



U7/U8 LAWS OF THE GAME - MODIFIED

Meridian PAL Soccer

Law 1 - The Field of Play

Field Size	Goal Size	Penalty Box Size	Goal Box Size
40 yds X 25 yds	4 ft by 6 ft	21 ft by 65 ft	6 ft by 25 ft

Build-out-lines are marked. Please see the "Build Out Line" attachment for more information.

Law 2 - The Ball

Size three (3).

Law 3 - The Number of Players

A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than five (5) players, one of whom is the designated goalkeeper. In the event that your team does not have enough players to play, the opposing team may "donate" some of their players to allow the game to continue.

A player who is suspected to have a head injury leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made at that moment.

Law 4 - The Player's Equipment

Meridian PAL provides a uniform for each player. This uniform consists of a reversible blue/gray jersey, black shorts, and black socks. In addition, the player is to provide shin guards and appropriate shoes (tennis shoes or soccer cleats).

Note: The Home team (first team listed on game schedule) wears the blue jersey and the away team wears the gray jersey.

Shin guards are mandatory and must be completely covered by socks. Meridian PAL issued uniforms must be worn. Cleat may not be made of metal and cannot have a toe cleat (eg. no football cleats). No jewelry may be worn; No earrings may be worn, even if they are taped.

Coaches: Please advise your players this is not a good time to get their ears pierced.

Law 5 - The Referee

When possible, a center referee will be provided by the league. Basic fouls and boundaries should be respected. All infringements should be briefly explained to the players.

In the event that a center referee cannot be provided, the home team head coach or assistant coach will referee the first half of the game and the away team head coach or assistant coach will referee the second half of the game.

The referees that the youth league provides are usually referees-in-training. **NOTE:** **Verbal/Physical abuse of any kind will not be tolerated.**

Law 6 - The other Match Officials

Each team should secure a volunteer to act as assistant referees (preferably parents) to signal out of play.

Note: Assistant referees do not change sides at halftime. The same assistant should be used for both halves of a game.

Law 7 - The Duration of the Match

The match shall be divided into four (4) periods of not more than 12 minutes, based on the energy and motivation of the players. The length of the match should be determined before the match starts by both coaches. There shall be a maximum of a five (5) minute break between each period.

Law 8 - The Start of Play

Two halves will start with a kick-off from the center circle. The kickoff is taken at the center spot. The game will be re-started from the center circle after every score. The ball does NOT have to move forward at kick-off to start the ball in play. The player who kicks off is not allowed to touch it a second time until another player touches the ball. Each player must be on his or her half of the field. The defending team must be outside the center circle. Kickoffs are direct kicks (a goal may be scored directly from the kick-off).

Law 9 - The Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play when it COMPLETELY goes over the goal line or touch-line regardless if it is in the air or on the ground.

Law 10 - The Method of Scoring

The ball must COMPLETELY cross the line into the goal.

Note: If a team has a deficit of 5 goals, the team SHOULD add an extra player.

Law 11 - Offside

Offside will not be called. Discourage "cherry picking."

Law 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

At the youth level, most fouls are due to pushing, holding or tripping, and result in a free kick. At this level, all freekicks are indirect with the exception of a grievous foul in the penalty box. If this occurs, a penalty kick may be taken from the TOP of the penalty box.

The game official should explain all infringements to the offending player. No cards shown for misconduct.

A hand ball infraction occurs when a player handles the ball deliberately. The “hand” includes the entire arm up to the armpit. The shoulder may be used to redirect the ball. Instinctive, self-protective reactions are not penalized at this young age. Accidental contact (ball striking hand or arm) is not an offense and should not be penalized.

Deliberate heading is not allowed and results in an indirect kick.

When the goalkeeper has the ball in their hands, the opponent must retreat behind the build out line, similar to a goal kick.

Law 13 - Free Kicks

There are two types of free kicks, direct and indirect. At the youth level, most free kicks are classified as indirect. This means a goal may not be scored until the ball has been touched by a second player on either team. Indirect kicks may be taken in the penalty box.

Goalkeepers are not allowed to drop kick or punt the ball. This will result in an indirect kick from the location of the punted ball.

Opponents are to be at least five (5) yards from the ball until it is kicked.

