



2012 Boys Youth Rules - FAQs

Do we have to follow USL rules to be USL members and use USL Insurance?

No, eligibility for USL insurance is not dependent on using USL age appropriate rules at this time.

How do I know what division my son should be in?

We will use U15 for as an example:

For U15 you must be under 15 (14 years or younger) on the cutoff date (August 31, 2011). The cutoff date proceeds the year of competition. We are looking at the competition year being Sept-August. This makes the summer tournament season the end of the competition year and the fall season (when most teams have tryouts for the next summer's club teams) the beginning of a new one. So, if you turned 15 in Sept 2011 you would be one of the oldest kids to qualify for U15 this year with the youngest kids being those who turn 15 in August 2012. The kids born in August would be 14 for almost the entire competition year, the kids born in Sept would be 15 for most of the competition year.

Do you have a chart that shows the cutoff for each age division?

Spring 2012 Age Grouping Quick Reference Table

<u>Birthdate</u>	<u>Age Bracket</u>
Born on or after 9/1/1996	U15
Born on or after 9/1/1998	U13
Born on or after 9/1/2000	U11
Born on or after 9/1/2002	U9

What rules should a 5/6 grade team be using?

It is very difficult to place grade divisions into age division because they do not line up. When kids are divided by grade there can be as much as 4 and sometimes even 5 year spread in age. It is for this specific reason that US Lacrosse age appropriate rules were developed with age based divisions for youth players. A child in 6th grade can be 10, 11, 12 or even 13 years old. We want to prevent the 10 year old from ever competing against the 13 year old on the field and so our rules subcommittees, following the recommendations of our Sport Science and Safety

Committee, specified that youth players should be divided by age rather than grade. Simply taking a set of age appropriate rules and applying them to a grade based division misses the fundamental intent of the rules which is for them to be applied to children of a specific age.

Can high school players compete in U15 if they are age eligible?

Kids who qualify for U15 but happen to attend a HS will be eligible for U15 play. However, we state in the rules that a player should not be doing both at the same time. We do not want kids playing on a HS team during the week and then at the local youth league on the weekend. This is a separate issue from eligibility and our concern here is overuse injuries and burn out. A U15 player who plays on a HS team in the spring could then compete at U15 during the summer when his season is over.

All of the USL age divisions contain two ages; can we divide our players into single age groups?

Yes, as long as the individual divisions play under the same age appropriate rules.

The new rules state "It is recommended that when multiple teams exist within a program, the program should consider physical size, skill, and maturity when organizing teams." Does this effectively permit tier programs at the younger levels (U9 & U11)?

We believe tiered play can be very valuable when used to benefit all players. Several of the biggest/best leagues around the country have both A and B divisions. This can help new players enter the sport, provide a safer environment for smaller or less mature players and also provide more equitable competition for new programs joining the league. I think there are some key factors to this being done properly. First is that there are actually two divisions not just towns making A and B squads that ultimately play in the same division with the A team having great success while the B team consistently loses. Also, it is important that the A and B divisions are treated equally with an emphasis on quality coaching at both levels. Field quality, officiating etc should all be carefully maintained to ensure all kids have a quality playing experience.

What we are saying in the section of rule you quoted is that often a big, strong, more mature kid belongs on the A team even if he is not yet a skilled lacrosse player. These kids tend to find success at the higher level and physically could create issues on a B squad. Our feeling is that leagues should be sure to consider all contributing factors when/if you choose to operate with A/B divisions.

Why would you define divisions by age when kids just want to play with their classmates?

We agree that it is great for kids to play with their classmates on teams and that there can be much gained from this experience. However, when this issue was addressed in making rules, safety of the players was the primary concern of the rules subcommittee. With grade based teams we have received complaints of kids as much as 5 years apart in age being on the same field. A quote from one such complaint letter:

“Is there an age limit for the respective age groups/divisions? If not, I think the USL should seriously consider imposing such a rule. Last year during a Lightning division game (3rd and 4th graders), we had the mother of the opposing team admit that her son

(who was a lot bigger than every kid on the field and was “tearing it up”) was 12. To no surprise, he was a lot faster and stronger than the 7-10 year olds that he was playing against given the five (5) year age differential between he and a few of our players”

This particular instance involved a kid who was two years “behind” in school. While this is uncommon, having kids one year ‘behind” (often intentionally held back by parents to gain an advantage) is something I hear about on a daily basis. By grouping kids by age rather than grade we eliminate parents’ ability to gain a competitive advantage for their children by holding them back in school (at least until HS). This rule has widespread support throughout the lacrosse community and is generally viewed as the best way to deal with a growing problem.

Will USL be creating age eligibility ID cards?

We recognize that there is a need for age verification but it is a complex issue and we have a lot of work to do to get to the point where everyone requires ID cards for participation. We do believe it is a step that has to be taken in our sport for both competitive and safety reasons and we are actively looking at the best ways to implement such a system.

Are kids allowed to “play up”?

The standard answer is that kids should compete in their appropriate age based division. That said, this is one of those "rules" that has exceptions and your son may be one of those. Over the years I have seen kids who although "playing up" were still the biggest fastest kid on the field. We specifically did not state anything about playing up in the rules for this reason. So, in the end it is a decision local leagues, coaches and most importantly parents need to make. You know your son's ability to be in physical competitive situations with older kids and should be able to make the best choice for your son. We do have concerns around this and we're sure you are aware of parents who might push a kid who is not ready into an older group thinking it will "toughen him up" or give him an advantage down the road.

Why not use U14 as the top division and then U12, U10, U8 as this is more like the old grade divisions?

There is a sizable group of students who do not qualify for U14 during their 8th grade year. In order to capture all of the “youth lacrosse eligible” players we needed to start with U15 as the oldest division and move down from there.

Why was the age cutoff moved from December 31 to August 31?

This was done for three reasons:

First, it was to get in line with the school cut off for most states. As we were looking at pushing for age vs grade divisions the issue that came up most often as a concern was that kids may not get to play with their classmates. Specifically it was pointed out by many people who contacted us that kids born in Sept, Oct, Nov and Dec can be on track grade wise (not held back or started early) but end up in a different division than the other 75% of the kids in their grade.

The second reason was to make the fall and the start of a new school year the time that kids shift divisions. The shift takes place after the summer tournament season and before the new fall

seasons starts. We found that most people consider the summer season the end of a cycle with the fall being the beginning of a new cycle.

Finally, the FIL (the international governing body) uses Aug 31 as the cut off for U19 play and in theory will use that cut off if they ever sponsor any other levels of international play. We use that cut off for U19 play to line up with FIL so it made sense to make the date consistent across the board.

Why is USL taking body checking out of the game?

USL does not want to remove body checking from lacrosse. The USL age appropriate rules are designed to provide an environment that foster development of critical skills in our youngest athletes. Body contact is introduced over time to prepare players for higher levels of play in high school and college but does so in a manner that creates the best playing experience at the younger ages. Research in a variety of sports has proven that player development and a positive playing experience are maximized when violent contact is limited or removed in the younger age divisions.

Are we “breaking the rules” if we schedule games on the hour and just play 20 minute halves at all age divisions?

The USL age appropriate rules were written to provide a great deal of flexibility in game times. USL recognizes that there are many factors at play locally when it comes to scheduling games and we wanted to give leagues the ability to do what works for their specific situation.