



Understanding the New Age-Group Structure for Fall 2026 and Beyond

Beginning with the **Fall 2026 season**, U.S. youth soccer organizations are changing how age groups are formed. Instead of grouping players by **calendar year (Jan–Dec)**, teams will now be organized by the “**seasonal year**,” which runs from **August 1 to July 31**, more closely aligned with the school calendar.

As a sanctioned member of **U.S. Youth Soccer** and the **New Hampshire Soccer League**, **FC Exeter will follow these guidelines** when forming teams for Fall 2026 and beyond.

When Does the Change Start?

Not until the Fall 2026 season. **This change DOES NOT impact rosters and teams for the Spring 2026 season.** Those teams will still be formed based on calendar year (Jan. – Dec.) birthdates.

Player evaluations for fall teams are held in late May or early June. Those evaluations will be conducted **using the new structure**, with groups broken up according to the seasonal-year (Aug. 1-July 31) guidelines.

Why Is This Happening?

The switch is designed to:

- **Keep kids with their school classmates**
Most players will now play with friends in their school grade, which is intended to help with team cohesion, social comfort and player retention.
- **Reduce “trapped players”**
These are players placed in an older soccer age group than their school grade because of their birthdate. The new system aims to eliminate this, allowing players to participate with their peers from school and other grade-based activities.

- **Reverse a previous decision**

This marks a reversal of the 2016 shift to birth-year registration (January 1–December 31), which was intended to align with international standards but created retention challenges and misalignment with school grades.

How the New System Works

Each age group now includes birthdates from **August 1 through July 31** of the following year.

Age Group	Birthdate Range
U8–9*	Aug. 1, 2017 – July 31, 2019
U10	Aug. 1, 2016 – July 31, 2017
U11	Aug. 1, 2015 – July 31, 2016
U12	Aug. 1, 2014 – July 31, 2015
U13	Aug. 1, 2013 – July 31, 2014
U14	Aug. 1, 2012 – July 31, 2013
U15	Aug. 1, 2011 – July 31, 2012
U16	Aug. 1, 2010 – July 31, 2011
U17	Aug. 1, 2009 – July 31, 2010
U18	Aug. 1, 2008 – July 31, 2009

** FC Exeter's U8 and U9 levels are combined and play at the U9 age level.*

Does This Mean My Child Will “Move” Age Groups?

Players with birthdays between Aug. 1 and Dec. 31 will **repeat** the level in which they played this past year. Other players will **move to the next age level**.

FC Exeter will move to the new age-group guidelines for all ages. While the club will not consider requests to “play up,” there may be instances where players are combined between two age ranges to accommodate roster-size requirements or needs.
