



SOCCER

A beginner's guide





Have a child starting soccer?

To a newcomer, any sport can seem overwhelming. But, there's a reason why soccer is popular all over the world. Besides just being fun, it's super accessible — all you really need to play is a ball. It does help, however, to understand a few of the fundamentals of the game, as well as what your child will want to get started. This guide has all the information you need, so you can feel prepared when your child steps onto the field for the first time.



WORDS OF ADVICE

We asked parents and coaches what they wish they had known about soccer from the get-go.

Pick the right program for your child.

There are tons of ways to play soccer, and each will offer different playing styles, and time and financial commitments. Be sure you understand what you're signing up for before you start. (For more on this, see Ways to Play on page 8.)

A good coach can make all the difference.

Look for a coach who can be a good role model for your child, and who is accessible, candid, and a good communicator. It's also helpful to understand the coach's views on things like playing time, discipline, player development, and expectations for practice and the off-season.

Cheer on — don't coach — your child.

That is, at least when they're at practice or a game. From the field, it can be hard to hear both a parent or guardian and the coach. Leave this job to the coach to avoid confusing the player.

Sports aren't a financial plan for college.

Less than 1 percent of high school athletes receive athletic scholarships, and only 0.03 to 0.05 percent go on to play professionally. Encourage your child to play because he or she enjoys it, and for the benefits of being active and learning life skills like teamwork, conflict resolution, and leadership.

You can practice anywhere.

Practice will help make your kid a better player, but it doesn't have to be formal or structured. Grab a ball and kick it around in the park, or juggle the ball on your feet in the house.

Social development is as important as the game.

Many people don't realize that communication has a large role in soccer. Your child will talk with their teammates on the field, as well as with coaches and referees during games. This means your child will not only meet new people, but he or she will learn social skills, too.

Be upfront with the coach.

The more the coach knows about your kid, the better he or she will be able to coach them. If there's anything you want him to know about your kid's background, skills, goals, or struggles, be open about it.

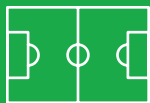
Don't overthink it.

In the beginning, there really isn't a lot of prep you or your child needs to do before they can play. Sign up and get the right equipment (for more on this, see Dressed to Play on page 7), then let the coach do the work of teaching your child how to play the game.

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/words-of-advice



The highest-level professional soccer league in the United States is Major League Soccer, which played its first season in 1996. It includes 24 teams, with 21 located in the United States and three in Canada.



FUNDAMENTALS OF THE GAME

While it's not necessary to be well versed in all aspects of the game before your child starts, it is helpful to understand some of the basics.



Time

Games are played in two halves or four quarters, with breaks in between.

JUNIOR

4-10

MINUTE
QUARTERS

YOUTH

25-30

MINUTE
HALVES

**TEENS &
ADULTS**

35-45

MINUTE
HALVES



Team

The number of players on the field varies based on your age.

JUNIOR

3-5

PLAYERS

YOUTH

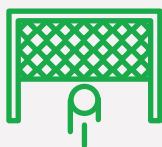
6-11

PLAYERS

**TEENS &
ADULTS**

11

PLAYERS



Score

The ball must enter the goal, crossing the goal line entirely.

1

POINT
PER GOAL

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/soccer-fundamentals



A 2018 survey conducted across the Americas, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia showed soccer to be an interest of more than 40 percent of the population, or 736 million people, a number that's well above any other sport.



THE BASIC RULES

You'll want your child to do his or her best to follow these six fundamental guidelines.



No Hands

Unless you're the goalie or are attempting a throw-in, you're not allowed to use your hands in play. In soccer, hands refer to anything from your fingers to your shoulders.



Throw-Ins

When the ball crosses the sideline and goes out of bounds, a throw-in is taken by a member of the team who didn't kick it out. The player will plant both feet on the ground, using both hands to throw the ball straight overhead and back into play.



Goal and Corner Kicks

These are taken when the ball is kicked out of bounds behind the goal line. If the offensive team kicks it out, the defensive team takes a goal kick from inside the goal box. If the defensive team kicks it out, the offensive team takes a corner kick from the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.



Direct and Indirect Kicks

Every kick is considered an indirect kick unless it comes from a foul or hand ball. You can score on a direct kick by kicking the ball directly into the goal, whereas on an indirect kick the ball must be touched by another player before you can score.



