

# Small Sided Games Manual

*COACHING EDUCATION DEPARTMENT*



## US Youth Soccer Coaching Education Department

*Mr. Sam Snow – Coaching Director*

US Youth Soccer wishes to thank and acknowledge Mr. Tom Goodman, former national director of coaching education for US Youth Soccer, for his initiating the concept for this manual and his contributions herein.

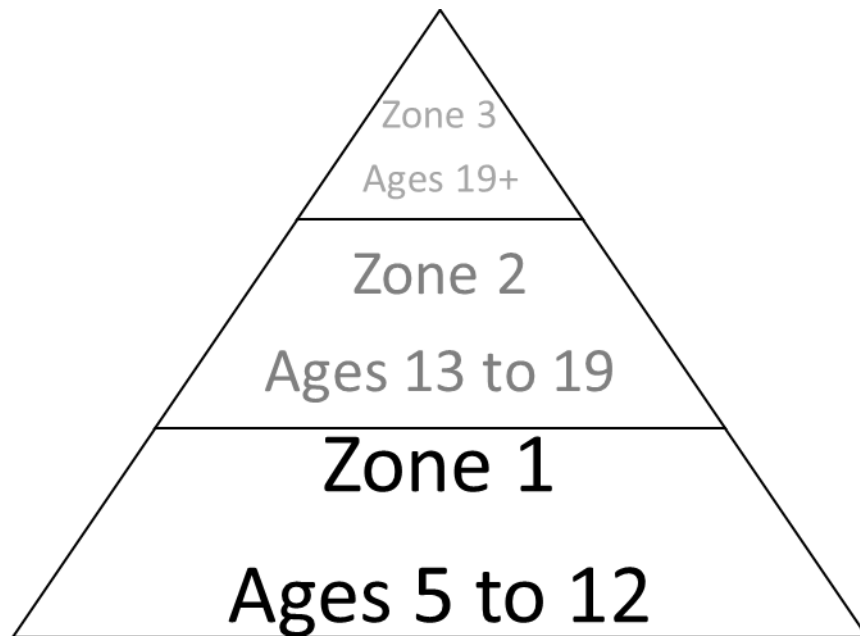


Figure 1 U. S. Soccer Player Development Pyramid

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Small-sided games have been part of our soccer history in the United States for generations. Many of our parents, our grandparents and our great grandparents immigrated to America having played this wonderful game in the streets of their native countries.

Small-sided games are games played on smaller fields and with fewer players than the adult game of 11 versus 11. Games of 3 versus 3, 4 versus 3 and 4 versus 4 are examples of small-sided game numbers. As you can see, playing numbers can be even or uneven and the game can be played.

In the past it was not uncommon for small-sided games to be played in the streets and in vacant lots with uneven numbers and mixed ages. Now the streets are too busy and the vacant lot is too dangerous or no longer exists. Thus, it has become the responsibility of the soccer club or youth organization to recreate the small-sided environment.

This manual provides the information needed to successfully implement small-sided games in your soccer club. It will cover the reasons for small-sided games, the implementation process, models of small-sided game play, recommended modified rules of play and helpful references.

The goal of both US Youth Soccer and U. S. Soccer is to improve the Zone 1 youth soccer experience. The outcome of that enriched soccer upbringing will be more players staying in the game and an overall improved standard of play.

## **REASONS FOR SMALL SIDED PLAY**

### **Philosophical**

1. Because we want our young soccer players to have more *individual teaching time* with the coach! Fewer players on the field will guarantee this! (Need to feel worthy...need to feel important)
2. Because we want to distance our young soccer players from the external undo pressures of the adult game. (eliminate extrinsic value)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to enjoy the game for its own sake. (foster intrinsic value)

### **Educational**

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 quality decisions* during the game! (Tactical development)
3. Because we want our young soccer players to be more physically *efficient* in the field space in which they are playing! (Reduced field size)
4. 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)
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunities to play on both sides of the ball!* (More exposure to attacking and defending situations)
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have *more opportunities to score goals and make saves!* (Pure excitement)

The “Small-Sided” environment is a *developmentally appropriate environment* for our young soccer players. It’s a **FUN** environment that *focuses on the player*.

These are the reasons why US Youth Soccer endorses “Small-Sided Games” for 6-U, 8-U, 10-U and 12-U players across the board...across America.

## STAGES OF PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

All ages can play “Small Sided Games,” but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players. This has to do with the stages of development that all children go through.

As children progress through these stages, their intellect grows, they mature physically and they get emotionally stronger. For example:

**Four and five year olds** (6-U players) are very, very little people. They are very egocentric. The ball represents a toy that belongs to them...they don't share well. They love to run and jump and roll around. They have wonderful imaginations! It's about **PLAY!** It's about **FUN!**

**Recommended game playing numbers:** *4 versus 4 or 3 versus 3  
(no goalkeepers)*  
**Recommended maximum field size:** *35 yards x 25 yards*  
**Recommended goal size:** *4 ft. high x 6 ft. wide*  
**Recommended ball size:** *Number 3*

---

**Six and seven year olds** (8-U players) are still little people but are maturing and have better balance and agility. They begin to experience success technically and will share the ball a bit with a teammate or teammates. Numbers on the field must be small so that they can have the ball a lot. This allows them to practice their newly learned skills in an uncluttered environment. They begin to enjoy playing *soccer!*

**Recommended game playing numbers:** *4 versus 4  
(no goalkeepers)*  
**Recommended maximum field size:** *35 yards x 25 yards*  
**Recommended goal size:** *4 ft. high x 6 ft. wide*  
**Recommended ball size:** *Number 3*

---

**Eight and nine year olds** (10-U players) can play the game and enjoy the game. They need time and the appropriate environment to continue their technical development and begin simple tactical development (simple combinations with their teammates). Fewer players on the field provide ample opportunity to make quality decisions more often, reinforcing the tactical basics, so-to-speak. They enjoy being part of a team because it's a FUN environment!

**Recommended game playing numbers:**    7 *versus* 7

  (6 *field players* + 1 *goalkeeper*)

**Recommended maximum field size:**        65 *yards* x 45 *yards*

**Recommended goal size:**                 6 *ft. high* x 18 *ft. wide*

**Recommended ball size:**                    *Number 4*

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**Ten and eleven year olds** (12-U players) participate in and enjoy the game because their intellect and technical ability allows for more mature play. Midfield play is introduced at this age due to their increased intellect and improved vision of the field. Training becomes economical in nature, merging the technical, tactical, physical and psychological components of the game.

**Recommended game playing numbers:**    9 *versus* 9

  (8 *field players* + 1 *goalkeeper*)

**Recommended maximum field size:**        80 *yards* x 55 *yards*

**Recommended goal size:**                 6 *ft. high* x 18 *ft. wide*

**Recommended ball size:**                    *Number 4*

---

*At the 13-U and older age groups, we believe that the players are becoming capable of 11 versus 11 play.*

**The future evolution of SSG in America should be:**

**6-U play 3 vs. 3 – no goalkeepers**

**8-U play 4 vs. 4 – no goalkeepers**

**10-U play 5 vs. 5**

**12-U play 7 vs. 7**

**14-U play 9 vs. 9**



## **PRETEEN SOCCER PLAYERS DEVELOPMENT**

1. All children are individuals and should be treated as such.
2. Their soccer environment should enhance their self-concept.
3. Our society fosters cooperation and competition. Soccer training activities can promote these behaviors.
4. The opportunity for each child to participate in challenging, meaningful and varied activities enhancing each ones perceptual motor development and total psychomotor development to his/her fullest capability.
5. Children should be able to choose their own activities as much as possible (responsible decision-making).
6. Developmental goals will be met by any of the activities that the children may choose.
7. Often times learning involves work.
8. The children have the responsibility to participate in the program with success-orientated activities.
9. Parents and the coach must structure the child's environment to enhance the development of physical literacy.
10. The home environment plays an important role in the learning process (cultural patterns).
11. Coaching of our youngest players requires specialized skill (certification).
12. Coaches must educate/develop the whole child/player.

It is a pity that youth soccer is often compared with soccer played by adults. Often there are instructions given by coaches that the children don't understand (also parents shouldn't get involved with the coaching). Small-sided games begin to give the game back to the players and allow a more player-centered soccer environment. When players are motivated to practice their sport, they'll learn more from it and therefore become a better soccer player. Our aim is to get as much pleasure from soccer as possible.

In the long run player development is best served by ability based grouping of players. However, mixed ability grouping also has a positive effect on the players. Grouping players by chronological age groups automatically provides that mixed ability experience, as do pick-up games. Generally we recommend that players could go into ability based groups beginning with the 10-U age group. It is best if those groups are pools of players. The players could be moved from

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pool to pool based on their developmental needs. At such a young age those needs could change over each six week period. Review the academy set up in North Carolina as a prime example:

[http://www.ncsoccer.org/home/default.asp?menu\\_category=Academy](http://www.ncsoccer.org/home/default.asp?menu_category=Academy)

Clubs should also offer some extracurricular skills sessions. Players who are new to the sport could attend those sessions to help them catch up with the more soccer experienced players. Then also offer every two weeks a ‘street soccer’ session and mix the ability levels to help all of the players develop different aspects of their game.

