (feet only) at least once. The final pass should be played to a player standing next to the coach. The coach then calls out a number and players must return the ball in exactly that many passes. The activity encourages players to think in terms of length and width as well as collective play. The coach can move within the space to make the task more difficult.

Game 2: Elbow Tag

Players are in pairs with their elbows hooked and standing in a random formation. The other hand is on their hip with elbow bent. The coach breaks apart one pair and gives one player a cone or small ball to carry. This player may not throw the object. If they tag their partner, the player drops the object and the roles reverse. The player who is being chased tries to get safe by hooking onto an empty outside elbow of another player. Once this occurs the player on the opposite end must leave and is now being chased by the player with the object. Once the players get the hang of it, involve another pair, so now you have two chasers and two players being chased. Players chasing can tag anyone who is not safe on an elbow. Continue adding chasers and runners until the game completely falls apart from sheer fun and chaos. This activity encourages quick thinking and anticipation, as well as a great deal of sprinting and changing direction.



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Game 3: Hurricanes & Ladders

Play consists of two teams of 5-7 players with one ball using half a field. One team starts out as the ladder; the other is the hurricane. The coach tosses the ball away and the ladder group must run to the ball, form a line and immediately begin handing the ball to the end of the line in an over the head/between the legs fashion.

At the same time the hurricane team forms a tight circle or huddle and watched while one team member runs around the huddle as many times as possible before the ladder group completes the process of passing the ball from the front to the back of the line and yells stop! The number of circles is counted and the roles reverse when the coach tosses the ball away again. Play until one team reaches 10. This activity encourages teamwork and problem solving.

Game 4: Defrost Tag

Start with two equal teams and a 30x30 yard area. Once entire team is inside the area without balls, the other team starts on the outside of the area with one ball per players. On the coach's signal, the team with the balls dribbles into the area and tries to hit the other team players below the knees. Emphasize passing, not shooting, the ball. Players can run or jump to avoid getting hit. Once a player is hit with the ball, they freeze and must stand with legs apart and hands on hips. A frozen player can be unfrozen if a teammate crawls through the legs. The objective is to see how long it takes to freeze the entire team.

Safety Note: As long as a part of the crawling player's body is still beneath the frozen player, both players are safe and a ball cannot be played at them. Only when a player crawls completely through a frozen player does the frozen player become unfrozen. Both are then actively back in the game. Use a time limit or end it when all players are frozen. Make sure that each team gets a chance to play both roles. This is a great activity for deceptive dribbling, passing to a target and fitness, as well as fostering communication and problem solving skills.

Game 5: Get Outta-Here

Set up a small-sided field with two equal sized teams. Players will play in a 2v2 format played to two small goals at each end of the field. A 30x20 yard space with goals is approximately 6-8 feet across and 4 feet high will work well but any size goal will work. The starting point is on the outside of the field at the mid-line.

The coach tosses a ball onto the field and one pair from each team runs onto the field for a 2v2 situation. If a goal is scored, the scoring team stays on while the defending team sprints off and a new pair runs on. If the ball goes out of bounds or a goal is not scored, the coach shouts "Get Outta-Here" and both pairs must run off the field and are replaced by the next two players from each team. Teams with odd numbers of players must organize effectively so that every player plays an equal amount. Each team must keep track of the total amount of goals they score. The game can be played to a final score or with a time limit. This is a fast paced activity that required concentration from everyone on and off the field.

U12 Sample Small-Sided Game/Activities

Game 1: Grab the Tail (Warm-Up)

On a field 25x20 yards (based on 12 players), players tuck a scrimmage vest into the back of their shorts. On the coaches signal all players try and grab each other's tail and throw it on the ground. All players continue to play even if they have lost their tail and play until there is no one player remaining with a tail.

A variation is to allow the player to keep any tail he/she has captured. See who can collect the most tails. This activity encourages quickness, speed and scheming.

A quick warm-up activity should be followed by several minutes of static stretching especially emphasizing the major muscle groups.

Game 2: Soccer to One Target (Target Game)

On a 40x30 yard field (12 players), each team has 5 field and 1 target player (he/she can be the goalkeeper). The target player may run the length of the goal line opposite the field players of his own color. The object is to score by playing the ball to the hands or feet of the target player. The target then distributes the ball to the opposite color, before it crosses the midfield, who then attempts to play the ball to their own target.

Keep the game continuous. A variation to this is the team that scores keeps possession and attempts to score on the opposite target. The team who gave up the score must change ends of the field quickly in order to defend the distribution of the ball to a member of the team who just scored.



