



## **Tots Rules of play – 4 and Under (4U)**

### **US YOUTH SOCCER**

#### Parenting Education | Small-Sided Games

... Education | **Small-Sided Games** The Tots (U3-U4) age group is a crucial transition period for players. For players to improve their soccer skills, it's necessary to look at long term development rather than focusing on winning right now. A key to helping players develop at this age is to play **small-sided** games ...



#### **Introduction:**

- 1. Be creative, allow parents on field to assist with their kids,**
- 2. Have parents sit all around the field to stop the ball when out of play, to allow the game to flow.**
- 3. Decorate goals to show which way players should go.**
- 4. No kick-ins should be necessary if the ball is kept in play by parents.**
- 5. Cheer for all goals.**
- 6. This is the first experience in team sports for these little ones, make it fun for them.**

#### **Format:**

- 1. 4 v 4**
- 2. No Goalkeeper**
- 3. Unlimited Substitution**

**Game Duration:**

1. **Four (4) six (6) minute quarters.**
2. **Two (2) minute water break between quarters.**
3. **Five (5) minute half time.**

**Number of players per team:**

**A teams can roster a maximum of 8 players** – Four (4) field players and three to four substitutes. Teams are allowed to roster less than six players if they choose (A team must have a minimum of 4 field players). Players may only play on one team per age group.

**Kick Offs / Kick Ins / Direct and Indirect Kicks / Goal Kicks / Penalty Kicks:****Kick Offs**

May be kicked in any direction. You cannot score directly from a kick off (ball must be 100% over the midline to be considered on the offensive half of the field). The kick off is an indirect kick.

**Kick-ins**

The ball shall be kicked into play from the sideline, rather than thrown in. The ball is considered in play when the ball is touched and changes position. This is an indirect kick, and a goal cannot be scored from this kick.

**Direct and in-direct kicks**

All dead-ball kicks (kick-ins, kick-offs, free kicks) are indirect with the exception of corner kicks, hand balls and penalty kicks. Indirect kicks must only change position before the ball will be considered in play. If a free kick is awarded within five yards of the opposing goal box, the ball will be moved back to five yards from the box. It is the referee's discretion where the ball will be placed.

**Goal kicks**

May be taken from any point of the end line. All Goal Kicks are indirect kicks.

**Penalty kicks**

Shall be awarded if, in the referee's opinion, a scoring opportunity was nullified by an infraction (the infraction does not automatically result in a red card). Penalty kicks are **DIRECT** kicks taken from the center of the mid-line with all players (on both teams) behind the midline. Penalty kicks are dead ball infractions. If a goal is not scored, the defense obtains possession with a goal kick.

**Five-Yard Rule**

In all dead-ball situations, defending players must stand at least five yards away from the ball. If the defensive player's goal is closer than five yards, the ball shall be played five yards from the goal box in line with the direction of play prior to the penalty.

**Goal Scoring**

A goal may only be scored from a touch (offensive or defensive) within the team's offensive half on the field. The ball must be completely on the offensive half of the field, and cannot be touching the midline (Example: kick-off). If a player in their defensive half kicks the ball across

the midline and the ball hits another player (offensive or defensive) in their offensive half, and the ball goes in the goal, a goal will be awarded. If a ball is kicked from the defensive half and is not touched before the ball rests in the goal, a goal kick is awarded to the defensive team. A goal cannot be scored from an indirect kick, such as a kick-in from out-of-bounds. See below for “Plane of the Goal / Net Interference.”

#### **Goalkeepers / Off-sides / Slide Tackling / Hand Ball Clarification:**

There are no Goalkeepers. We don’t play with offside and no slide tackling is allowed. If a player is sliding for the ball, contact with any player(s) from the other team is NOT ALLOWED. If a player slides and contact is initiated, a free kick shall be awarded. This does not prevent players from sliding to stop/intercept a ball where contact is not initiated during the slide. Example: a player may slide to save a ball from going out-of-bounds.

#### **Handball Clarification**

Deliberate handling of the ball that denies a team an obvious goal-scoring opportunity will result in the following: (1) A penalty kick (at the discretion of the referee) (2) A yellow or red card given to the player committing the hand ball (at the discretion of the referee).

#### **Field Dimensions**

The playing field is about 55 by 95 feet. The goals are approximately four feet high and 6 feet wide.

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