

Rules of the Game

Basic Rules for Youth Soccer

www.holdenyouthsoccer.org





Holden Youth Soccer – Soccer Rules of the Game

Introduction

Basic soccer rules for kids and adults. Soccer is a complex sport, but the rules are simple. The objective is to get the ball in the opposing team's goal.

The rules become more complicated and technical with the level of play. But even at the professional level they are quite simple. FIFA, International Federation of Football, holds the official rules to the game. The official rules may be modified in their application for players of under 19 years of age, female soccer players, veteran players (over 35 years of age), and for players with disabilities.

Any or all the following modifications are permissible:

1. size of the field of play.
2. size, weight, and material of the ball.
3. width between the goal posts and height of the crossbar from the ground.
4. duration of the periods of play.
5. substitutions.
6. rules related to safety.
7. age group accommodations.



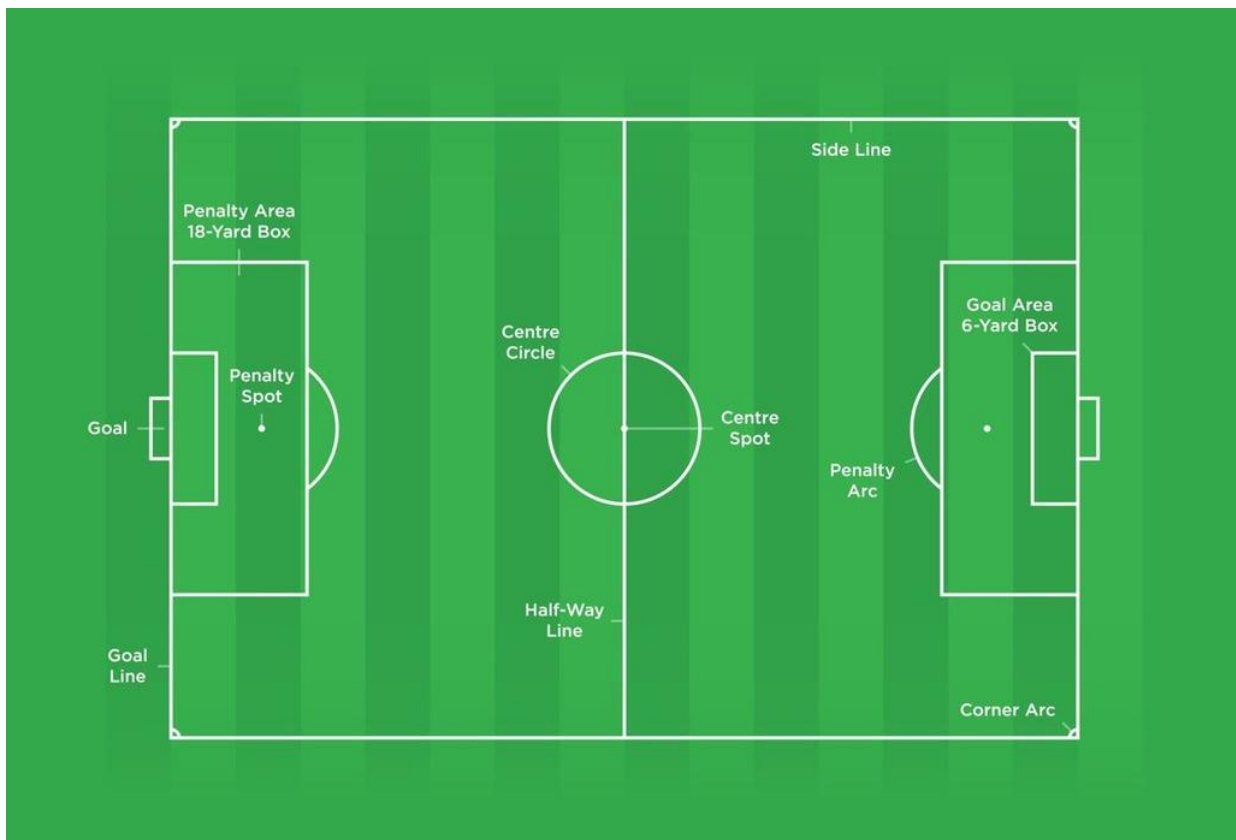
General Soccer Rules

Size of the Field

The field must be rectangular, that's pretty much it. The field size depends on good judgment of how many players on each side, and the size of your goals. The more you play or watch soccer the better you will get at judging a field size. You want it big enough to keep ball in play but small enough to engage all players and prevent kick and chase ball. To be considered true international competition basic soccer rules (11 vs 11) field must be:

- Length: minimum 100 m (110 yd) maximum 110 m (120 yd)
- Width: minimum 64 m (70 yd) maximum 75 m (80 yd)

MAYS (Our Travel Team League) prescribe field sizes, players, and game rules [here](#).





Ball Size

The ball size depends on age. Below are soccer size rules/guidance. We suggest the following sizes for all development programs:

- **U6** - Size 3 is a good size for introduction to soccer for younger players.
- **U8** - Size 3 is a good size for introduction to soccer for younger players.
- **U10** – Size 4 is better for players at this level, the more surface area the better for development. This is also mandated by MAYS for travel teams at this level.
- **U12** – Size 4 is better for players at this level, the more surface area the better for development. This is also mandated by MAYS for travel teams at this level.
- **U14 and above** – Size 5, this is the standard size for professional and adult soccer. We use this size for U14 and above. This size is also mandated by MAYS for travel teams at this level.

Players

Soccer is played by two team's preferably of equal number. Max players per team is 11 (Goalie + 10 field players). Team size is reduced by age.