Game in Play

So long as the ball is on the field inside of bounds, the game is considered in play. The only exception to this rule is if the referee calls for an infraction or offside (offside is applicable to ages 11 and older only).



Fouls

It's the referee's or coach's responsibility to monitor safe play and fouls, but, in general, the intent is to go for the ball, not the player. You can't kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, or hold an opponent. If a foul does occur, the team who was fouled gets a free, direct kick at the location of the foul.

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/basic-soccer-rules

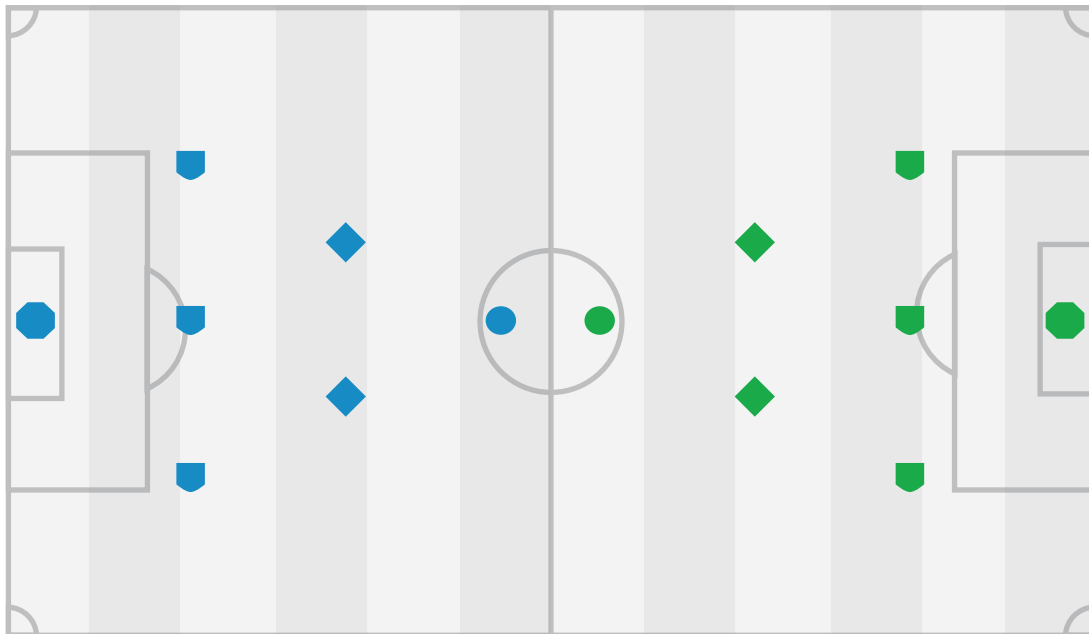


The word soccer is thought to have originated in Britain some 200 years ago, coming from the official sport name, association football. The term soccer gained popularity in the United States, but by the 1980s Brits began to part with it, calling it football instead.



GETTING INTO POSITION

Soccer positions vary based on age and competitive level. Young players start by trying all roles, then, as they get older and more positions are introduced, they'll likely find one they like to play more often than others. These are the four basic positions that set the foundation for the game.



Forwards

These players help to hold up or initiate play and create scoring opportunities.



Midfielders

These players help get the ball from one side of the field to the other, playing both offense and defense.



Defenders

These players help protect the goal, but do so from the field rather than the goal box.



Goalie

This player's job is to defend the goal, blocking shots from the opposing team.

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/soccer-positions



Soccer is often referred to as the beautiful game, a phrase that was associated with the sport after Brazilian soccer star Pelé called it such in Portuguese: *jogo bonito*.



SOCCER TERMS EXPLAINED

Communication is a big part of the game. Your child will be introduced to more words and phrases as they play and get into specific situations, but these are some of the first ones you might hear.

Corner Pass

This is how you'd set up a crossing pass. As you run down the field to score, kick the ball into the corner for your teammate to go after and kick back to you.

Crossing Pass

This is when you kick the ball from the corner or side of the field into the middle to one of your teammates in an attempt to score.

Give-and-Go Pass

If you have the ball and want to pass it to your teammate so you can get open before getting the ball back, you'd yell out "give and go."

