



**Zia Youth Soccer League's Condensed Playing Rules for
NON-COMPETITIVE COACH-LED SCRIMMAGE GAMES
in the Kickers and Passers Age Divisions:**

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Soccer's rules and regulations are maintained and updated annually by the International Football Association Board (IFAB). The board consists of eight members, four of which come from FIFA, and the other four coming from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales - all countries that contributed to the development of the sport. FIFA's most recently published rule book is 140 pages long, which is a bit ambitious for the young player or parent who is just becoming familiarized with the sport. For this reason, Zia Youth Soccer has prepared a simplified version below that should allow you to learn the basic rules of soccer. Please also be aware that although FIFA publishes an established set of rules, these rules are subject to modification by national, regional, and local organizations, such as Zia Youth Soccer, as needed to best serve our players.

IFAB currently acknowledges 17 standard rules of soccer as follows:

Rule 1: The Field of Play

Soccer is played on a rectangular grassy field, distinctly marked by two short goal lines and two long-touch lines. The field is divided into halves, separated by the halfway line, which runs from the midpoints of each touchline. At the midpoint of the halfway line is a marked center point surrounded by a lined center circle.

Zia Youth Soccer League's Kickers and Passers field is approximately 40 yards long and 30 yards wide, with the following markings:

Halfway Line - width of field, marked equidistant between goal lines;

Center Circle Radius - 5 yards;

Penalty Area - approx. 5 yards from goal post and 5 yards into field;

Corner Arcs - on all four corners, 1-yard radius;

The **goals** used are 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, securely anchored for play.

Rule 2: The Ball

The size of the soccer ball used will vary from division to division according to the players' ages. Zia Youth Soccer League's Kickers and Passers use a **size 3 ball**.

Rule 3: The Number of Players

Youth leagues such as Zia generally play small-sided scrimmages, with fewer players on the field than in a professional match, in order to best serve player development.

Number of players: 5 per team on the field, plus goalkeeper (6 per team total);
Substitutions - Substitutions can be made at any stoppage and are unlimited;
Playing Time - Playing time that is as close to equal as possible shall be offered to all team members present at a scrimmage. **Note: although every effort shall be made to provide absolutely equal playing time to all team members present, various factors may affect a coach's ability to provide 100% equal playing time, including but not limited to logistical challenges that may arise due to the number of players present, an individual player's unique readiness or ability to participate, etc.;*
Team Sizes - Standard roster size up to 12 players (roster size variation/exception may be considered per coach and administrative discretion); teams may be co-ed.

Rule 4: The Players' Equipment

All players should wear a league-issued jersey, shin guards (fully covered by the socks), and soccer cleats. No jewelry or other sharp, hard, or dangerous objects.* Goalkeepers must wear a specified jersey or pinnie so that they are easily distinguished from the other players. If the coach deems a player's equipment unsatisfactory, the player can be sent off until the issue is remedied.

**Newly-pierced ears, in which the earrings cannot be removed, may be covered with padded medical tape for player safety.*

Rules 5 and 6: The Coach-Led Scrimmage

In Zia Youth Soccer League's truly non-competitive environment, which is focused on positive player development and FUN, not strict competition, scrimmage games are led by the coaches. Certified referees are not needed, as this is not a competitive game. **The scrimmage should instead be viewed as an opportunity for players to expand upon what they learn during practice in a game-like environment, with the continued direct support of their coaches on the field.** Coaches work together, both on the sidelines and on the field with the players as needed, to guide the scrimmage in a safe and enjoyable manner for all involved.

Rule 7: The Duration of the Scrimmage

- Zia's Kickers and Passers play four 10-minute quarters or two 20-minute halves at the coaches' discretion;
- Quarters are highly encouraged during hot weather to allow for adequate water breaks in the shade;
- There will be 1-minute breaks between quarters, and a 5-minute halftime break.

Rule 8: The Start and Restart of Play

The initial **kick-off** is generally determined by a coin toss or rock/paper/scissors, whereby the winning team can either choose to start with the ball or choose which goal they would like to attack. The other team is then afforded whatever choice the winner does not elect to take. Kick-off occurs at the start of each half, and after each goal scored, and is taken at the center of the halfway line. If a team scores a goal, the opposing team is given the kick-off to restart the match. At kick-off, all players must be on their own half of the field. The kicker will be within the center circle; the kicker's offensive teammates may accompany him/her within the circle. Opponents must be outside of the center circle. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves in any direction.

The **dropped ball** is the method of restart generally used when the game is stopped for an injury, outside interference, weather, or similar. An unlimited number of players may take part in a dropped ball. The ball is in play when it makes contact with the ground. Two-touch rule does not apply.

Rule 9: The Ball In and Out of Play

The ball is out of play when it completely leaves the field of play over the touchline or goal line, on the ground or in the air. The ball is also considered out of play whenever there is a stoppage. If, for any reason, the ball strikes the frame of the goal or a coach and remains within the goal and touch lines, it is still in play.

