

Grays Harbor Foothills Youth Soccer Association

U9 and U10 Small-Sided Soccer Rules

Why Small-Sided Games?

by US Youth Soccer

US Youth Soccer has thought long and hard about the answer to the question, "Why Small-Sided Games?"

What does "Small-Sided Games" mean? These are soccer games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field with modified rules. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball.

Here are some of the reasons why our young soccer players play small-sided games:

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become **more skillful** with it! (Individual technical development)
2. Because we want our young soccer players to make **more, less-complicated decisions** during the game! (Tactical development)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically **efficient** in the field space they are playing in! (Reduced field size)
4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more **individual teaching time** with the coach! Less players on the field and less players on the team will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy and need to feel important)
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more, involved playing time** in the game! (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents)
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball!** (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
7. Because we want our young soccer players to have **more opportunities to score goals!** (Pure excitement)

These are the reasons why we adults support "Small-Sided Games" in our youth soccer programs. The "Small-Sided" environment is a **developmentally-appropriate environment** for our young soccer players. It's a **FUN** environment that *focuses on the young soccer player.*

It just makes sense doesn't it?

Dimensions of the Field: Games will be played on fields 35-45 yards wide by 55-65 yards long. A netted goal is preferable. Typical goals are 6' high x 12' wide or 6.5' high x 18' wide. A full-sized goal is not appropriate for U9 and U10 ages. In the event that no goals are installed, the goals will be distinguished with cones and flags, or at least flags. There may be a marked goal box (4 x 8 yds). There will be a marked penalty area (12 x 24 yds), a penalty arc 8 yards from the penalty mark (10 yds from goal line), and 8 yard center circle.

Revised 2025

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Number of players on the field: 7 players (7v7). One of these players must be designated as goalkeeper.

Duration of the game: The game will be 50 minutes long (two 25-minute halves) with a 5 minute break at the half. Total time is ultimately decided by the referee.

Referees: If an assigned referee is not available, the coaches for the teams shall agree on a volunteer referee to officiate the game. Ultimately the home team(coach/club) will be responsible to stand in as referee if no other agreement can be made. The referee should expect to be very informative, if needed, and should explain the reason for a stoppage in play to the players and how it will be restarted. Please ensure the restarts are performed correctly. Emphasis should be on learning the correct procedure. If it is discovered that any "stand in" behaved with bias. The game will list as a 1-1 draw. Unsportsmanlike conduct will NOT be tolerated. In the absence of an official, EACH coach is responsible for maintaining good conduct for themselves, their players and their sidelines. Misconduct will result in yellow/red card being issued to one or both coaches as appropriate.

Equipment:

- All players shall wear shin guards for all practices and games.
- Socks must be over and outside of the shin guards.
- No jewelry or earrings are allowed.
- Shoes must be worn.
- Ball size is #4.

Substitutions:

- a) Substitutions may be made, with consent of the referee, during any stoppage of play.
- b) The number of substitutes shall be unlimited. Each player will play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Substitutions will be allowed in order to give an opportunity for all players to get enough playing time.
- c) Coaches shall have a copy of their roster for the referee at each game.
- d) This league does not allow the "player pass." Teams should expect to only use players from their official club roster. *Exceptions may be made by GHFYSA Admins only *see Guest Pass

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- Guest Passes are allowed. A guest pass is for use when a team does not have enough players to properly field a team.

i.e. If a team is 7v7 and only has 7 players available they may pick up 2 guest players so they have 2 subs for that game. Guest passes are intended to be used for 1 game not a weekly occurrence.

Team Personnel and Spectators:

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Team Personnel and Spectators:

- a) When possible, Teams(players and coaches) will remain on OPPOSITE sides of the field. Spectators may intermingle as they see fit. This separation is recommended to benefit players. It is not required. If it is decided that home and away teams will sit on opposing sides of the field, each coach is responsible for ensuring that **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP** is exhibited by the spectators on his/her side. Team personnel are subject to cautions and ejections. Sideline misconduct by spectators is punishable with cautions or ejections, too, per Washington Youth Soccer rules. Coaches shall set clear expectations and show leadership to maintain a calm, respectful sideline.
- b) Players, coaches and spectators not on the field of play must remain two (2) yards behind the touchline and not closer to the corner of the field than the top of the penalty areas.
- c) Coaching from the sidelines is permitted IF it is done in a civil manner, and the tone of voice will be informational and encouraging, not demanding or critical.
- d) Coaches and parents should remember that we are all here for the good of the game and the good of the players—please make our games positive experiences.

Heading: Heading is NOT allowed. This division will follow the guidance from US Youth Soccer and its Concussion Initiative.

