

FAIRFIELD SPORTS
SOCCER RULES 3rd/4th Grade Division
August 2025
Adapted from the US Soccer Policy: Rules of the Game
April 2022

INTRODUCTION

All players, coaches, and parents will adhere to the Fairfield Sports Association Soccer Code of Conduct. Any violations of the Code of Conduct may result in removal from fields for the parent and potentially the player.

1) THE FIELD OF PLAY.

- a) The field of play shall be 125' by 160'.
- b) The team is allowed to have one coach and one assistant coach on the same sideline as the players.
- c) All parents should be on the opposite side of the players. No parents or coaches are allowed near the goals.

2) THE BALL.

- a) A size 4 ball shall be used for the U9/10 division.
- b) The ball must be properly inflated (~10 psi) and be firm to the touch.

3) PLAYERS.

- a) Teams will play 8 v 8, including the goalkeeper unless granted permission to play 9v9 by commissioner.
- b) Roster permitting, each child will play the equivalent of 1 full half.
 - i) Goalkeepers are only allowed to play 1 half in goal.
- c) A game may not start unless each team has at least five (5) players on the field. The minimum number on the field shall be five (5) players including the goalkeeper. Players who arrive late may enter the game when the ball is not in play.
- d) Substitutions are unlimited.
 - i) They can be made at any natural stoppage of play. Substitutions need to be cleared by the referee before play resumes. Oncoming players can only enter the field when the player coming off the field is out of play. Any endline or sideline is acceptable for being out of play.
- e) Only players on the team's roster shall represent that team on the field. Under no circumstances will un-registered players be allowed to play in any games.
- f) No team can use fill-in players during the tournament.
- g) One player from each team must be designated as a goalkeeper. The goalkeeper's attire shall be such that they are easily distinguishable from their teammates.

4) PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT.

- a) Coaches are responsible for checking their players' equipment before each game.
- b) Shorts, socks, a team jersey, cleats, and shin guards are required.
 - i) The league will provide team shirts and shorts.
 - ii) Socks MUST be worn OVER the shin guards. This is for the protection of all players.
 - iii) The goal keeper's jersey will be provided by the league. It will be bright in color and contrast to all the other players jerseys.
 - iv) Shin guards shall be made of suitable material (rubber, plastic, polyurethane, or similar substance) and shall afford a reasonable degree of protection.
 - v) Cleats are required, they must be soccer cleats. No stud in the front center of the cleat like used in baseball and football. If a player does not have cleats, that child may play, but the coach should strongly advise the parents to have cleats for safety purposes.
- c) Players are not allowed to wear items that could cause harm to themselves or other players. Think watches, rings, or shiny things. (e.g., rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, hair clips...etc.)
- d) **Earrings are not allowed during game play.** Covering the earring with tape is not acceptable as a cover-up. The backing of the earring can push through the tape and become a hazard.
- e) Long hair must be tied up and back with a safe, elastic-type band.

5) REFEREES.

- a) The referee shall actively encourage good play and discourage marginal behavior.
- b) The referee acts as timekeeper and record keeper.
- c) Goals scored, red cards, and yellow cards will be kept by the referee.
- d) The referee shall enforce these rules but may let play continue and not call a foul if he thinks that it is an advantage to the fouled team. The referee should indicate his decision by saying "advantage, play on." If the advantage does not develop, the referee shall stop play, and penalize the original offense.
- e) No one is allowed on the field of play without the referee's permission.
- f) The referee may caution and send players off the field using the yellow and red card format.
- g) **The referee's decisions are final.**
- h) Note: US Soccer (USYSA) rules apply unless otherwise stated.

- i) Coaches or parents who attempt to intimidate or verbally abuse the referee may be subject to removal from the field and premises at the referee's discretion.

6) DURATION OF THE GAME. USYSA Rule 303 Section 1

- a) The games shall be divided into 2 equal halves of 25 minutes each.
- b) Substitutions may be made any time the ball is not in play, or a player has been injured. All substitutions need the referee's approval.
- c) Halftime shall last no more than 5 minutes.
- d) No extra time will be played in the tournaments held by FSA Soccer.
- e) If the score is tied at the end of regulation the game will be decided by penalty kicks.
 - i) Penalty kicks will go in the AB-AB-AB-AB-AB format for 5 rounds. The winner of a coin flip will get to pick which side shoots first.
 - ii) Only players who were on the field at the end of regulation will be allowed to take the penalty kick.
 - iii) Teams will line up their players at mid-field in order that they will be taking the penalty kicks.
 - iv) Any player taking a penalty kick will not be allowed to pause or stop the run-up process during the penalty kick. If a player stops or pauses his/her run-up the penalty kick will result in a miss no matter the actual outcome of the kick.
 - v) Goalkeepers may not move off the goal line until the ball is struck by the kick taker. If a goalkeeper moves off his/her line before the kick, the kick will be retaken by the same penalty shot taker.
 - vi) Goalies will stay near the goal at which the kicks will be taken but far enough away to not interfere with the opposing goalkeeper.
 - (1) If a goalie is designated to take a penalty kick, the coach will let the referee know prior to any penalty kicks taking place.
 - vii) The team who has more goals at the end of 5 penalty kicks will be deemed the winner.
 - (1) If the game is still tied after 5 penalty kicks, the game will go to the AB format where teams will take turns until one has scored in the round and the other has not.
 - viii) All players who are on the field must take a penalty shot before a player may take a penalty shot.
 - ix) Players will not be credited with goals that are scored during the penalty kick shootout at the end of the game.
- f) Soccer uses a rolling clock, which means there are no stoppages in the game clock unless there is serious injury, or a goal is scored. The referee will account for this time at the end of the half.