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This small-sided game encourages accuracy and pace of pass, an early forward pass, following the pass and distribution. Coaches should observe and praise players when they recognize the forward pass, keep possession long enough to get a clear chance to play forward and are in good position to receive the ball.

Game 3: Barrel Ball (Target Game)

This is commonly called a street-game. Use up to half the field with a barrel in the middle. The rules are quite simple: two teams play against each other and score a goal when they hit the barrel. The last player who touches the ball before it hits the barrel receives the goal, regardless of which team shot the ball. Players are not permitted to touch the barrel. It would be good to have at least a one yard dead space around the barrel where players are not allowed to stand. Award bonus points for a ball that is played in the barrel (this is a difficult but a great challenge)! This is a great small-sided game that can be used to start or end a practice. Players have to possess the ball under pressure, find the open player and make accurate passes, and shoot the ball quickly and accurately when presented the opportunity.

Game 4: Triangle Game (Maze Game)

Using cones or flags create a triangle goal in the middle of your training space. The sides of the triangle should be approximately 8-10 yards in length. Two teams of approximately 6-8 players each play against each other. The defending team places three goalkeepers on each line of the triangle goal while the remaining 3-5 players defend against the attacking players. A goal may be scored on any side.

The team in possession is the attacking team and attempts to shoot or pass the ball across any one of the three triangle sides. The height of a "good" shot (goal) is determined by the coach. When possession is lost, goalkeepers must vacate the goal and the team that has lost possession must employ a quick defensive transition to avoid being scored upon. Play is to a set number of goals or to a time limit.

If a goal is scored the team who scored can become the defending team or can be allowed to retain possession and try to score again. If the defending team gains possession, the three goalkeepers sprint out and three new players from the other team must run in and take up goalkeeper positions. The roles are now reversed and play continues. This activity encourages transition play and changing the point of attack.

Game 5: Four Goal Game

Two teams play on a 40x30 yard area with goals in each of the four corners. Each team will defend two goals and attack two goals. Goalkeepers are optional. One goalkeeper could be utilized to defend both goals. This game encourages changing the point of attack and establishing field width. Players are able to identify which goal is the most vulnerable to attack.

Street Soccer

“Negative comments or over-coaching only discourage children from continuing to play soccer. The more our young players enjoy themselves, the greater the likelihood that they will remain in the game.”

- Steve Sampson, Former Men's National Team Coach, June 1998

Street Soccer Formats

There are many forms in which free play may be organized. The three formats below each have merit, but all free play should contain certain standards:

1. **No Coaching:** This of course defeats the purpose of "street" soccer. Adults should be present in supervisory roles to protect the safety of the players. They should not interfere with the play.
2. **No Parents:** We love you, but go shopping!
3. **No Referee:** Let the players determine what is a foul and how to settle borderline disputes.



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- 4. Players are responsible to organize the game.** Who players here? How should we defend, who marks who? Players need to make, perhaps for the first time, elementary decisions about how they play.
 - 5. Players keep and report their own score.**

Format #1: The Dutch Plan

This is basically a tournament format that demands the self-responsibility from players. Several charts are set up giving instructions on which field is which and when and where each player is to report to each game. Several games are played, each with different opponents and teammates but the collective score of the team is kept individually by the player. Scoring systems can be simple or complex. For example, award three points for a win and one point for a tie, award one point for each goal, or two points for a shutout. These can be used independently or in a combination.

The games are played on a 40x20 yard area with small goals and no goalkeepers to encourage distance shooting. Kick-in or throw-in, corners or no corners are options to be determined before the games begin.

Format #2: The Texas Plan

This format covers the same basic ideas as the Dutch Plan but the teams are permanent and rotate against other "set" teams. The groups change week to week but stay 4v4. Players can be organized into teams of 4-5 with one substitute. The order of substitution should be left up to the players. This game uses a field with one substitute. The order of substitution should be left up to the players. This game uses a 30x20 yard field with no offside and no goalkeeper. "Kick-ins" are preferred over throw-ins. Teams play five games of ten minutes each (running time) and keep their own score.

Format #3: The Florida Plan

This is another simplified version of the Dutch plan. Instead of using charts the coach simply lines the players up and counts the first four as team one and indicates which field they should play. Each player receives an individual number and keeps their own score. This score is given at the conclusion of each 6-10 minute game (running time). Players are asked not to play with those they have already been teamed with so that players must learn to play to the strengths and weaknesses of the moment.