Goalkeepers: Teams must designate one player (with a different colored jersey or vest) as the goalkeeper. A goalkeeper is just like any other player with one additional ability: he/she can use their hands to control the ball when THE BALL is inside his/her own penalty area. There are two rectangles around the goal. The small rectangle around the goal is called the goal area and is used to identify where the ball is placed on goal kicks (among other things). The larger rectangle is called the penalty area.

In soccer, the line itself is always considered part of the area that it surrounds.

New soccer coaches often ask, “Can my goalie leave the penalty area?” Yes. They can play anywhere on the field. But they can only handle the ball when the ball is inside their own penalty area.

Special Rules for goalkeepers:

- At the U9-U10 level, NO PUNTING or drop-kicking the ball.
- Goalies MAY NOT deliberately handle the ball outside of the penalty area.
- Goalies MAY NOT pick up the ball a second time once they’ve released it into play unless an opponent has touched it.
- Goalies MAY NOT pick up the ball if passed back to them by the foot of one of their own players or if thrown to them from their own team’s throw-in.

Charging the goalkeeper: No player shall make physical contact with the goalkeeper, harass the goalkeeper or attempt to play the ball **once the goalkeeper has control of the ball in any manner and to any degree whatsoever**. Note: “Having control of the ball” includes when the goalkeeper has contact with the ball with one or both hands.

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The Build-Out Lines: Will be used for U9/U10 Soccer.

- Whenever a goal kick occurs, the attacking team MUST retreat behind the build-out line and stay there until *the ball is kicked and clearly moves*
- Whenever the defending goalkeeper has control of the ball, the attacking team must retreat beyond the build-out line until the ball is released by the goalie
- *The referee may penalize an attacking team that does not comply with the build-out line rule with an indirect free kick for the defending team, once the ball is in play.*

Start of the game: The winner of the coin toss chooses which goal to attack or the kick-off. Each team must be on its own side of the field (*except the kicker*), and the opponents of the team kicking off must be outside of the center circle until the ball is in play. The ball is in play when it *clearly moves*. The kicker cannot play the ball a second time until the ball has been touched by another player. A goal MAY be scored directly from a kick-off. At the beginning of the second half, the teams switch sides, and the other team gets to kick-off. If an infraction occurs, the referee will stop play, instruct, and perform the appropriate restart.

Restarts: At any restart except a dropped ball, a player cannot play the ball a second time without another player touching it first. When the ball goes out of play or the referee stops play, the game is restarted in one of the following ways:

- **Throw-ins:** (for balls that go out of bounds over the touchlines or “sidelines”) At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower faces the field of play; has his/her feet on the ground, either on the touch line or outside the touch line; uses both hands equally; delivers the ball from behind and over his/her head. Goals cannot be scored directly on a throw-in.
- **Goal Kick:** When the attacking team last touches the ball before it goes out over their opponent's goal line, the defending team restarts with the ball from anywhere in its goal area. Attackers must be outside of the penalty area. A goal CAN be scored directly from a goal kick (only in the other goal). *The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves.*
- **Corner Kick:** When the defensive team last touches the ball before it goes out over their own goal line, the attacking team restarts the ball by placing it within a yard of the corner of the touchline and goal line on the side where the ball went out. Defenders must stand back 8 yards from the corner arc. A goal CAN be scored directly from a corner kick.
- **Free Kick:** A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits a foul or misconduct. The ball is placed where the foul or misconduct occurred and must be stationary before it is kicked. The kicker CANNOT play the ball again until it has touched another player. The ball is in play once it clearly moves. *All opponents should be at least 8 yards from the ball when it is kicked.*
- **Penalty Kick:** If a direct free kick is awarded within the penalty area, the restart will be a penalty kick. The ball is placed at the penalty mark (10 yds from the goal). The

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kicker must wait to kick the ball until the referee whistles. The opposing goalkeeper must stay on the goal line between the posts. Although the goalie cannot move forward until the ball is kicked, the goalie may move side to side on the goal line (**one foot must stay on or in line with the goal line**). All other players besides the kicker and the defending goalkeeper must stand outside the penalty area, outside of the penalty arc, and behind the ball, until the ball is kicked forward.

- After a goal: The game is restarted by a kick-off from the center of the field. The team that did not score the goal gets to kick off. The referee will whistle to indicate when the team can kick-off. A goal CAN be scored directly from a kick-off. The ball can be kicked in any direction at the kick-off, and the kicker can stand in the opposite side of the field in order to kick the ball back to their own teammates.
- Restarting play after temporary delay: **The new IFAB 2019-2020 Laws of the Game have refined the drop ball process, which will now be used in our leagues. If the referee restarts play in the penalty area with a drop ball, the ball will be dropped to the defending goalkeeper. If the referee restarts play outside of the penalty area, the referee will drop the ball to one player from the team who last touched the ball. All other players will stay at least 4.5 yards away from the dropped ball.** The ball is in play when it touches the ground. Although a player can dribble away with the ball at a dropped ball, a goal CANNOT be scored directly from a dropped ball unless it touches a second player.