7) START AND RESTART OF PLAY.

- a) **Kick-off**. A kick-off is taken at the center mark to start a game, to restart play after a goal is scored, and to start the second half.
 - i) The designated home team may elect to kick-off to start the game, elect to start the second half kickoff, or pick the side of the field they want to defend. If the home team elects to pick which side they defend, the away team can elect what half to start the ball with.

- ii) **The higher seed in the tournament will be considered the home team.**
- iii) During kick-offs, all players must be in their own halves of the field and defenders must be outside the center circle.
- iv) The player kicking off may not play the ball again until it touches another player of either team.
- v) The ball is in play once it is kicked and moves either forward, backward, or sideways.
- vi) **Goals may not be scored directly from a kick-off in the 3rd/4th divisions.**

8) BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY.

- a) **Throw-Ins-** The ball is out of play when the ball is completely outside the outside edge of the touch line or goal line.
 - i) At this age group, it is recommended to introduce and use throw ins.
 - ii) The ball cannot be thrown directly into the goal. It must be touched by another player on the team that is throwing the ball in before it can be counted as a goal.
 - iii) A throw-in is taken to restart the game after the ball goes out of play past the touch line. It is taken where the ball crosses the line.
 - iv) Opponents must be 2 yards away from the throw-in spot.
 - v) The ball must completely re-enter the field of play for it to be a legal throw-in. If the ball does not completely re-enter the field of play on a throw-in, the team in possession has unlimited opportunities to make a legal restart.
- b) **Goal Kicks-** A goal kick is taken by any player to restart the game after the ball goes out of play past the goal line (unless a goal is scored) when the ball is last touched by an attacking player. A ball is out of play when all of it has completely crossed the outside edge of the goal line, either on the ground or in the air.
 - i) The ball is in play once it leaves the penalty area. If the ball does not leave the penalty area it must be kicked again. No attacking player may play the ball until it has completely left the penalty area.
 - ii) A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick.
- c) **Corner Kicks-** A corner kick is taken by any attacking player to restart the game after the ball goes out of play past the goal line (unless it is a valid goal) when the ball last touched a defending player.
 - i) To go out of play, the ball must completely cross the outside edge of the goal line, either on the ground or in the air.
 - ii) The ball is placed in the corner arc nearest to where the ball went out of play.
 - iii) Opponents must be at least 5 yards away from the ball when it is kicked.
 - iv) A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.
 - v) The ball is in play once it is kicked.

d) **Goalkeeper played ball**

- i) The goalkeeper may throw, roll, or kick the ball from the ground back into play. There will be no punting (drop-kick) in this age group. If/when the goalkeeper releases the ball to kick with their feet, the ball is live. Which means the attacking team can then try and win the ball back.
- ii) A goal can be scored from a goalkeeper played ball.
- iii) The goalkeeper may not play the ball with their hands if it is passed back to them by **foot** from a teammate.
 - (1) Example: Team A defensive player deliberately passes the ball to the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper then picks the ball up to play the ball. This is an indirect kick from the spot of the foul for the attacking team.
 - (2) Example: Team A defensive player deflects the ball to the goalkeeper as an attempt to block the shot or pass from the opposing team. The goalkeeper then picks the ball up to play the ball. This is not a foul.
 - (3) Example: Team A goalkeeper has possession of the ball and places it onto the ground to play the ball by foot. The goalkeeper then picks the ball up to play the ball before any other player has touch the ball. This is an indirect kick from the spot of the foul for the attacking team.

9) METHOD OF SCORING.

- a) A goal is scored when the entire ball goes completely over the outside edge of the goal line, under the crossbar and between the goalposts, while the ball is legally in play.
- b) Any player on a team may score goals.
- c) A ball played by a player directly into his or her own goal is a score for the opposing team.
- d) A goal may not be scored directly from a kick-off without touching another player before it enters the goal.