GAME RULES & PROCEDURES

The purpose of the FSC Recreational League is to provide an opportunity for youth players to participate in a learning program that focuses on participation and fun over competition. The objective at each "fun activities" session and in each game is to teach youth players through age appropriate activities to further "player development" and develop the child's appreciation for the game of soccer.



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Small-Sided Game Format

The Fargo Soccer Club is helping the drive to the small-sided (fewer players on the field) game format. At FSC, we promote small-sided games in the Recreational League to give players more of an opportunity to “touch the ball”. This is an exciting and positive step for the future development of our youth players. What could be more fun and enjoyable than getting the opportunity to become more actively involved?

The benefits are clear:

- It's more appropriate for players
- Promotes better soccer
- Improves the player development process and speeds up the acquisition of skills
- More enjoyable for players
- Requires less field space
- Allows the smaller clubs to keep their recreational program in-house

The youth player has:

- More time with the coach
- More practical space to be successful
- Increased number of contacts with the ball
- More actual playing time
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- Required to make more decisions
- Experience repeating game situations more frequently
- The work rate and involvement of a player stays consistent

The small field allows for:

- More efficient use of space
- Games to be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children to be physically more efficient in smaller space
- Less time to achieve a goal or advance to goal, successfully
- Children to be actively involved for a longer period of time

ALL players should play about the same amount of time in each game. Players should have an opportunity to play in EACH position on the field. This is a no score, no standings, no protest league.

The Ball (general rule)

#3 soccer ball for Pre K, K, 1st and 2nd graders
#4 soccer ball for 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th graders

The Field (general rule)

Pre K and K 15 x 25 yds
1st and 2nd grade 25 x 40 yds
3rd and 4th grade 40 x 50 yds
5th, 6th and 7th grade 45 x 80 yds



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The fields are marked with “goal lines” at the ends and “touch lines” at the sides. A “halfway line” crosses the center of the field. All of the lines are part of the area that they delineate. For example, the touchline (at the end of the field) is part of the field. The ball is not “out” until the ENTIRE ball crosses the ENTIRE touchline.

Number of Players on the Field

Pre K and K play with three players or four players (NO goalkeepers).

If your team and your opponent have 7 or 8 players present for a game, you must play 4v4 so that no player sits for 2 consecutive shifts. Otherwise, play 3v3. If each team has 9 or 10 players, play 5v5.

All other teams will play on a U9/U10 field with five field players and one goaltender, i.e. 6v6. In cases where teams have more than 13-14 players present, each team should play with six field players and one goaltender, i.e. 7v7. In the rare instance when each team has 15-16 players present, each team should play with seven field players and one goaltender

Depending upon the number of players present on the team with the smallest roster, you may reduce the size of the on-field teams to four players PLUS a goalkeeper or even three players PLUS a goalkeeper. Use sound judgment.

If one or both teams have fewer than the above number of players, make the best game you can (have fun). Players may be placed in any arrangement deemed suitable by the coach.

Substitutions

No substitutions may be made while the ball is in play.

There are no referees. Coaches are expected to referee the game fairly, impartially and with an attitude of instructing and maintaining a safe environment for all players.

Both teams may substitute on throw-ins, goal kicks, after goals, when play is stopped for an injury or when a player is sent off. There are no substitutions on corner kicks or free kicks.

Players Equipment

FSC Recreational team uniforms must be worn. All players must wear shin guards and socks that entirely cover them.

No jewelry is allowed such as bracelets (including fabric bands), watches, neckwear, earrings (including small studs), hair ornaments containing metal or hard plastic.

Goalies must wear a jersey or t-shirt of a color different from either team playing. Tennis shoes (not slip-on shoes) are acceptable, turf shoes are optional.

Hats are not permitted by field players, although a goalkeeper may wear a hat with an approved soft bill based on the referee’s discretion. During cold weather, hats are permitted.



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Referees

There is no referee for any of our recreational programs. Coaches should referee.

Referees will determine if field and weather conditions permit play. All decisions of the referee shall be final.

Coaches and Spectators

All playing levels may have one coach from each team on the field to help direct players during the games. Two coaches per team are permitted for pre-k teams. As teams get older, coaches should consider remaining on the sidelines.

Both teams will be located on one side of the field and spectators on the opposite side. (Not recommended for pre-K and, possibly, K). No coaches or spectators will be behind the goal lines. No criticism or abuse of the referees, coaches or players is allowed.