We suggest the following numbers based on age and league:

- **U6** – 4v4 with as few substitutes as possible. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs.
- **U8** – 5v5 with as few substitutes as possible. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs.
- **U10** – 7v7 with a roster size of approx. 9-13. This has some flexibility for our in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams. The minimum numbers of players on the field are 5.
- **U12** – 9v9 with a roster size of approx. 11-18. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams. The minimum numbers of players on the field are 6.
- **U14 and above** – 11v11 with a roster size of approx. 13-22. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams. The minimum number of players on the field are 7.



Substitutions:

For youth leagues usually there is no cap on substitutions. A substitution can only be performed when the ball is not in play and your team has possession or on any goal kick. (Ex) it's a throw in for your team, or goal kick for your team or the opponent. Substitutions cannot be made when the ball is in play (even if your goalie has the ball in his/her hands. this is still in play). When there is a referee officiating a game, you will typically make substitutions at the halfway line on the referee's approval.

Durations

The standard duration of a soccer game is two 45 min halves separated by a 10–15-minute half time break. There is often a small amount of time added to the end of the game for injuries, substitutions, and goals. Game duration is reduced by age.

We suggest the following based in age group and league:

- **U6** – 10-20 min scrimmage based on the players comfort level.
- **U8** – 10-20 min scrimmage based on the players comfort level.
- **U10** – 2 x 25 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams.
- **U12** – 2 x 30 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams.
- **U14** – 2 x 35 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams.
- **U16** – 2 x 40 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams.
- **U19** – 2 x 45 min halves. This has some flexibility for out in-town programs but is mandated by MAYS for travel teams.

Equipment

The basic equipment needs for soccer are simple. Every player on the team should have a matching color jersey, wear shin pads under soccer socks, wear appropriate soccer footwear, and be wearing no form of jewelry at all.

Depending on the league (in-town vs MAYS D3 vs MAYS D1/2) these rules will be applied at various levels of scrutiny.

- There is **no** jewelry allowed – earrings of any type, bracelets, necklaces, watches.
- Medical/religious bracelets are allowed but must be secured or taped down.