10) Heading the Ball.

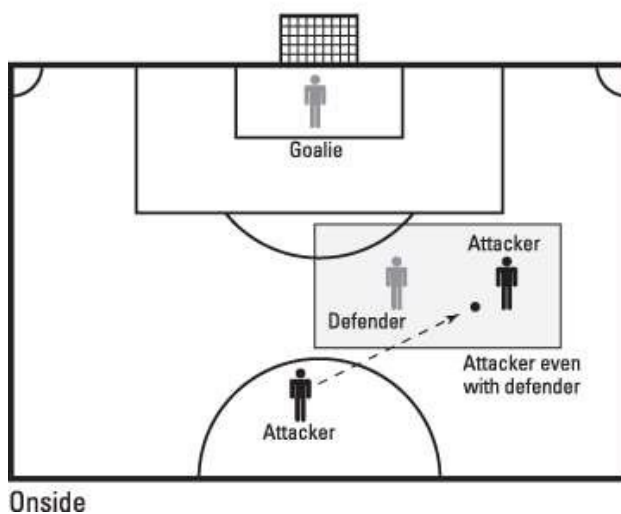
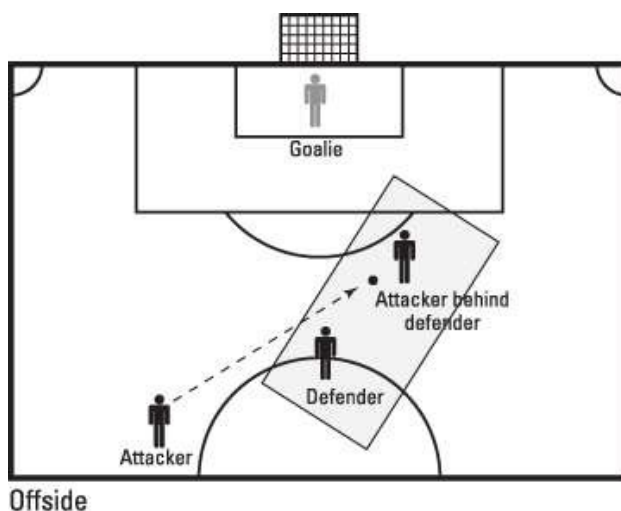
- a) **USYSA Rule 305 Section 3.** All Players aged 10 years of age and under shall not head the ball directly from the air in any match or competition, nor shall these players practice heading the ball in any organized team setting. If a player aged 10 or younger deliberately heads the ball in a match, the referee shall award an indirect free kick to the opposing team at the spot of the infraction. If the heading occurs within the penalty area, the referee shall move the ball outside the penalty area and award an indirect free kick to the opposing team.

11) Slide Tackles

- a) **Slide tackles are not permitted** for this age group due to the injuries that it can cause. If a player tries to slide tackle during the game, this infraction will be a spot foul and a free kick will be given to the opposing team.

12) OFFSIDES.

- a) Offsides will be called when a player is caught offside if he's closer to the opponent's goal than both the ball and the second-last opponent (including the goalkeeper) when his team-mate plays the ball to him. See Image. (There is no offside on a goal kick, throw in, or corner kick).



13) Penalties

- a) There are many ways to commit a penalty during the game. Some result in a “Direct Free Kick” or in an “In-Direct Free Kick”. If a penalty is committed in the penalty area and is deemed a direct free kick, a shot from the penalty spot will be awarded. It is the referee’s discretion to award a direct or in-direct free kick.
- b) A penalty will result if any of the following acts are committed during game play.
 - i) Kicking an opponent
 - ii) Tripping
 - iii) Charging into an opponent
 - iv) Pushing
 - v) Tackling from behind
 - vi) Tackling an opponent and you contact the player prior to contacting the ball.
 - vii) Holding
 - viii) Touching the ball with your hands (if you are not the goalkeeper)
- c) Cards - **Cards will accumulate throughout the duration of the tournament. If a player gets a yellow card in 2 consecutive games, they will be forced to sit out the next game. If a player receives a red card, they will be forced to sit out the next game.**
 - i) Caution (Yellow Card): The referee can choose to give a caution or yellow card to a player for the following actions:
 - (1) Unsportsmanlike behavior (note that this includes trying to trick the referee)
 - (2) Arguing with the referee
 - (3) Fouling by one player consistently.
 - (4) Delaying the game
 - (5) Entering or leaving the game without informing the referee
 - ii) Expulsion (Red Card): When the referee shows a red card, this means the player has been kicked out of the game, and that player cannot be replaced on the field. A red card can be given for the following actions:
 - (1) A serious foul
 - (2) Violent actions against the referee or other players
 - (3) Using their hands to stop a goal (when not the goalkeeper)
 - (4) Using bad language
 - (5) Receiving a second caution