Golazo

This is what you'd shout if someone on your team made a really impressive goal. Golazo!

Make a Run

When your teammate throws in or kicks off the ball, don't just stand there and watch. Instead, move in a figure-eight position to get open, then run to an open space so they can pass you the ball.

Nutmeg

When the attacker kicks the ball through the defender's legs without the defender being able to stop it.

Open Space

The area of the field that no one from either team is using. If you hear this, go to that space and own it.

Overlap Pass

If you have the ball and your teammate runs past you from behind and yells "overlap," that means you should pass the ball forward so they can take the ball on the run.

Support

If you have the ball but the other team is defending close to you, your teammate might yell "support," indicating you should pass them the ball, run to get open, then be ready for a return pass.

Use Your Body

If the ball is coming at you, get in front of it and use any part of your body (except your hands, of course) to stop, redirect, or control the ball.

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/soccer-jargon



The FIFA World Cup is, along with the Olympics, one of sport's two largest events on a global scale, generating cumulative audience figures in the billions when it's held every four years.



DRESSED TO PLAY

Soccer is a minimal equipment sport, but there are a few items your child will need for the game.



Shin Guards

These come in different sizes based on your child's height and weight. Look on the package for a guide to what size is best for your child. (Tip: shin guards are meant to be worn inside their socks.)



Soccer Socks

These socks are made of athletic-intended materials and are long enough to fit over the length of the shin guards.



Cleats

Get soccer-specific cleats; never choose metal ones. If you're just starting out, tennis shoes are OK, but cleats are recommended.



Athletic Clothes

Your child will want to wear clothing that's easy to move around and run in, such as athletic shorts and a T-shirt, avoiding anything heavy or baggy. If your child needs a jersey or pinnie, the team or organization will either provide it or have it available for purchase.



Water Bottle

This isn't required, but we definitely encourage it. Your child will be running around a lot, and hydration is key.

Soccer Ball

The size of ball your child will need depends on his or her age. Follow these guidelines when purchasing.



SIZE 3 (JUNIOR)

for ages 8 and under



SIZE 4 (YOUTH)

for ages 8 to 12



SIZE 5 (ADULT)

for ages 13 and older

For more information, visit: community.sportsengine.com/soccer-kits



The number of high school girls who play soccer is almost equal to the number of boys.



WAYS TO PLAY

There are a lot of soccer programs available, each with varying types of structure and levels of commitment. Research all of your options first to find the one that will be the right fit for your child.

Club Soccer

INTENSITY



Age: 8 and older	Good for: Those who want to increase their skills and push themselves to play better.
Commitment: Clubs typically play year-round in some capacity, with practices three to five times a week. They can also involve travel at a metro, regional, or state level, and often require a larger financial and time commitment.	Structure: These leagues are focused on skill development and competition. Players often need to try out and be assigned to a team. In this format, you'll tend to see higher-level players and coaches.

School Soccer

INTENSITY



Age: Middle and high schoolers	Good for: Those who want to represent their school, playing with classmates and friends.
Commitment: This tends to be the middle ground between community/recreational and club soccer. There's a mid-level financial commitment, and you'll likely practice daily during the season.	Structure: Like club soccer, school soccer is a formal league with tryouts. However, it does differ in that there's usually a team for everyone, based on skill level. Your competition will often be opposing schools.



WAYS TO PLAY (CONT.)

Community/Recreational Soccer

INTENSITY



Age: Young kids to adults	Good for: Those who enjoy the game, but view it more as a way to stay active with friends.
Commitment: These leagues tend to be lower cost and require a smaller time commitment. You'll typically play for a defined season, practicing one to two times a week, with no expectations for off-season training.	Structure: The goal is to learn the basics of the sport, then just get out and play. It tends to be less intense and competition-focused. In general, anyone and everyone can play, and coaches are typically volunteers or parents.

Life Time Sport

INTENSITY



Age: 5 and older, including teens and adults	Good for: Those who enjoy the playing aspect of soccer. You can choose to play soccer here for fun, or do so in addition to another team you're on.
Commitment: There are no tryouts or committing to a season — just come and play when it works for your schedule. There are drop-in and day passes available, and you don't have to be a Life Time member to play.	Structure: The structure can be as tight or loose as you prefer. Knowledgeable coaches are there to help with skill development or to just facilitate play.



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