## IMPLEMENTATION LOGISTICS



*The Game for All Kids!*®

## **Staffing**

### *Coaches*

At the 6-U to the 12-U age groups the level of coaching varies from program to program and from age group to age group. US Youth Soccer strongly recommends that your coaches have the appropriate certification/license according to the ***Recommended Coaching Certification Chart*** in the appendix of this manual.

#### **Options:**

##### ***6-U and 8-U coaches...***

Can be parent/facilitators who have attended the U6/U8 state coaching module and/or the “F” license and/or have received instruction from a National Youth Licensed Coach. Parent/facilitators can run age appropriate activities, which will provide a developmentally appropriate environment for the players. The environment (activities) becomes the teacher.

Training sessions can be organized so that the club’s Director of Coaching or a National Youth Licensed coach runs an ***age group*** training session that the parent facilitators observe. This coach should provide copies of his/her lesson plan to the 6-U/8-U coaches. After witnessing an activity or two, the parent facilitators can run the activities with their group of players. After a few weeks of this mentorship, a list of activities is produced and simple repetition of the activities is used for the completion of the season. This becomes a coach-in-training program.

If the dual method of play is being used, the coach can train all the players at the training session and on game day, can delegate one field to a parent/facilitator, while he/she ***watches*** the other game. After all, on game day, parent/facilitators/coaches should enjoy ***watching*** the kids play, cheer for the players and refrain from giving too much direction to them.

Continuing education is extremely important for the parent/facilitators and other adults involved with youth soccer. The mentor program described above is a great way to fulfill this need.

### ***10-U and 12-U coaches...***

Should be parent/coaches who have attended the U10/U12 state coaching module and/or the “E” license. Ideally, coaches at this age group should attend the National Youth Coaching Course. More coaching is involved at these age groups due to the increase in intellectual, emotional and physical development of the players. Therefore coaching education becomes extremely important.

Training sessions can be organized so that the club’s Director of Coaching or a National Youth Licensed coach runs an ***age group*** training session that the parent facilitators observe. This coach should provide copies of his/her lesson plan to the 10-U/12-U coaches. After witnessing an activity or two, the parent facilitators can run the activities with their group of players. After a few weeks of this mentorship, a list of activities is produced and simple repetition of the activities is used for the completion of the season. This becomes a coach-in-training program.

Parent/coaches continue to use age appropriate activities to teach the players about the game. Providing training and match environments that stimulate problem solving by the players is key to their development.

If the dual method of play is being used, the coach can train all the players at the training session and on game day, can delegate one field to a parent/facilitator, while he/she ***watches*** the other game. After all, on game day, parent/facilitators/coaches should enjoy ***watching*** the kids play, cheer for the players and refrain from giving too much direction to them.

Continuing education is extremely important for the parent/facilitators and other adults involved with youth soccer.

### ***Referees and Other Match Officials***

At the 6-U to the 12-U age groups the level of officiating varies from program to program and from age group to age group. US Youth Soccer strongly recommends that your referees have the appropriate certification/license according to the ***Recommended Referees Certification Chart*** in the appendix of this manual.

#### **Options:**

##### ***6-U and 8-U referees...***

Can be parent/facilitators or young soccer players, twelve years of age or older, who have attended a basic clinic on the ***US Youth Soccer Modified Playing Rules*** and/or have attended the Grade 9 Referee's Course. The person taking on the responsibility of the referee should help the little players understand the rules, make sure the environment is safe, be flexible, patient and understanding, and keep the game moving. (Smile a lot!) The referee has a tremendous impact on player development at this age...just keep it FUN!

At this level of play, the environment can be an excellent training ground for young referees.

On game day, parents and coaches should enjoy watching the kids play, cheer for the players and refrain from yelling negative and/or directing comments at the referees.

Continuing education is extremely important for referees. The mentor program for young referees described above is a great way to fulfill this need.

### ***10-U and 12-U referees...***

Referees for 10-U and 12-U can be parent/facilitators or young soccer players, fourteen years of age or older, who have attended the Grade 9 Referee's Course. Assistant Referees are not required but use of club linespersons is highly recommended. The persons taking on the responsibilities of the referee and the assistant referees should help the players understand the rules, make sure the environment is safe, be flexible, patient and understanding, and keep the game moving. The referee should not be the center of attention...the players should be the center of attention.

At this level of play, the environment can be an excellent training ground for young referees especially as the assistant referee (linesperson).

On game day, parents and coaches should enjoy watching the kids play, cheer for the players and refrain from yelling negative and/or directing comments at the referees.

Continuing education is extremely important for referees. The mentor program for young referees described above is a great way to fulfill this need. State referee courses are also highly recommended.

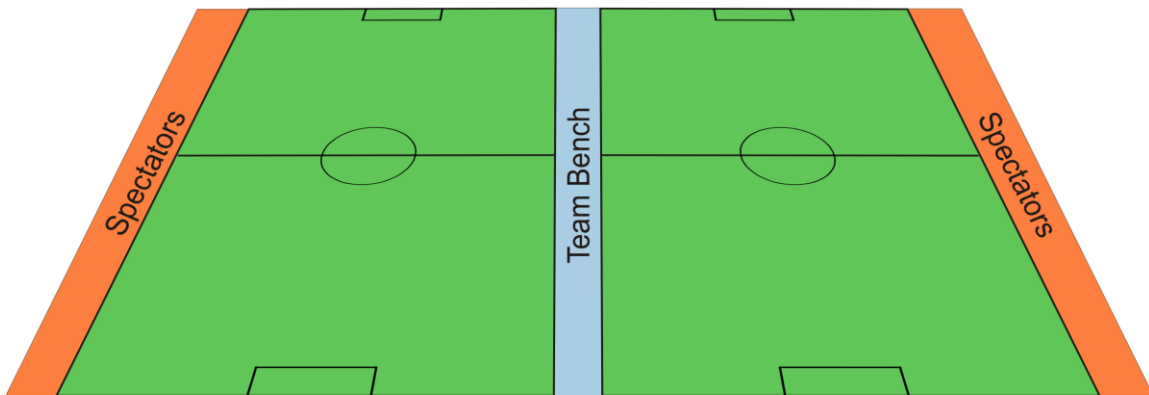
## **Fields**

### ***Multiple Field Layout***

Single field layouts are located in the *Modified Rules, Addendums and Diagrams* section of this manual on pages 35 to 54.

Here are samples of the dual field method layout:

Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields Dual Mode



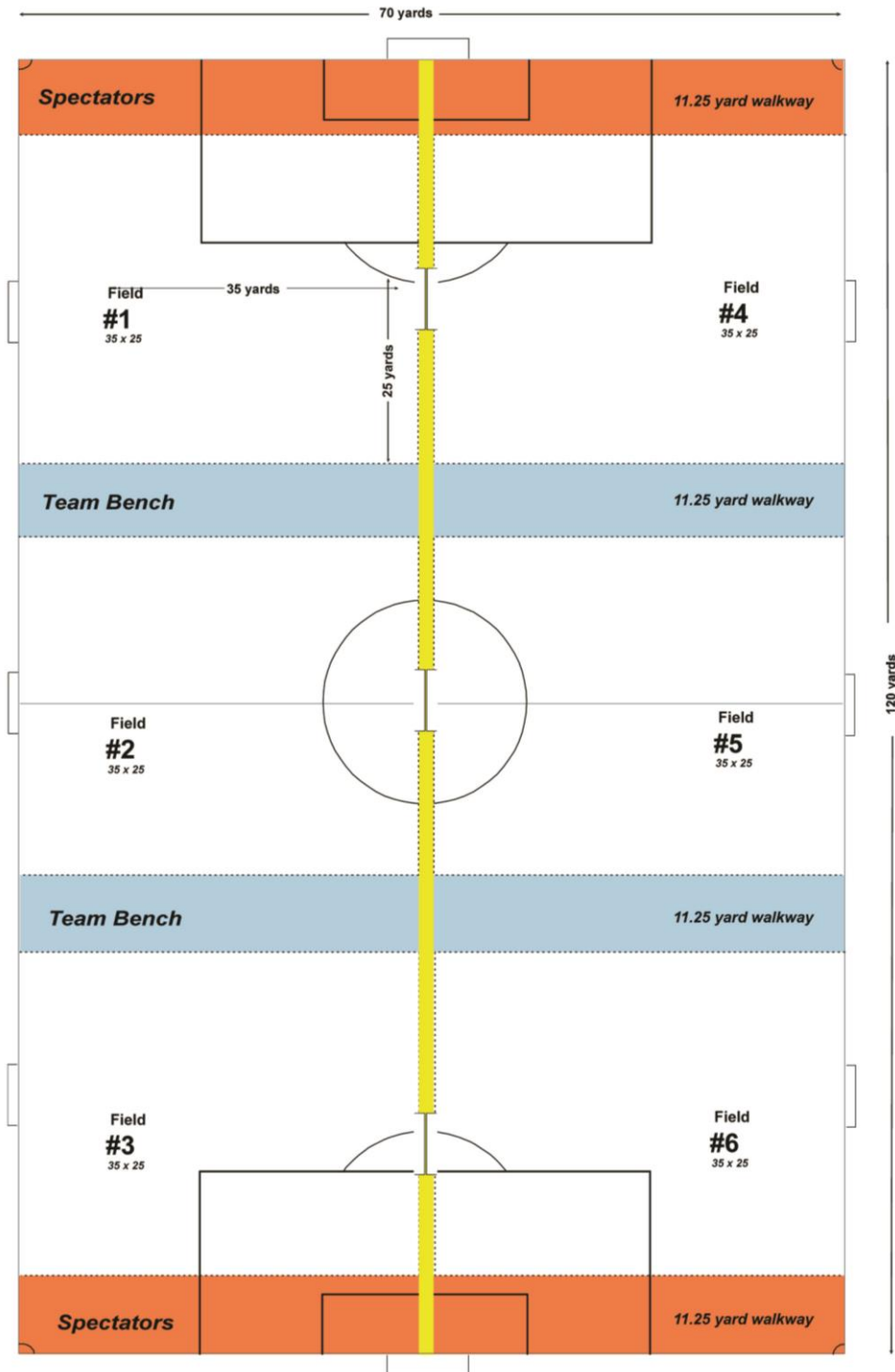


Depending on the space that your organization has available to them, multiple field layouts are recommended. Here are possible options:

## **6-U / 8-U FIELDS**

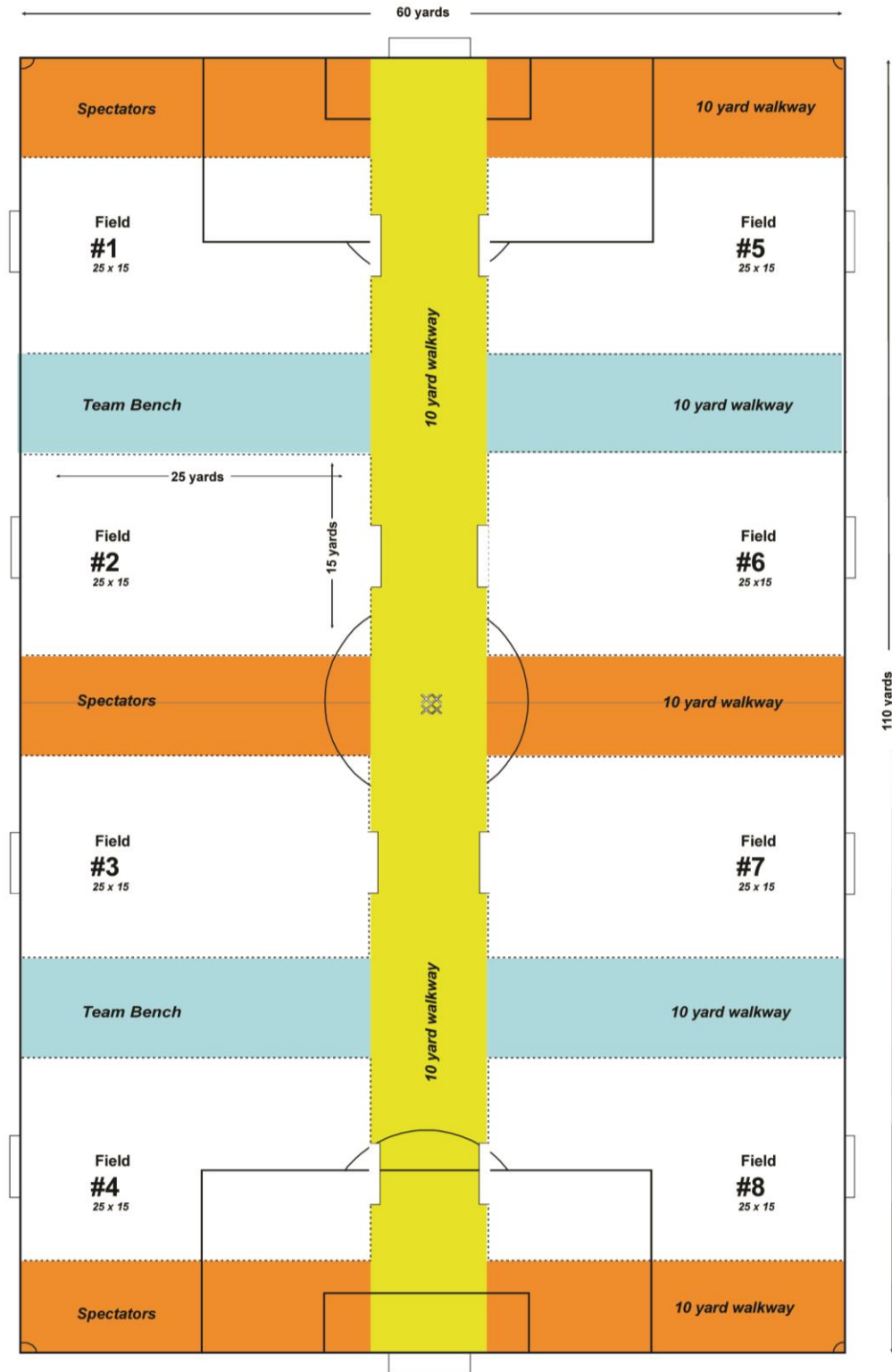
### Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields

*Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 6 - 35 x 25 fields (maximum field size)*



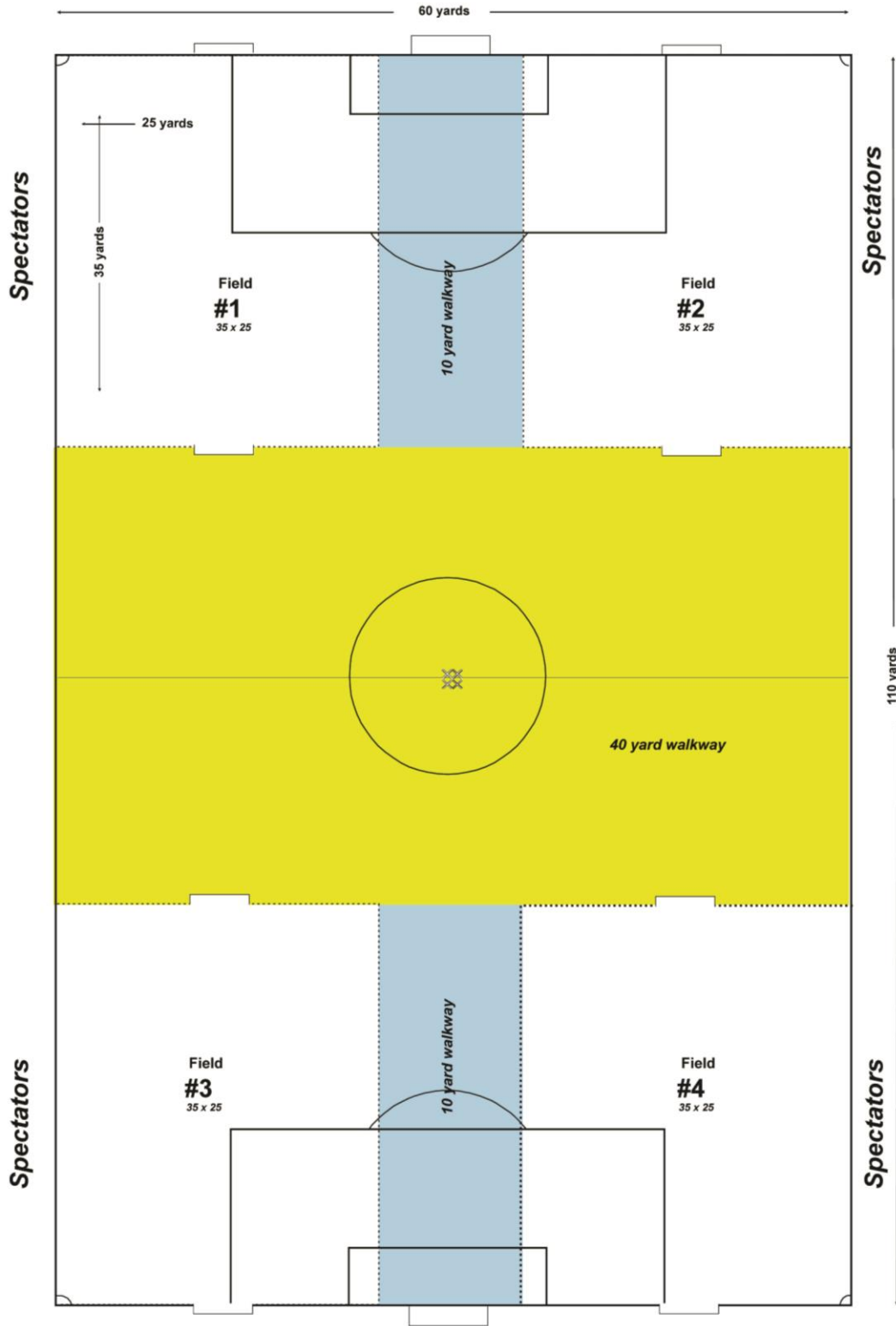
## Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields

Dividing a 110 x 60 field into 8 - 25 x 15 fields (minimum field size)