- There are **no** rigid casts allowed – this includes soft hand/wrist/arm splints with metal in them.
- Knee braces with metal are **not** allowed.
- Soft hair items – pre-wrap or elastic bands are allowed.
- Barrettes, beads, or plastic clips in hair are **not** allowed.
- Sweatshirts are allowed if worn under the jersey and the hood is tucked in.
- Sweatpants worn over the uniform shorts and socks are allowed.
- Shin guards are required and worn under the socks.
- Socks are required and worn over the shin guards.
- Soccer footwear is required – no football or baseball cleats or footwear with metal studs.
- For MAYS D1/D2 season where teams qualify and play in the MTOC, some referees will require complete matching jersey, shorts, and socks to be worn.
- The goalkeeper, if applicable, needs to be distinguishable from the rest of the team and opposition.



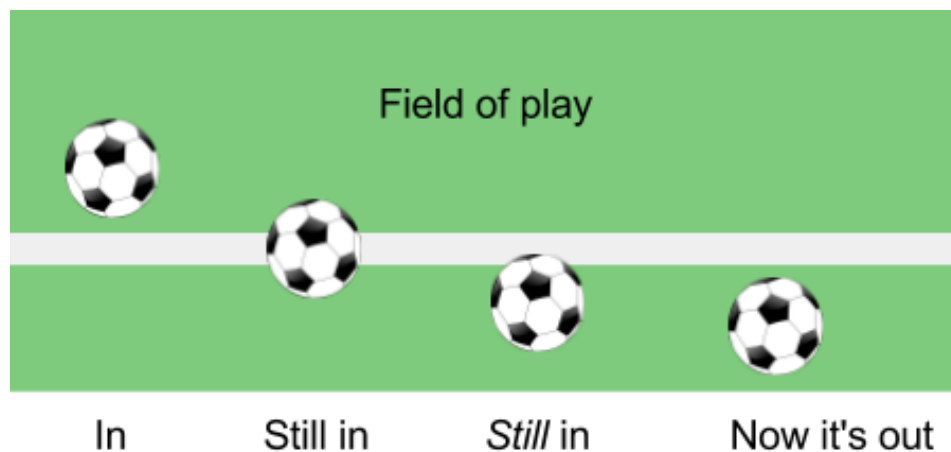
Playing Soccer Rules

Starting the Game

The game begins at the center of the field. The team who kicks off passes the ball to a teammate at the referee's signal. Before 2016 the ball had to move forward at kick off. This has been changed by the IFAB (The International Football Association Board). Now the ball can be passed back or forward at kick off. The opposing team is not allowed to enter the center circle until the team kicks off (some get confused with the refs whistle as the signal to play but it really begins with the team kicking off).

Game in Play

As long the ball stays in the field the game is in play. The only exception is when the referee blows his whistle for an infraction or offside. The ball is considered in play as long as it is inside the end lines and side lines. Furthermore, it's still in play as long as the entire ball has not crossed the entire line. Therefore, the ball may not be touching the end line or side line and still be considered in play (This applies if the ball is in the air as well). Contact with the goal post, or corner flag is still considered in play.



Goal

In the basic soccer rules the point of the game is to get the ball in the opposing teams goal and the team with the most goals after the specified time is the winner. The ball must cross the goal line to be a goal. Therefore, if the ball is still in contact with the end line in the inner part of the goal it is not a goal!



Outcome of the Match

A typical soccer match ends in either a win/loss or a draw. A win is when the referee ends the match, and a team has more goals than the other team. A losing team is the team that has less goals at the end of the match. A draw is when both teams have the same number of goals at the end of the match.

During tournament play, if the match ends in a draw, the game may continue. They will typically play two extra time halves. If the match still ends at a draw, the match will be decided on a penalty shoot-out.

