

US YOUTH SOCCER

ADDENDUM

MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR U8

Law 1 The Field of Play: dimensions are smaller to accommodate the four-versus-four game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of six- and seven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the center circle gives the players a concrete marking on where to be for the kick-off. The corner arc gives the young player a concrete place to put the ball to kick it back onto the field of play. While kids this young will execute corner kick plays to a modest degree taking a kick from the corner is a reasonable way for them to put the ball into play and provides continuity with all other age groups. However, the center circle and the corner arc for U8 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet or smaller, is the same for the U6 to U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for these age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals and there will be greater flexibility in the use of fields. A big goal without a goalkeeper should mean a few more goals for kids whose shooting technique is primitive along with their eye-foot coordination. Let's give them the broad side of the barn at which to shoot, the more goals the merrier. Finally the shooting odds for the U8 age group are one versus seven, so let's give them a chance by having a larger target. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for U8 Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use cones, pop-up goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

Law 2 The Ball: must be a size three. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

Law 3 The Number of Players: there are no goalkeepers in the U8 age group so that all of the players may chase the ball around the field. The kids want to be where the action is and at this age it is around the ball. This will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop

US YOUTH SOCCER

their running, jumping and kicking coordination. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting, passing and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeated game situations frequently. The involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. Children in the U8 age group will intentionally play in pairs. The smaller number of players on the field will make it easier and more likely that passing and receiving will occur.

There should not be a minimum number of players for U8 and U6 and clubs, administrators, coaches and referees should be encouraged to allow players from the team with sufficient numbers to 'loan' a player or two to the team that is short players and then PLAY.

The rationale for substitutions at any stoppage is to give more playing time as noted. Allowing subs at any stoppage is on the same page as FIFA. The only thing that we need remember is that play must be stopped for all substitutions; we can never allow on-the-fly substitution.

Law 5 The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should officiate the game. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player. It is strongly recommended that the adult officiating the U8 game attend the Grade 9 referee course.

Law 6 The Assistant Referees: none are needed.

Law 7 The Duration of the Match: the game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the U8 age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

Law 10 Goal Scored: shall conform to FIFA.

Law 11 Offside: there shall be no offside called during these games.

US YOUTH SOCCER

Law 12 Fouls and Misconduct: no caution or send off shall be issued to players. If a child is being too rambunctious then the game official will ask the coach to make a substitution of that player to give the child a chance to calm down before returning to play.

Law 13 Free Kicks: all free kicks shall be direct. This will keep the game flowing and keep the attention of the kids.

Law 14 The Penalty Kick: there will not be any penalty kicks called.

Law 15 The Pass-In: some U8 players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. This leads to endless retakes from one team to the other. Additionally with a pass-in the ball is on the ground and stationary so the U8 player has a better chance of striking it correctly. This may lead to some intentional passes, thus encouraging teamwork. However, this is still unlikely given that whether it is a throw or a kick all of the kids on the field will be yelling for the ball at the same time and the child putting the ball into play will be confused.

Law 16 The Goal Kick: the kick should be allowed to be taken from anywhere along the goal line over which the ball traveled. This is so the ball can be put back into play quickly. The ball should be placed two or three yards into the field of play to make it easier for the child taking the goal kick to get the ball well into the field of play once it is kicked. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play. If the suggestion of using the halfway line is used then the defending players must stand at least at the halfway line until it is in play. The position of the defending players is so that the attacking team has a chance to advance the ball up field.

Law 17 The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play.

⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the recommended minimum roster size is six players and the maximum roster size is eight players. Under the dual field method the recommended minimum roster size is ten players and the maximum

US YOUTH SOCCER

roster size is twelve players. This range of roster sizes allows for a club to use either the single field or dual field set up.

- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of at least 50% playing time is required.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See appendix for options.
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- More time with the coach
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- More efficient use of field space
- Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- Greater success rate for the players

US Youth Soccer Recommendations

- ❖ Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- ❖ Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- ❖ No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.
- ❖ Coaches of U8 teams should attend the U6/U8 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course.

US YOUTH SOCCER

Effective Playing Time Relative to Game Format and Roster Size

Single Game	Roster Size >	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Game Format	Game Duration																
3 v 3 (U-5/6)	4 x 8 min. quarters	100% 32 min	75% 24 min	60% 19 min	50% 16 min												
4 v 4 (U-7/8)	4 x 12 min. quarters		100% 48 min	80% 38 min	66% 32 min	57% 27 min	50% 24 min										
5 v 5 (U-7/8)	4 x 12 min. quarters			100% 48 min	83% 40 min	71% 34 min	62% 30 min	55% 26 min	50% 24 min								
6 v 6 (U-9/10)	2 x 25 min. halves				100% 50 min	85% 42 min	75% 37 min	66% 33 min	60% 30 min	54% 27 min	50% 25 min						
8 v 8 (U-11/12)	2 x 30 min. halves						100% 60 min	88% 53 min	80% 48 min	72% 43 min	66% 40 min	61% 36 min	57% 34 min	53% 32 min	50% 30 min		

Split Game	Roster Size >	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Game Format	Game Duration																
3 v 3 (U-5/6) Split	4 x 8 min. quarters				100% 32 min	85% 27 min	75% 24 min	66% 21 min	60% 19 min	54% 17 min	50% 16 min						
4 v 4 (U-7/8) Split	4 x 12 min. quarters						100% 48 min	88% 42 min	80% 38 min	72% 34 min	66% 32 min	61% 29 min	57% 27 min	53% 25 min	50% 24 min		
5 v 5 (U-7/8) Split	4 x 12 min. quarters								100% 48 min	90% 43 min	83% 40 min	76% 36 min	71% 34 min	66% 32 min	62% 30 min	58% 28 min	55% 26 min
6 v 6 (U-9/10) Split	2 x 25 min. halves										100% 50 min	92% 46 min	85% 42 min	80% 40 min	75% 37 min	70% 35 min	66% 33 min

These tables show effective playing time relative to game format and roster size. The figures are presented as a) percentages of total playing time and b) as actual minutes played. Both figures assume equal rotation of players. At the youth level, a minimum goal of 70% playing time is recommended.

Tables provided by Dr. Thomas Turner with contributions from Mr. Bill Spens.