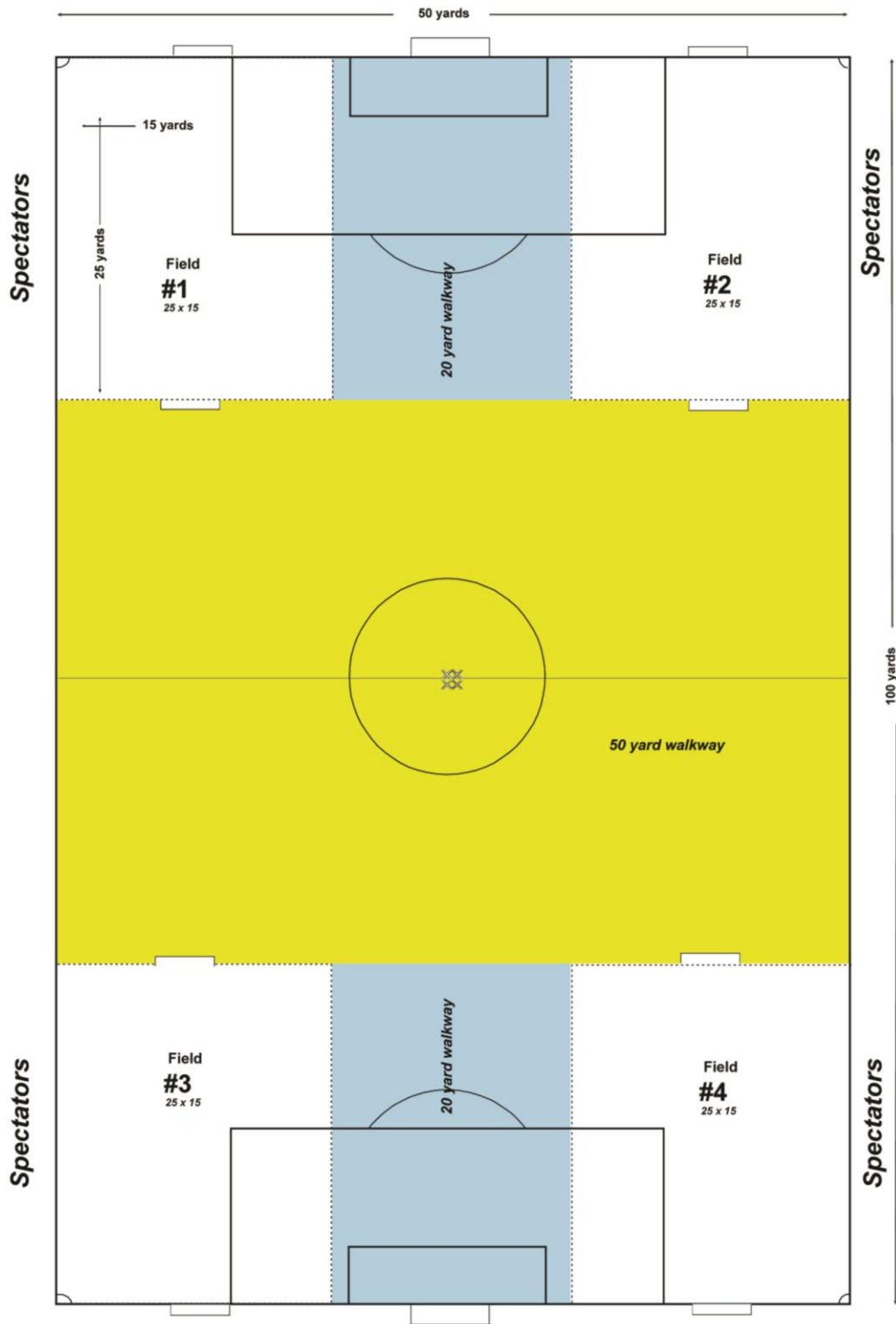
# Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields

Dividing a 110 x 60 field into 4 - 35 x 25 fields (maximum field size)



# Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields

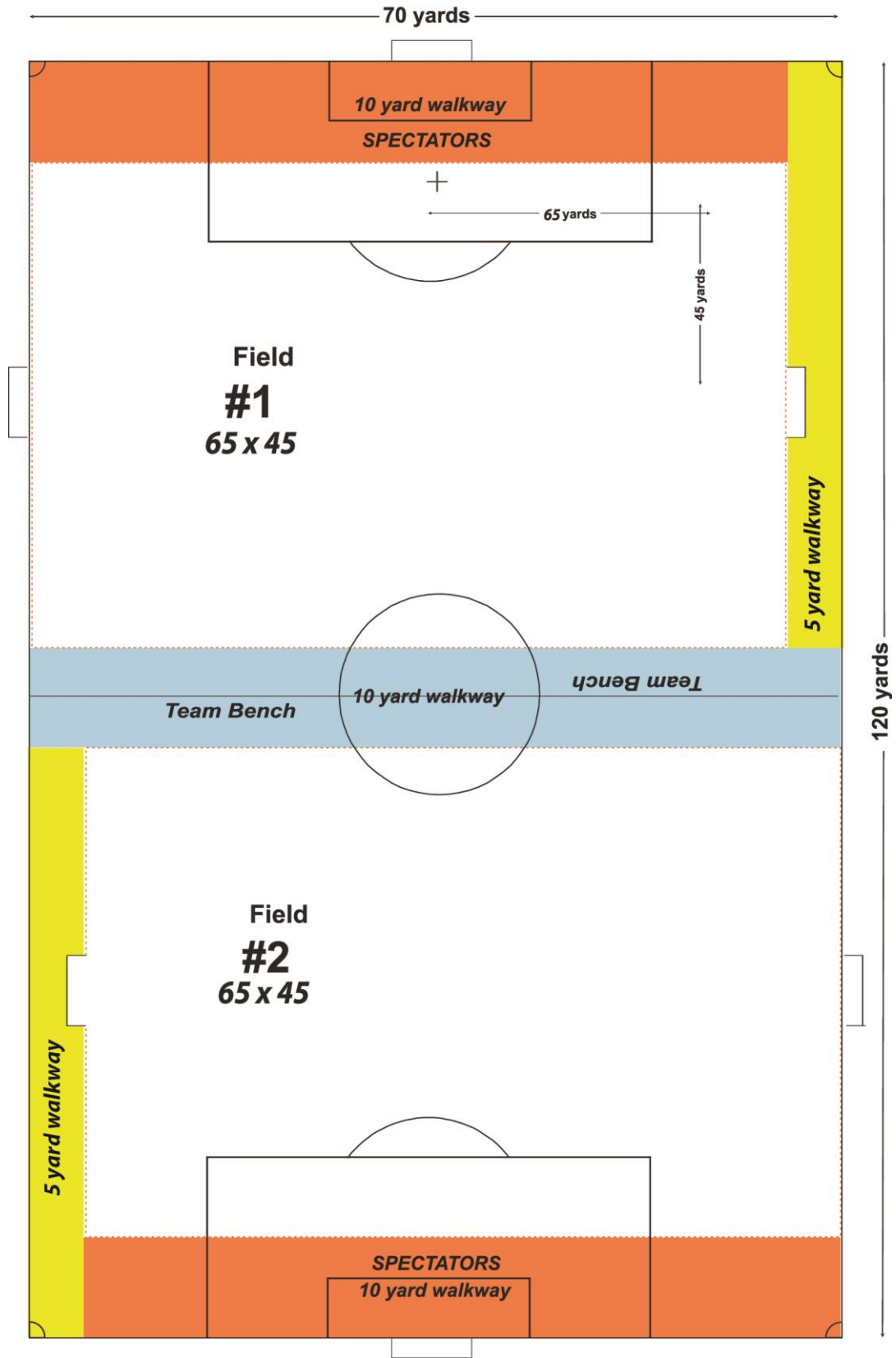
Dividing a 100 x 50 field into 4 - 25 x 15 fields (minimum field size)