If coaches, players or spectators are abusive, obnoxious or unruly, the referee shall suspend the game until the inappropriate behavior stops or the violators leave the field. If the violators refuse to leave the field, the referee will terminate the game.

Spectators, players and equipment (bags, coolers, etc.) must remain at least one-yard from the touchline. Coaches may be in this area, but must be aware of, and move out of the way of the line, people and players.

Changing game length: The game length may be shortened for reasons such as rain, heat, etc. at the referee's discretion. Ideally, each period will be shortened equally and the coaches will be advised prior to the start of play. **Additionally, during extreme heat and upon agreement of both coaches and the referee, one additional water break may be taken during each quarter. For those age groups playing halves, two additional water breaks may be taken.**

Pre-Game Conference

Coaches (and referees) should meet before the start of the game to introduce themselves and to ensure there is a consensus regarding the number of players, length of game, throw-in rules, etc.

The Start of Play

Coaches choose a captain before each game (every player should have an opportunity to be captain). The captains from each team meet at the center of the field with the referee (or coaches for PreK-2nd Grade). The referee tosses a coin or chooses a number between 1 and 10 with the visitors choosing. The winner of the toss/number chooses whether they want to kick-off first or defend a half.

The ball is placed at the center of the field. Players on both teams must stay on their own (defensive) half of the field and players on the non-kicking-off team must stay out of the center circle until the ball is kicked (touched by the kicker's foot).

If players encroach, the rule is explained and the kickoff is retaken without penalty. To start play, the ball is kicked and must be touched forward or if it travels backward, the rule is explained and the kickoff is retaken without penalty. The player kicking off cannot play the ball



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again until another player of either team has played it. If the two touch rule is violated (after the ball has been touched forward), an indirect kick is awarded to the receiving team at the point where the ball was played the second time.

A goal can be scored directly from a kickoff.

Ball In And Out of Play

The ball is considered out of play if it crosses completely over the goal line or over the touchlines. A ball that bounces off a goal post or cross bar remains in play. A ball that bounces off of the referee remains in play.

“Touched” is used in the descriptions below, not “played”. For example, if a red player kicks the ball and it touches a blue player before crossing the line, the ball is awarded to the red team.

The ball, when out of play, will be put into play in the following manner:

Throw-In

When the ball crosses the touchline (on the ground or in the air), a throw-in will be awarded to the opposing team of the player that last touched the ball. Note that it is the position of the ball, not the player, which is significant. A player may be outside the touchline and play the ball, or play the ball while in the air and land outside the touchline. It is the ball that must be out.

The throw in must be performed as follows:

The ball must be thrown from behind and over the head with both hands at the time of release. Both feet must be on the ground when the ball is released. The player making the throw may not play the ball again until another player (on either team) has touched the ball. If the ball is thrown but does not enter the field, the throw is retaken without penalty. A ball that enters the field and then leaves the field without touching anyone is awarded to the non-throwing team.

Age Group Guidelines

Pre K-2nd Grade: A throw-in per the following instructions occurs. No defender may be within 5-yards of the ball at the start of the throw-in.

All other grades: If after two throw-in tries, the referee/coach will explain what was wrong if done incorrectly and demonstrate a proper throw-in, if needed. Play will resume with the second try even if the throw is not done properly.

Goal Kick

A goal kick is awarded to the defending team when an attacking player is the last to touch the ball before it passes over the goal line (and a goal is not scored). The following rules apply to the goal kick:

The ball is placed on the ground on the penalty area line and is kicked into play by the defending team. Once kicked, the ball is in play. No defender may be within 5-yards of the ball. Any player may take the kick. The kicking player may not play the ball again until another player touches it.



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Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when a defending player is the last one to touch the ball before it passes over their own goal line (and a goal is not scored). It is awarded to the attacking team. The following rules apply to the corner kick:

The ball is placed entirely within the corner arc on the same side of the field as the ball went out of play. The kicking player may not play the ball again until another player touches it. Defending players must give 5-yards clearance.

Method of Scoring

A goal will be awarded when the ball passes underneath the cross bar between the goal posts and completely over the goal line, if not rule violations have been committed.

If the ball is in play, a goal is awarded to the attacking team regardless of how the ball crosses the goal line. A team can not intentionally score on itself but can do so accidentally. For example, it may be kicked in by a defender accidentally or carried in by the goalkeeper while failing.

A goal can be scored from field play as well as directly from a corner kick, kick-off or goal kick. After a legal goal is scored, the game is restarted by a kick-off at the center of the field by the defending team.