Method of Scoring: A goal is scored when the whole of the ball has crossed the whole of the goal line, on the ground or in the air, between the goal posts and below the crossbar. If cones/flags are being used as a goal, the ball must pass lower than the height of the flags.

Offside: Law 11 "Offside" is in effect for U9 and U10. Offside is being introduced at this level for instructional purposes, and referees will enforce Law 11 considering the spirit of the game for U9 and U10 players, not World Cup standards.

At the moment the ball is played by a teammate, attacking players are in an *offside position* IF:

- **they are anywhere past the midfield**, based on the position of their body, legs, or head (not their arms)
- AND if they are closer to the goal line than the second-to-last defender(s)
- AND if they are closer to the goal line than the ball.

Once players are in an offside position, if they interfere with play, interfere with an opponent, or gain an advantage from their position, they may be penalized for being offside. There is no offside offense if a player receives the ball from a throw-in, goal kick, or corner kick. [An offside primer is available at the GHFYSA website.](#)

Fouls and Misconduct:

- a) FREE KICKS: Free kicks in soccer are classified in two (2) ways: "Direct", from which a goal can be scored by a direct kick against the offending side, and "Indirect",

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from which a goal cannot be scored unless the ball has been played or touched by a player other than the kicker before passing into the goal.

b) A direct free kick (DFK) shall be awarded for the following fouls:

- i. **Kicking** an opponent; **tripping** an opponent; **striking** an opponent; **pushing** an opponent; **jumping at** an opponent; **charging** an opponent, especially from behind. These six fouls are judged on a scale of careless, reckless (dangerous), or excessive (violent) manner. "Attempting to" kick, trip, or strike an opponent may also be a foul, in the judgement of the referee.
- ii. **holding** an opponent; **deliberately handling** the ball (with the exception of the goalie touching the ball inside his/her penalty area), **impeding** an opponent **with contact**, striking the ball with an object, and **spitting/biting**.
- iii. **SLIDE TACKLING IS NOT ALLOWED** at U9 and U10. Any slide tackling (in the presence of an opponent) is a DFK foul.
- iv. Penalty kicks (PK) will occur at the U9 and U10 age level. If a DFK is awarded for a foul by the defending team within its own penalty area, the restart is a PK.

c) An indirect free kick (IFK) shall be awarded for the following:

- i. in general, if an offense occurs during the game, play will be started with an indirect free kick if one of the eleven direct kick fouls did not occur. An IFK is the correct restart for many offenses in soccer, ranging from the special goalkeeper fouls to second-touches by players at restarts. The referee signal for an IFK is one arm raised straight up. Lack of this signal, however, does not change an IFK into a DFK.
- ii. dangerous play (such as high kicking or laying on the ground by the ball in the presence of opponents).
- iii. impeding an opponent without contact (examples include a player using his/her arms to block an opponent's movement; a player, unable to play the ball, uses their body to block an opponent's movement).
- iv. interfering with the goalkeeper (there will be NO physical contact with the goal keeper in the penalty area once he/she has the ball).
- v. preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands.
- vi. **no deliberate heading** (this decision is in alignment with Washington Youth Soccer and US Soccer decisions re: concussion awareness/ prevention).

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- vii. the four goalkeeper fouls, evaluated by the judgement of the referee:
- i. the goalkeeper handles the ball a second time, after putting it back into play after handling it, but before another player touches it;
 - ii. the goalkeeper handles the ball directly from a throw-in by a teammate;
 - iii. the goalkeeper handles the ball for more than 6 seconds;
 - iv. the goalkeeper handles the ball when directly kicked to the goalkeeper by a teammate;
- viii. Any IFK that would restart within the goal area should instead be moved to a point parallel on the goal area line and restarted from there.

COACHES: Decision-making in young goalies is often **confused or slow**. The REFEREE shall make the final determination if an indirect free kick is warranted for a potential goalkeeper offense. Often a verbal warning or verbal instruction is more appropriate. Goalkeeper offenses in particular are included for instructional purposes (learning the game of soccer), not for the attacking teams to take advantage of age-appropriate errors by young goalies. This is not FIFA-level, adult international game play.

Scores and Standings: For our GHFYSA league, scores are not reported, and standings will not be published.

For any other details, please refer to the Small-sided Rules in the Washington Youth Soccer Rules of Competition, USSF Laws of the Game, and/or the IFAB Laws of the Game. Any rules not mentioned above should comply with the IFAB Laws of the Game. All of these resources are available via the Internet.

Also, please keep a copy of these rules and make them available for your opponent coaches. These are the rules in effect at the GHFYSA U9 and U10 games. Please inform your local club president immediately if you have any rules disputes at a particular game.