# **10-U FIELDS**

## Suggested Set-up for 7v7 Fields

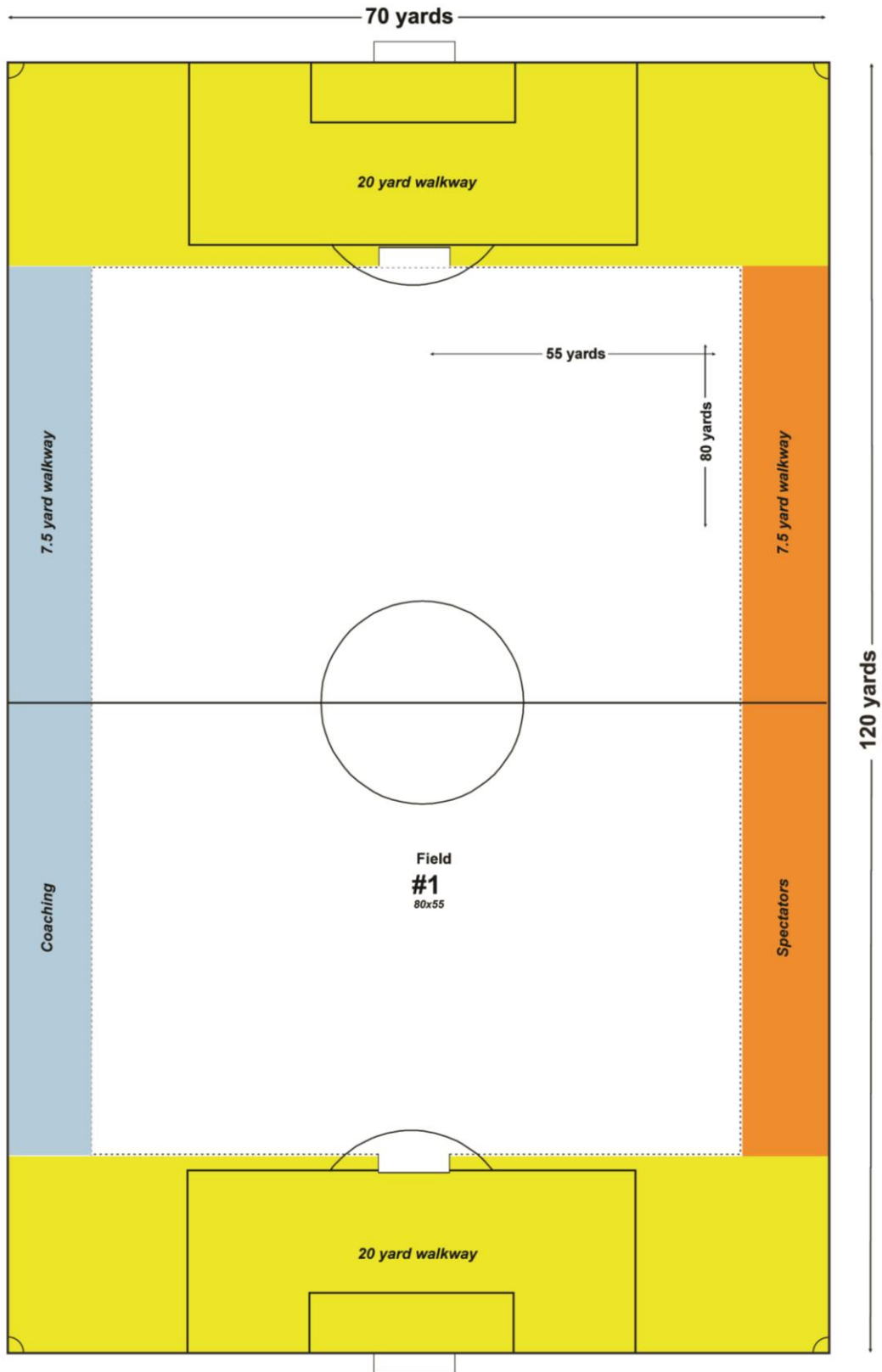
Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 2 - 65 x 45 fields



## 12-U FIELDS

### Suggested Set-up for 9v9 Fields

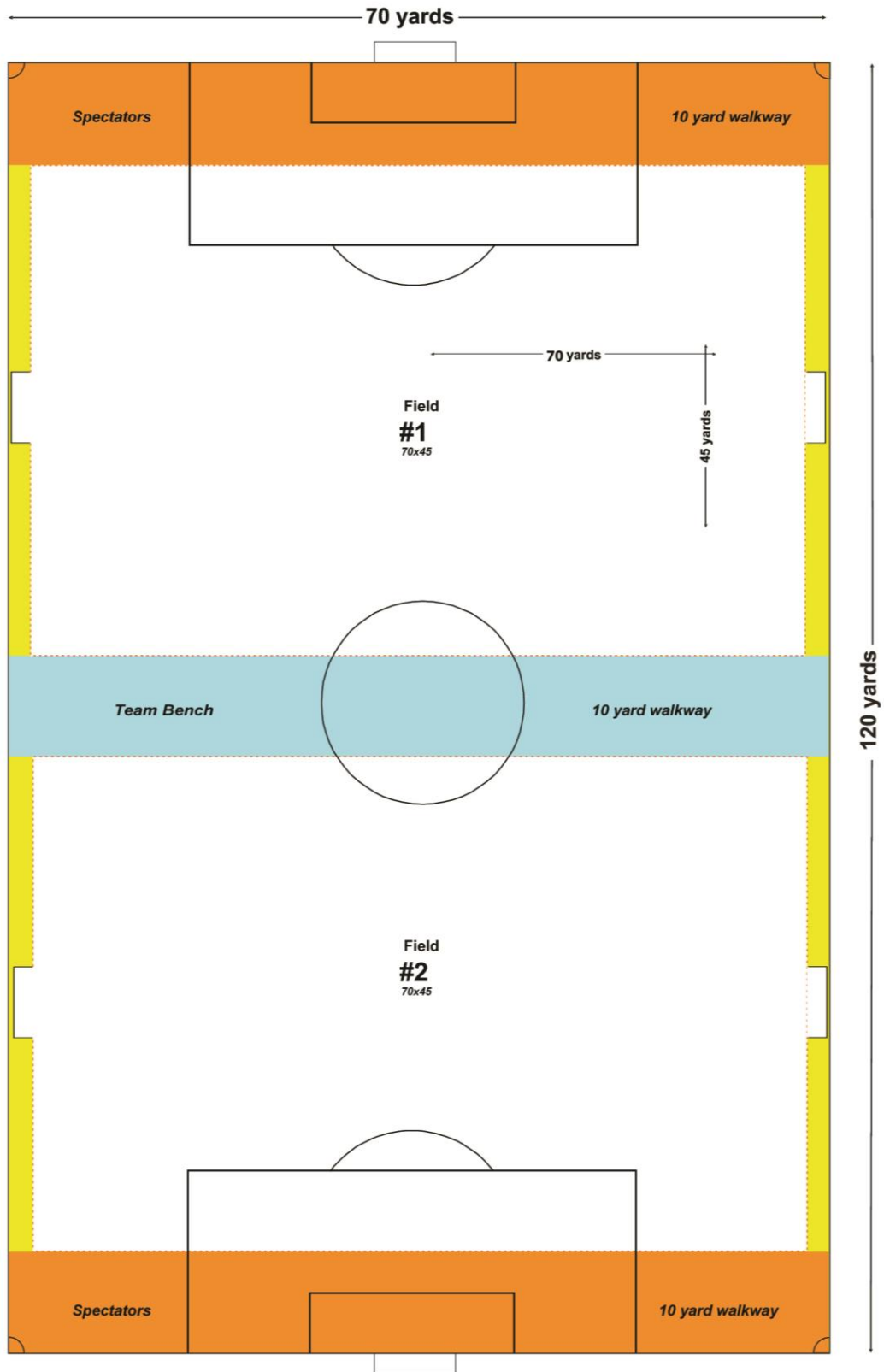
*Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 1 -80 x 55 field (maximum field size)*



## 12-U FIELDS

### Suggested Set-up for 9v9 Fields

Dividing a 120 x 70 field into 2 -70 x 45 fields (minimum field size)



## **Equipment**

### *Goals*

#### **Do we need more GOALS?**

#### **NO**

- Can use *corner flags* for goals
- Can use *cones* for goals

#### **YES**

- May buy additional goals if needed and can use colored flat cones for boundaries, if necessary.
  - Upgrade to the new required goal sizes as the club capital expenses budget allows
- Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

*For more information on goal safety click on this link:*

<http://www.cpsc.gov/CPSCPUB/PUBS/Soccer.pdf>

### *Cones*

Cones can be used to mark off field boundary lines as well. Usage of cones may be best applied to 6-U and possibly 8-U matches. Tall cones or flags could be used to mark the corners of the field and flat disc cones could be used to mark the goal lines and touch lines. In this way a club will have great flexibility in where the playing fields for the youngest age groups are laid out in the soccer complex. It also could be a cost saving measure in that less chalk/paint would be needed to designate playing areas. The age group coordinator and/or the age group coaches could help with laying out and collecting the cones on game day.



## **Scheduling**

### *League*

- Weekly organized, age level team competition versus other teams:
  - Intra club (within the club)
  - Inter club (outside of the club)
- Usually seasonal in nature (fall, winter, spring, summer).
- Requires officials (coaches, parents and/or certified referees)

### **Single Field Method**

One team vs. one opposing team per field.

Smaller roster (i.e. 8 and Under *four versus four* teams use a roster of 6 players).

### **Dual Field Method**

Split-Team play...each team splits into two teams and plays on fields side by side against an opposing split team.

Larger roster (i.e. 8 and Under *four versus four* teams use a roster of 8-10 players).

### *Festivals*

- Soccer festivals feature multiple small-sided mini-games per event (e.g., 10 games X 10 minutes) with no elimination and no ultimate winner. Soccer festivals create an atmosphere of enjoyment, stemming from the fun of participation in the game and allowing play to be the center of the experience. Coaching consists of positive comments about the player's efforts and cheering. Fans cheer for the players on both teams.
- We believe that soccer festivals should replace soccer tournaments for all players under the age of ten.