Fouls and Misconduct

The following fouls result in an **indirect free kick** awarded to the opposing team of the player on which the foul was called. *{Note: For pre-K-2nd Grade soccer, there should be no fouls called unless the offense is absolutely deliberate and the child has been instructed multiple times to discontinue the offense. Instead, stop play and let the offended team have an indirect free kick. There are no penalty kicks or direct free kicks in pre-K soccer.}*

Offside (described below)

Dangerous Play (include high kicks, sliding tackles, playing the ball while on the ground and any type of play that in the opinion of the referee may endanger the offending player or another player).

Impeding/Obstruction (intentionally obstructing a player to prevent them from playing the ball)

Charging (running into an opponent)

Playing the ball a second time (before it is touched by another player following a kick-off, free kick or corner kick)



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The following fouls result in a **direct free kick** awarded to the opposing team of the player on which the foul was called.

Pushing An Opponent

Kicking or Attempting to Kick an Opponent

Tripping or Attempting to Trip an Opponent

Jumping at an Opponent

Spitting or Swearing at an Opponent (the player will be sent off with no warning)

Hitting or Swinging at an Opponent

Holding or Pushing an Opponent

Intentionally Playing the Ball (with the hand intending to gain an advantage, if a player is “intentionally” trying to protect themselves the fouls shouldn’t be called unless a clear advantage is gained.)

A player may be sent off for spitting or swearing, or for other serious foul play or persistent infringement of the rules. The player may be immediately replaced by a substitution. The player sent off may not play for the remainder of the game.

Advantage

The referee will use the “advantage rule” whenever appropriate:

If the referee feels that the team that would be awarded a free kick would be placed at a disadvantage by stopping play, the referee will hand signal “advantage” and yell “play on”.

Players should never stop play as a result of something they observe, rather they should continue until they hear a whistle.

Once the referee applies the advantage rule, the foul cannot be called even if the advantage does not develop.

At times, the referee may signal advantage or say “play on” when no foul has occurred just to make it clear to players that play should continue.

Offside

An attacking player in the opponents half of the field is in an “offside position” if there are not two defending players (including the goalkeeper) even with the player or closer to the goal line.



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A player in an “offside position” is “offside” if the ball is played forward by a teammate and the player in the “offside position” is involved in the play. A player cannot be offside if receiving the ball from a throw-in, goal kick or corner kick.

Pre K-6th Grade: Offside will not be called unless an attacking player is “camping in the penalty area. The referee will warn the player and coach and call the next violation after the warning. If a goal is scored by a player who is blatantly offside, the goals should be disallowed and an indirect free kick awarded to the defending team.

An indirect free kick is awarded to the defending team at the point where the player was in the “offside position”.

Free Kicks

A free kick is awarded for certain violations. The ball is placed on the ground at the point where the violation occurred. Players must wait until the referee indicates (by whistle, word or motion) that the kick may proceed. Any player may kick the ball.

The opposing team must give 5-yards clearance for all grades. The ball must be touched forward before being played by another player. The kicking player may not play the ball until it is touched by another player.

There are two types of free kicks: direct and indirect.

Direct Free Kick

A goal can be scored directly from a direct free kick.

For 3rd graders and up, if the foul was committed by a defensive player within the penalty area, a penalty kick will be awarded. (See modified version below)

Indirect Free Kick

A goal cannot be scored directly from an indirect free kick. On an indirect free kick, if a ball is shot directly into the goal without touching another player of either team, the restart of play is a goal kick for the defending team.

The referee will raise an arm straight up into the air to indicate that the free kick is an indirect free kick, and lower the arm when the ball has been touched by another player to indicate that goal can now be scored.

If the foul was committed within the penalty area, the kick will be taken at the spot of the foul unless it is inside the goal area. If this occurs, the ball is moved to the nearest spot on the goal area line parallel to the goal line.

Penalty Kick



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If any of the fouls that would result in a direct free kick are committed by a defensive player in their own penalty area, a penalty kick shall be awarded. In the “spirit of the game,” there will be no traditional penalty kicks awarded as most teams do not have dedicated goal keepers and the fields are not of official size.

To perform a new style of PK, the ball is placed at a specific mark that is 10-yards from the goal line. The kick is performed exactly like an indirect free kick and the opposing team is allowed to set a wall, but must be 5-yards from the ball. The player who took the penalty kick may not play the ball again until another player of either team touches it.