**Soccer - Game Basics**

Soccer is a simple game. It requires a field, a ball, two teams of players and their equipment, and a referee.

Soccer is played by two teams. Field sizes vary depending on the age of the players, with smaller fields used for younger players. Let's face it, it wouldn't be much fun for 5 yr olds to play soccer on a full-sized field. Smaller fields mean more action for the players.

The game is played in two timed halves of equal length. To advance AYSO’s “Everyone Plays” commitment, quarter breaks are made within each half to allow for player substitution. The length of each half is determined by the age of the children playing.

Game Duration - by Division

U5 - 30 min
U6 - 30 min
U8 - 40 min
U10 - 50 min
U12 - 60 min
U14 - 70 min
U16 - 80 min
U19 -90 min

Physical size is not an important factor in becoming a skilled and successful soccer player. Because of the game’s pace, every child participates in the action while on the field.

**Soccer Skills**

The sport involves several basic skills: passing/shooting, dribbling, and controlling (or trapping) the ball. These skills can be learned at any age, and a good soccer player works continually to improve them.

**Passing**

Passing is kicking, pushing or heading the ball to a teammate or to a space where a teammate can run to the ball. A player may lightly tap the ball to a teammate several feet away or kick it strongly to move it down the field. The ball may scoot along the ground or may be kicked into the air.

Most players use two types of kicks to pass to a teammate or shoot towards the goal. One is the instep drive which is a powerful kick. The other kick is called a push pass. Performed using the inside of the foot, the push pass is much more accurate than the instep drive, but is less powerful.

**Dribbling**

Dribbling is transporting the ball under control from one area to another. Soccer players cannot use their hands. Players dribble the ball with their feet, using light taps on the ball to move it along the ground.

**Controlling (or Trapping)**

Controlling (or trapping) is stopping the ball in flight or on the ground, and then controlling it by either dribbling or passing the ball to teammates. There are many ways to trap a ball: (1) allowing it to hit the chest at an angle that deflects the ball to the ground where it can be controlled; (2) allowing it to hit the thigh or bent knee to deflect the ball to the ground where it can be controlled; or (3) using the foot to stop the ball.

**Heading**

**AYSO does not recommend heading below the age of ten. Coaches are not encouraged to teach or practice heading at these early ages.**  Heading is unique to the game of soccer. When a ball is too high to kick, players “head” the ball to pass to a teammate or score a goal