## ***Tournaments***

- We also endorse and support the movement to prohibit 10-U teams from traveling to events that promote winning and losing and the awarding of trophies.
- Teams are participating in a vast number of tournaments each season. The participation in these tournaments by youth teams often creates a “win-at-all-cost” attitude and has a negative influence on player development.
- This high level of participation in tournaments affects the development of the player in the following ways:
  - a) Time is reduced for development (i.e. training)
  - b) Excessive play at competitive tournaments is detrimental to individual growth and development
  - c) Winning becomes the main issue for the coach rather than the long term development of the player

## ***Street Soccer***

### ***Organized by the Numbers***

In this version of the small-sided game, each player is assigned a number that he/she keeps for the duration of the event. The organizer will announce teams of four players by calling out numbers prior to each small-sided game.

For instance, in the first match, numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4 will play as a team against numbers 5, 6, 7 and 8 on field A; while numbers 9, 10, 11 and 12 will play against 13, 14, 15 and 16 on field B. In the second match, numbers 2, 6, 10 and 16 might play against numbers 1, 5, 9 and 13 on field A, etc. In this way, players play with and against different combinations of players throughout the event.

After each match, the organizer requests and records each individual player’s score based on the following point system.

<b>POINT SYSTEM</b>		
<b>Win</b>	=	3
<b>Draw</b>	=	1
<b>Loss</b>	=	0
<b>Goal</b>	=	1
<b>Assist</b>	=	1
<b>Shutout</b>	=	1
<b>MVP</b>	=	1

Possible set-up logistics for ‘street soccer’:

- 4-8 minute matches depending upon total number of players
- 4 matches in an hour ... give sufficient time between matches for water and to get to the next field for the next match
- 4 vs. 4 without goalkeepers or 5 vs. 5 with goalkeepers
- Players set up fields using cones for the corners of the field and corner flags for the goals
- Have training bibs at each field
- The players determine the rules (how goals are scored, etc.)
- The players make the subs
- The players solve disputes (fouls, etc.)
- The coach keeps time
- The coach records the points for all of the players after each match

### ***Pick-up Games***

This is an opportunity for a club to return players to the pick-up game (free play) environment where players learn how to play the game from each other. This is the opportunity to mix age groups; for the 8- to 15-year-olds no more than a two-year span in ages. For the players 16-years-old and older a three-year span is fine. Indeed this SSG environment is a chance to also mix genders as the boys and girls have different positive playing traits.

Past generations learned to play the game on their own with other kids in the neighborhood or at school in these kid-organized games. Today youth sports are overly adult controlled and influenced. It’s difficult today for youngsters to have a pick-up game since the streets have too many cars, the sandlot now has a mini-mall on it and parents are

reluctant, with good cause, to let their child go blocks away from home on Saturday to play in a game on his or her own.

Pick-up soccer is a way for soccer clubs to give the game back to the players in the community. Once a week, or whatever frequency fits the circumstances the best, a club can have organized spontaneity. The club will provide the fields and supervision. Adults will be on site for safety and general supervision, but otherwise it is all up to the players to organize the games.

The adults should NOT coach, cheer, criticize, referee or in any other way involve themselves in the game. The best bet for parents is to drop off their child, go run some errands, and then come back to pick up your child an hour or two later.

The coaches are on site NOT to coach, but to supervise, be on hand for any injuries and any severe discipline problems. Additionally the coaches are there to provide the game equipment and to let the players know when each game segment starts and stops.

It can be used to assist with player development, player identification and player selection. Mostly it is a chance for players to play the game for the FUN of the game. Street soccer brings together children, parents, coaches and volunteers to a soccer celebration, regardless of ethnic or cultural backgrounds. Soccer is the common language and the soccer ground is an arena for social inclusion.

Referees are not needed, since these rules are meant to teach self-responsibility and fair play, with the implied agenda of improving the player's competences in non-violent communication and conflict resolution.

***Here are some pick-up game or free play event organizational tips:***

- All participants play at the same time
- The use of goalkeepers is optional
- Each player has different teammates for five separate matches
- Matches are ten minutes long, using small goals
- Kick-off from the kick-off spot
- After a goal has been scored the player may dribble or pass the ball from the back line
- Free-kicks are always indirect, the distance from the opponent to the ball must be at least three yards

- Instead of throw-ins the ball is passed in from the side line and is indirect
- No off-side
- Penalties from the kick-off spot without a goalkeeper
- One can score from any position on the field
- Players have to decide their positions among themselves
- Players keep track of the score themselves
- There are no referees
- Players control the rules themselves
- Five small fields on an official field
- Cones/flags as a goal 2-3 yards wide
- The number of participants varies between sixteen and fifty; if there are more than fifty participants then a second soccer field has to be used
- At each field there are pinnies/bibs/vests
- Teams can be 4-a-side up to 6-a-side
- Players make their own substitutions if there are extra players at a field

The beauty of setting up SSG practices and games is that numerous fields can be set up within a regular adult-sized field. There is no need to purchase expensive small sized goals or take the time to line numerous small fields. It is the amount of time spent playing the game that matters the most, not the aesthetics of painted lines or goals with nets. Corner flags or bicycle flags can be used as goal and corner markers. Cones or discs can be used to mark sidelines and end lines. A minimum number of vests/pinnies/bibs can make it easy to change teams from field to field. Have the players leave one set of bibs of different colors on each half of the field when they are done playing for the next group of players to use in the next game. Be sure to have appropriate size soccer balls available. The players are responsible for getting a ball to each game and for collecting the ball when it goes out of play.

*“Play has become spectacle, with few protagonists and many spectators, soccer for watching. And that spectacle has become one of the most profitable businesses in the world, organized not for play but rather to impede it. The technocracy of professional sport has managed to impose soccer of lightning speed and brute strength, a soccer that negates joy, kills fantasy and outlaws daring. Luckily, on the field you can still see, even if only once in a long while, some insolent rascal who sets aside the script and commits the blunder of dribbling past the entire opposing side, the referee and the crowds in the stands, all for the carnal delight of embracing the forbidden adventure of freedom.”*

**Eduardo Galeano**

## **SUPPORTING ARTICLE**

### **“Street Soccer And Small Sided Games”**

By Andy Roxburgh

It was lunchtime in Turin, and while others around the table spoke about the UEFA Champions League match which would take place that evening in the Stadio Delle Alpi between Juventus FC and Manchester United FC, Roberto Bettega, Juve's vice-chairman and former star player, talked to me about street football.

#### **Time for Self-expression**

"Although I was attached to this club from the age of nine years, much of my development took place in the streets – it was there that I practiced and refined my basic skills," said Roberto, who won seven championships for the 'Old Lady' of Turin and represented Italy on 42 occasions. What troubles Roberto, who played alongside Michel Platini, Paolo Rossi, Zbigniew Boniek and other icons of the game, is the dominating style of many youth coaches. With the passion of a street fighter, he added: "Young players need some time for self-expression, for spontaneity. Their coaches need to watch and listen more and instruct a little less."

#### **Valid Philosophy**

In many parts of Europe, street football has all but disappeared, but the philosophy and the mentality remains valid. The street game was player-centered, competitive, skilful and fair, and the small-sided game, with one-on-one a key element, was the basic form of play. Youngsters practiced for hours on tricks and on passing and shooting techniques, using a wall as their silent partner. A love of football permeated all activities, and cups and medals (extrinsic motivation) had no immediate significance for the fierce young dreamers who were dedicated to the ball and lost in the romance of the game.

#### **Grassroots Program**

UEFA, through its Grassroots Program, is committed to supporting the associations and the clubs with their community schemes and player development programs. Football leaders are acutely aware that the loss of the street environment, particularly in industrial regions, has provoked a greater need for training facilities, free-play areas, and appropriate equipment. But equally, there is an increasing demand for well-educated coaches who have the specific knowledge and the ability to work with young players. Just as the smart referee knows the difference between a foul, a dive and a legitimate tackle, so the sensitive youth coach understands when to drill, when to teach creatively, and when to encourage self-reliance and free expression.

#### **Football Maxim**

Every player, even the stars, were once grass-roots players. Every Sunday morning, as a youngster, Michael Owen of Liverpool FC played two v two games with his father and two elder brothers. Ronaldo claimed that his 'toe-poke' goal against Turkey in the semi-final of the FIFA World Cup was the product of his Futsal (five v five) experiences as a

Revised on January 31, 2017

young player. Wayne Rooney, Everton FC's 17-year-old striker, who recently became the youngest player to play for England, still plays in the streets with his friends. It is a football maxim: if the grass roots are strong, then the game will grow and blossom.

### Street Mentality

As facilities improve and programs become more sophisticated, there is the danger that some will lose sight of the heart and soul of the game. Coaches who have a street mentality, who appreciate the value of free play, self-expression, and passion, will never allow the game to become sterile and mechanical. The Japanese have a saying: "You are never too old to have a happy childhood." For the youth coach, this translates into a simple message: stay young at heart – it is a sentiment, which Roberto Bettega would fully endorse.

This article, written by UEFA technical director Andy Roxburgh, appeared as an editorial in an edition of the UEFA publication "The Technician".

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#### US Youth Soccer Disclaimer

Street Soccer is simply a phrase for free play. Youngsters should play on their own in places where they have permission to play.

## Resources and Supportive Information

The term street soccer encompass a number of informal varieties of association football. These informal games do not necessarily follow the requirements of a formal game of football / soccer, such as a large field, field markings, goal apparatus and corner flags, eleven players per team, or match officials (referee and assistant referees).