Rule 10: Method of "Scoring"

A "score" has been made when the whole of the ball completely crosses the goal line between the posts and under the cross-bar. But remember, this is a RECREATIONAL NON-COMPETITIVE scrimmage. As such, no scores or standings will be recorded or posted, in accordance with Zia Youth Soccer League's philosophies of non-competitive recreational play. Coaches should maintain a focus on fun, encourage players in all areas of scrimmage activity, and help them understand that "scoring" is not the only goal. Players should be praised for every effort and achievement on the field, not just when goals are made.

Rule 11: Offside

The offside rule is not observed in Zia Youth Soccer League's scrimmages.

Rule 12: Fouls & Misconduct

This rule covers offenses involving contact committed on the field-of-play while the ball is in play and against any opponent, teammate, or coach, in addition to non-contact fouls and technical offenses, including but not limited to:

- Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent.
- Tripping or attempting to trip an opponent.
- Jumping at, charging, pushing, tackling, holding, spitting at, striking or attempting to strike an opponent.
- Playing in a dangerous manner.
- Serious foul play or violent conduct.
- Unsportsmanlike behavior.
- Dissent by word or action.
- Using offensive or abusive language and/or gestures.
- Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands.
- Persistent infringement of the rules.
- Intentionally delaying the restart of play.
- Failure to respect the required distance when play is restarted for any reason.
- Entering or re-entering the field of play without the coach's permission.
- Deliberately leaving the field of play without the coach's permission.
- Denying the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (the goalkeeper being an exception).
- Denying an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick.
- Handling the ball deliberately (Accidental contact, i.e. ball striking hand or arm with no intent by player, is not an offense and should not be penalized, as these are instinctive, self-protective reactions).
- **Heading the ball deliberately is prohibited**, for player safety and in accordance with US Youth Soccer regulations. Goalkeepers are not allowed to punt or drop-kick the ball.

When a child makes a mistake or an offense occurs, it shall be explained to the offending player. There will be no cautions or ejections in these divisions, with the exception being repeated dangerous or violent play, which may result in the offending player being removed from the game for a period of one quarter or one half at the coach's discretion. All fouls/offenses (including within penalty area) shall result in a direct free kick restart.

Rule 13: Free Kicks

The free kick is broken into two categories, being direct and indirect. A direct free kick can be shot directly into the opponent's goal without touching another player. An indirect kick can only go into the goal if it has subsequently been touched by another player before it enters the goal. The ball must be stationary for both types of kicks.

All free kick restarts in the Kickers and Passers divisions are direct free kicks. Opponents must be at least 4 yards from the ball or on goal line between the goal posts. Ball is in play when kicked and clearly moves.

Rule 14: The Penalty Kick

There are no penalty kicks in these age divisions, as all fouls and offenses result in direct free kicks.

Rule 15: The Throw-In

This is the method of restart used when the ball goes over the touchline (side line). The throw-in is taken by an opponent of the player who last touched the ball. Both of the thrower's feet must remain on the ground, on or outside the touchline. The throw-in must be taken with both hands, from behind and over the head. The ball is in play when any portion of the ball breaks the outside plane of the touchline into the field-of-play after having been thrown. When an improper throw-in is taken, the coaches should stop play, explain the proper procedure and allow throw-in to be retaken. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

Rule 16: The Goal Kick

This is the method of restart used when the ball goes over the goal line (end line), and was last touched by an attacking team player. After the ball is out of play, the defender or goalkeeper may place the ball anywhere within the penalty box and kick the ball back into play. All opposing players must remain 4 yards from the ball. If any player on either team, other than the kicker, touches the ball before it leaves the penalty area, or if any member of the opposing team fails to remain 4 yards from the ball, the goal kick is retaken. A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick.

Rule 17: The Corner Kick

This is the method of restart used when the ball goes over the goal line (end line), and was last touched by a defending player. The ball is placed within the corner arc and is kicked back into play by a member of the offensive team. Opponents must remain 4 yards from the corner area. Ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

MERCY RULE: Keeping the scrimmage experience positive and balanced.

Although Zia Youth Soccer League tries to form teams that are as balanced as possible, there are times when one team will simply be at a more advanced place in their skill development than another. If this happens, and one team is "scoring" goal after goal while the other team clearly struggles and begins losing confidence (and their smiles), the coaches must take action together. Remember, Zia's scrimmage games are designed to be fun opportunities for players to expand upon what they learn in practice in a game-like environment. These are NOT competitive games, and not a single child should walk away feeling like they've "lost." That is not what Zia is about. So should a scrimmage begin to have an unbalanced feel as previously described, coaches should take steps to balance the environment accordingly. Sometimes this may mean loaning a more skilled player to the other team, or allowing the team in need of a boost to have an extra player on the field. Or perhaps adding a new rule for the team that keeps "scoring," requiring that each

player they have on the field must touch the ball before it goes in the goal. Another great tactic - one which is particularly useful to not only help the team that is struggling but to also challenge the team that is ahead - is to move players out of their "usual" positions in which they excel, in order to try new positions. This could mean moving that one player who scores goal after goal into a defensive spot, or giving a new player a chance to try the position of goalkeeper. Or the goalkeeper could even be temporarily removed altogether. The options are endless. Coaches are encouraged to get creative and work together to make the experience a positive one for every player on every team, supporting Zia Youth Soccer League's mission of providing a truly recreational, non-competitive, FUN and pressure-free soccer experience.