Ball in and out of bounds

If the ball crosses the sideline, it is a throw in. The team who did not touch the ball last before the ball crossed the line gets the throw in. If the ball crosses the end line two things may occur. If the team that is defending that end line touches it out it is a corner kick. If the team attacking that end kicks it out it is a goal kick

The Throw In: When the ball leaves the field from the side or touch line it is a throw in. The sideline assistant referee or referee, if available, signals who's throw in it is by point the flag to the direction that team is attacking. There are no offsides on throw ins, and you can't score directly from a throw in. A proper throw in is both feet need to have contact with the ground at time of throw. Also, the arms need to move from back of the head to the front over the head. No side throws allowed.

Goal Kicks: A goal kick is given when the attacking team touches the ball last before it leaves the end or goal line. The goalkeeper (or any other player on his team) places the ball anywhere in the goal area to restart play. Prior to 2019 the ball had to leave the penalty box before a second player could touch it. This has since changed. Now, the ball can be a simple touch to a teammate inside the penalty box. The opposing team is not allowed inside the penalty box when the kick is taken.

In U10 games, leagues (including our in-town league) require the defending teams to recede behind a 'build-out' line on the opposing teams goal kicks. This is to allow the team with the ball the opportunity to play out from the back instead of just kicking the ball long every time. Some fields have a specific build out line, but most use the halfway line.

Corner Kicks: A corner kick is given when the defending team touches the ball last before it goes over their end or goal line. The corner kick is taken from the corner kick area. The ball needs to be on or inside the lined area. It is a direct kick so the ball can go directly in the goal without touch a person. Also, the nearest defender needs to be at least 10 yards away from the corner on a full side pitch.



Offside

Only an attacker can be considered offside. The offside rule does not apply to the team without the ball.

A player is offside when they are on the opponent's half of the field, closer to the defending team goal or end line than both the ball and the opponent's second last player when the ball is played (passed to or passed into an area in which the player engages in play).

Things to know:

- The goalkeeper counts as one of the two players.
- Any part of the body which can legally play the ball (knee, foot, head or even buttocks) is considered offside.
- You are not offside if you are even with either or both of the two players.

Offside position versus offside offense

One thing to know is that just because you are offside, it doesn't mean you get a freekick. If you are just standing offside, that is generally okay. If you are standing offside and then get involved in the play, then that is an offside offense.

Other things to know:

- Your offside position is determined when the ball is touched by a member of your team. This means that if you are not offside at the moment your team member kicks the ball to pass it to you, then you can legally pursue the pass.
- Offside can be a very difficult call to make for the referees. Different angles can make the same play look different to different people playing the game.
- The penalty for an offside offense is an indirect free kick for the opposing team.

Offside examples:



The player is offside because only one player (the goalkeeper) is between the player and the goal when the pass is made.



Here the player is not offside because two players are between him and the goal.



In this example the player is not offside because there are two players between him and the goal at the time when the ball is kicked for the pass.



Fouls and Misconduct

The referee has the obligation of catching and enforcing infractions of the rules.

Misconduct may have on or a combination of the following consequences:

- Direct Kick - See Free kicks.
- Indirect Kick - See free kicks.
- Yellow Card - Warning and the second yellow is a red.
- Red Card - Direct expulsion from the game with possible further repercussions.

Common misconduct behaviors are:

- Fouls (pushing, tripping, pulling, overly aggressive play.
- Hand balls.
- Vulgar behavior (spitting, verbal threats and insults, bad sportsmanship behavior etc.)

These apply to players, coaches, and parents.

Free Kicks:

There are two types of free kicks in soccer.

Indirect: Indirect kicks are awarded for less violent or interruptions to the game. It is awarded at the spot the ball was last and does not need a referee's whistle to restart unless the attacking team asked for their 10 yards to the wall. The ball must touch another player before it can directly be kicked into the goal.

Direct: The direct kick, on the other hand, can be directly kicked to goal on the restart whistle by the referee. The 10 yards to the wall is also applied here.

The Penalty Kick

A penalty is awarded when the defending team commits an infraction or foul on or inside the 18-yard penalty box. The ball is placed on the penalty spot (12 yards from the goal line) and the shooter must kick the ball in one forward motion without touching the ball twice. The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line until the shooter strikes the ball.