[http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/street\\_soccer\\_day/](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/street_soccer_day/)

[http://www.cnsfund.org/DVD/index\\_E.html](http://www.cnsfund.org/DVD/index_E.html)

<http://www.streetsoccerusa.org/>

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

<http://www.joyofthepeople.org/page/show/79898-free-play>

<http://www.skylinesoccer.org/benefits-pick-up-soccer/>

### Pick-up soccer

A game of soccer where anyone can join, usually there's no membership fees, no skill requirements and it's just for fun. It's just a bunch of strangers meeting together to play the greatest sport in the world.





## MODIFIED RULES, ADDENDA AND DIAGRAMS



*usyouthsoccer.org*

## **6-U Modified Rules**

### **US Youth Soccer Official 6 and Under Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees).

## Law 1 – The Field of Play

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### **MINI FIELD**

**Dimensions:** The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

**Length:** minimum 25 yards      maximum 35 yards

**Width:** minimum 15 yards      maximum 25 yards

**Field Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line.

**The Goal Area:** None.

**The Penalty Area:** None.

**Flagposts:** Corner flags are optional.

**The Corner Arc:** None.

**Goals:** Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is six (6) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is four (4) feet. Goals for this age group may be smaller.

**Optional:** Use corner flags / bicycle flags in lieu of standard goals.

**Safety:** Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

## Law 2 – The Ball

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**Size three (3).** The ball will need to be FIFA Quality.

**Optional:** use a lightweight<sup>1</sup> size four (4) ball or a Futsal ball to keep the ball mostly on the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> A lightweight version reduces the weight of a size 4 soccer ball while still staying within the standards set by U. S. Soccer. Physical benefits of a lightweight ball include less stress on joints at the moment of impact and young players can make long passes, hard shots and block attempts by opponents.

## Law 3 – The Number of Players

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A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than four (4) players. There are NO goalkeepers.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

N. B.: If a player who is suspected to have a head injury<sup>i</sup> leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. It is the coach's responsibility to enforce this rule. Teams and matches may be coed.

The maximum team roster size is six (6).<sup>ii</sup>

## Law 4 – The Players Equipment

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Conform to FIFA Laws of the Game. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must distinguish teams. Shinguards are MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks. If needed, teams can be distinguished by scrimmage vests.

### **Safety**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry; with the exception of a medical alert bracelet).

## Law 5 – The Referee

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There is no need for fully qualified referees to manage 6-U games. One or both of the coaches should officiate / manage the game. The games are intended to be an opportunity for our young players to experience the fun of playing. Minimal rules are needed and should be applied with a generous amount of flexibility. Let the players have the freedom to play with little interruption. All infringements should be briefly explained to the players.

## Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

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None.

## Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

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The match shall be divided into four (4) periods of not more than 10 minutes, based on the energy and motivation of the players. There shall be a maximum of a five (5) minute break between each period. The four periods do not have to be of equal duration.

## Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

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Conform to FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the defending team is at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

## Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play

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Conform to FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 10 – The Method of Scoring

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Conform to FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 11 – Offside

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None.

## Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that deliberate heading is not allowed in 4 vs. 4 games. In all instances explain the infraction to the player. All free kicks shall be indirect. No cards will be shown in this age group.

## Law 13 – Free Kicks

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that all free kicks are indirect and the opponents are to be at least four (4) yards away from the ball until it is kicked.

## Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

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None.

## Law 15 – The Throw-In

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

Optional: the throw-in is replaced with the pass-in<sup>2</sup>; otherwise conform to FIFA Laws of the Game. Opposing players are to be at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is kicked. *US Youth Soccer strongly recommends this options to its members.*

Optional: Dribble-In.

## Law 16 – The Goal Kick

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The ball shall be placed on the goal line one (1) yard to the outside of either goal post. Opposing players step four yards away from the ball and once it is kicked then game on.

Optional: Dribble-In.

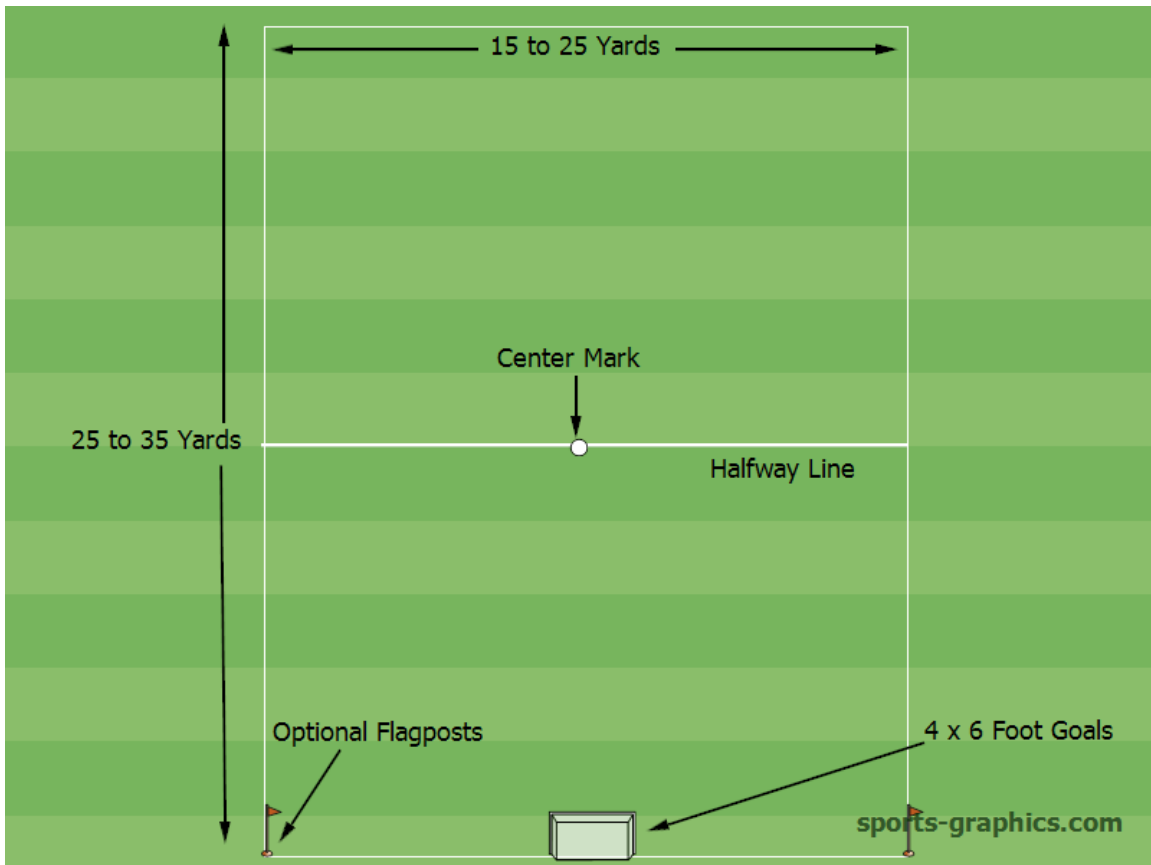
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<sup>2</sup> The ball is placed on the ground off of the field of play and is passed into the field of play.

## Law 17 – The Corner Kick

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that the ball shall be placed in the corner of the field and the opposing players are to be at least four (4) yards away from the ball until it is kicked.

Optional: Dribble-In.



## **6-U ADDENDUM**

### **MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR 6-U**

**Law 1** The Field of Play: the dimensions are smaller to accommodate the three-versus-three game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of four- and five-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful. Field Markings: the center circle gives the players a concrete marking on where to be for the kick-off. The corner arc gives the young player a concrete place to put the ball to kick it back onto the field of play. While kids this young will not execute corner kick plays taking a kick from the corner is a reasonable way for them to put the ball into play and provides continuity with all other age groups. However, the center circle and the corner arc for U6 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings. Cones may be used in lieu of corner flag posts if desired. Neither cones nor corner flag posts to mark the corners of the field are mandatory for this age group.

Goals: the goal, 4 x 6 is the same for the U6 to U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for these age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals and there will be greater flexibility in the use of fields. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for 6-U Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use cones, pop-up goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Indeed, even the entire goal line could be considered the 'goal' and a ball kicked over the goal line is considered a goal. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

**Law 2** The Ball: must be a size three. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

**Law 3** The Number of Players: there are no goalkeepers in the 6-U age group so that all of the players may chase the ball around the field. The kids want to be where the action is and at this age it is around the ball. This will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their running, jumping and kicking coordination. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeating game situations frequently. The work rate and involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates.

**Law 5** The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should supervise the game for safety sake. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player. 'Do-overs' should be a regular occurrence allowed by the adult(s) supervising the 6-U game. It is strongly recommended that the adult officiating the 6-U game attend the Grade 9 referee course.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: the game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the 6-U age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

**Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: no caution or send off shall be issued to players. If a child is being too rambunctious then the game official will ask the coach to make a substitution of that player to give the child a chance to calm down before returning to play.