Law 14 - The Penalty Kick

If a player commits a grievous foul in their own penalty area (slide tackle, reaching out to stop a shot with their hand), a penalty kick is awarded. This is determined by the center referee. Penalty kicks are taken from the top, center of the penalty box.

All players shall remain outside the penalty box, with the exception of the defending goalie until the ball is kicked. The kicker may not kick the ball again until it is touched by another player on either team.

Law 15 - The Throw - In

Players must have both feet on the ground, two hands on the ball, and the ball must come from behind the player's head. A goal may not be scored on the throw in until touched by another player. When an improper throw-in occurs, the opposing team is given the throw-in.

Modified Rule: During the first three weeks of the season, players are given a second opportunity to throw in if the first was improper.

Law 16 - The Goal Kick

A goal kick is granted when the attacking team kicks the ball over the goal line.

The goal kick shall be taken anywhere inside the goal box area. Opposing players must retreat behind the build-out-line until the ball is in play. The team taking the goal kick may choose to restart play before the opponents have retreated behind the build-out-line. The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player on either team. The ball is in play as soon as it is touched/clearly moves and does NOT need to leave the penalty box before it can be played.

Law 17 - The Corner kick

A corner kick is awarded when the defending team kicks the ball over their own goal line. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick. Corner kicks are taken from the corner flag.

Substitutions

Substitutions may occur at any stoppage at referee discretion.

Best Practices

Players should get regular chances to play in all positions.

Each player should play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Weaker players need more playing time than stronger players, not less. Playing time during games should not be used as a punishment.

Teams should limit scoring when up by 6 goals.

- **Recognize Early** - Generally you can tell early in the game if your team is going to dominate. To avoid excessive goal differential, start making adjustments early in the game .

To help limit blowouts, coaches can implement rules such as the following.

- **Encourage Skill Development** - Players must shoot with their nondominant foot, do a move worked on in practice before taking the shot, score off a cross, etc.
- **Set a Number of Passes Before a Shot** - Players must link a certain number of passes before taking a shot
- **Switch Goalie** - Play a much less experienced goalie.
- **Set a Midline Boundary** - Tell your offensive players they can't cross the midline to help the defense. Let the opposing team have the offensive advantage.
- **Anticipate the Last Goal** - Often we hear, "We were keeping the score down but little Johnny never scores and I wanted to give him a chance." We understand but try to anticipate that early. If you quickly hop up to 4 goals, start implementing requirements for all of your players besides little Johnny.

- **Add Players** - This should be done with a minimum of a 5 point score differential. If your team is dominating extremely early, talk with the other coach about adding players even before the 5 point differential.
- **Play Short** - Start pulling players off the field. It can add competition for your players and you can always add the players back if the other team begins scoring a lot.



BUILD OUT LINE

Meridian PAL has implemented the build out line rule in the U7, U8, and U10 age groups (see diagram below). The build out line will promote playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting. The intent is to support the Meridian PAL player development initiative which is to develop the skills and abilities of each player.

Here are some basics regarding the build out line rule:

- When the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands during play from the opponent, the opposing team must move behind the build out line until the ball is put into play
- Once the opposing team is behind the build out line, the goalkeeper can pass, throw or roll the ball into play (punting or drop-kicking the ball is not permitted)
- After the ball is put into play by the goalkeeper, the opposing team can cross the build out line and play resumes as normal
- The opposing team must also move behind the build out line during a goal kick until the ball is put into play

For U9/U10 only -

- The build out line will also be used to denote where offside offenses can be called
- Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build out line
- Players can be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and goal line

The following are some tips for practical application:

- Ideally, the goalkeeper will wait to put the ball into play once all opponents are past the build out line
- However, the goalkeeper can put the ball into play sooner but he or she does so accepting the positioning of the opponents and the consequences of how play resumes

- To support the intent of the development rule, coaches should be mindful of any intentional delays being caused by their players (when they're the opponents) not retreating in a timely manner or encroaching over the build out line prior to the ball being put into play
- Coaches are responsible for addressing these types of issues with their players
- Referees should be flexible when enforcing the 6 second rule and counting the time of possession should only begin when all opponents have moved behind the build out line
- Referees can manage the situation with misconduct if deemed appropriate

We've included a link to a YouTube video breaking down the build out line rule visually as well as a field measurements image (please note that Meridian PAL measurements may differ slightly).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PAE4d0wLmhc>