**Law 15** The Pass-In: most 6-U players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. This leads to endless retakes from one team to the other. Additionally with a pass-in the ball is on the ground and stationary so the 6-U player has a better chance of striking it correctly. This may lead to some intentional passes. However, this is

still unlikely given that whether it is a throw or a kick all of the kids on the field will be yelling for the ball at the same time and the child putting the ball into play will be confused.

**Law 16** The Goal Kick: the kick should be allowed to be taken from anywhere along the goal line over which the ball traveled. This is so the ball can be put back into play quickly. The ball should be placed two or three yards into the field of play to make it easier for the child taking the goal kick to get the ball well into the field of play once it is kicked. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play. If the suggestion of using the halfway line is used then the defending players should stand at least at the halfway line until it is in play. The position of the defending players is so that the attacking team has a chance to advance the ball up field.

- ⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the recommended minimum roster size is four players and the maximum roster size is six players. Under the dual field method the recommended minimum roster size is eight players and the maximum roster size is ten players. This range of roster sizes allows for a club to use either the single field or dual field set up.
- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of at least 50% playing time is required. The goal of the 6-U facilitator is to achieve 100% playing time for each child.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See appendix for options.
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

#### **ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES**

- More time with the coach/facilitator
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- More efficient use of field space
- Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- Greater success rate for the players

#### **US Youth Soccer Recommendations**

- Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.
- Coaches of 6-U teams should attend the U6/U8 Youth Module coaching course, the “F” license and the Grade 9 referee course.

## **8-U Modified Rules**

### **US Youth Soccer Official 8 and Under Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees).

## Law 1 – The Field of Play

### **MINI FIELD**

**Dimensions:** The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

**Length:** minimum 25 yards      maximum 35 yards

**Width:** minimum 15 yards      maximum 25 yards

**Field Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line.

**Optional:** A circle with a radius of five (5) yards should be marked around the center mark.

**The Goal Area:** None.

**Optional:** Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line four (4) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of five (5) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line.

**The Penalty Area:** None.

**Flagposts:** Corner flags are optional.

**The Corner Arc:** None.

**Goals:** Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is six (6) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is four (4) feet. Goals for this age group may be smaller.

**Safety:** Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

## Law 2 – The Ball

**Size three (3).** The ball will need to be FIFA Quality.

**Optional:** use a lightweight<sup>3</sup> size four (4) ball or a Futsal ball to keep the ball mostly on the ground.

<sup>3</sup> A lightweight version reduces the weight of a size 4 soccer ball while still staying within the standards set by U. S. Soccer. Physical benefits of a lightweight ball include less stress on joints at the moment of impact and young players can make long passes, hard shots and block attempts by opponents.



## Law 3 – The Number of Players

---

A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than four (4) players. There are NO goalkeepers.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

N. B.: A player who is suspected to have a head injury <sup>i</sup> leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. It is the coach's responsibility to enforce this rule. Teams and matches may be coed.

The maximum team roster size is six (6).<sup>ii</sup>

## Law 4 – The Players Equipment

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must distinguish teams. Shinguards are MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks. If needed, teams can be distinguished by scrimmage vests.

### **Safety**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry; with the exception of a medical alert bracelet).

## Law 5 – The Referee

---

There is no need for fully qualified referees to manage 8 and Under games. One or both of the coaches should officiate / manage the game. Basic fouls and boundaries should be respected. All infringements should be briefly explained to the players.

## Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

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None.

## Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

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The match shall be divided into four (4) periods of not more than 10 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. The four periods do not have to be of equal duration.

## Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the defending team is at least five (5) yards from the ball until it is in play. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

## Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 10 – The Method of Scoring

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 11 – Offside

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None.

## Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that all fouls shall result in an indirect free kick.

When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area [if one is being used], the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

The game official must explain ALL infringements to the offending player. No cards shown for misconduct.

N.B.: A hand ball infraction occurs when a player handles the ball deliberately. The “hand” includes the entire arm up to the top of the shoulder. 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.

## Law 13 – Free Kicks

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that all free kicks are indirect and all opponents are to be at least five (5) yards from the ball until it is kicked. Deliberate heading is not allowed in 4 vs. 4 games.

## Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

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None.

## Law 15 – The Throw-In

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

Optional: the throw-in may be replaced with the pass-in<sup>4</sup>; otherwise conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game. Opposing players are to be at least two (2) yards from the ball until it is kicked. *This option is strongly recommended by US Youth Soccer.*

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<sup>4</sup> The ball is placed on the ground off of the field of play and is kicked into the field of play.

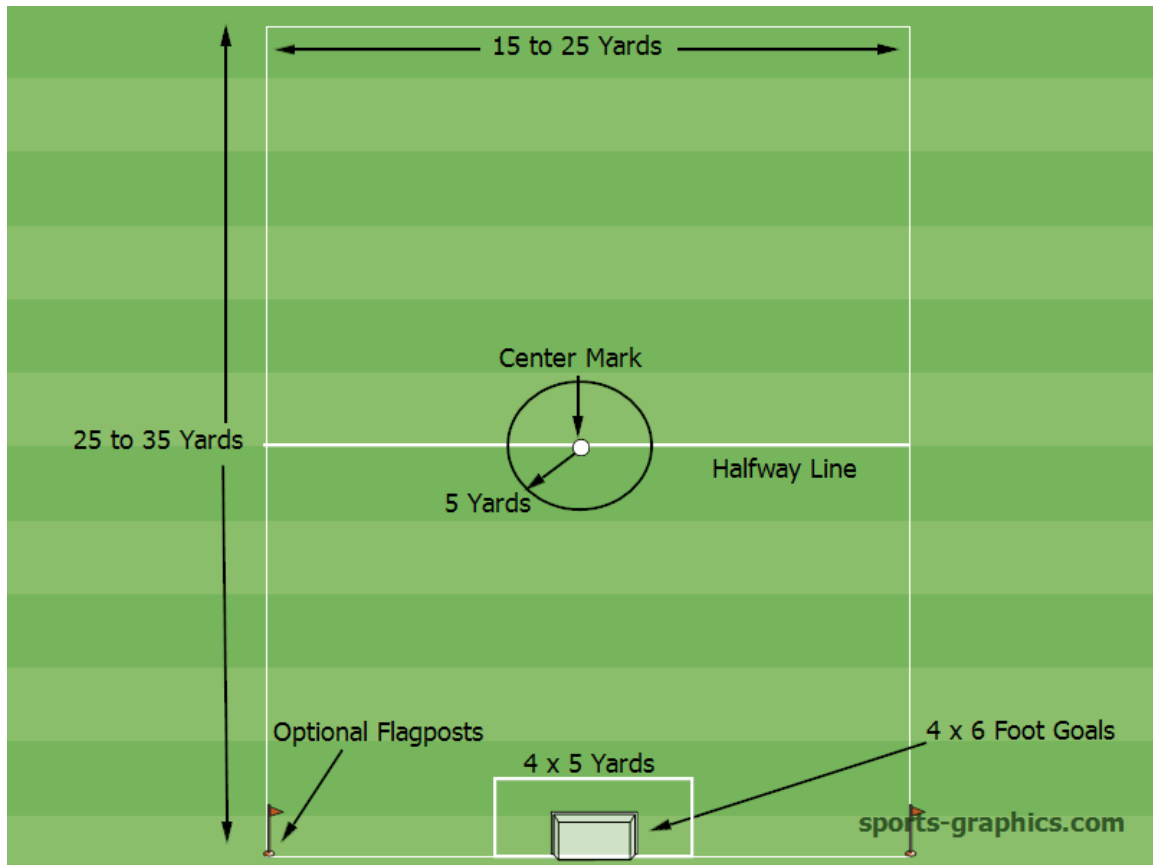
## Law 16 – The Goal Kick

The goal kick shall be taken anywhere along the goal line within five (5) yards of the goal. Opposing players must drop off five (5) yards from the ball until the ball is kicked.

Optional: If the goal area is marked on the field of play then the goal kick shall be taken there. The ball must leave the goal area before being touched by another player.

## Law 17 – The Corner Kick

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that opponents remain at least five (5) yards from the ball until it is kicked.



## **8-U ADDENDUM**

### **MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR 8-U**

**Law 1** The Field of Play: dimensions are smaller to accommodate the four-versus-four game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of six- and seven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the center circle gives the players a concrete marking on where to be for the kick-off. The corner arc gives the young player a concrete place to put the ball to kick it back onto the field of play. While kids this young will execute corner kick plays to a modest degree taking a kick from the corner is a reasonable way for them to put the ball into play and provides continuity with all other age groups. However, the center circle and the corner arc for U8 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings.

Goals: the goal, 4 x 6 is the same for the U6 to U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for these age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals and there will be greater flexibility in the use of fields. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for 8-U Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use cones, Pug goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

**Law 2** The Ball: must be a size three. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

**Law 3** The Number of Players: there are no goalkeepers in the 8-U age group so that all of the players may chase the ball around the field. The kids want to be where the action is and at this age it is around the ball. This will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their running, jumping and kicking coordination. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting, passing and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeated game situations frequently. The involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. Children in the 8-U age group will intentionally play in pairs. The smaller number of players on the field will make it easier and more likely that passing and receiving will occur.

**Law 5** The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should officiate the game. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player. It is strongly recommended that the adult officiating the 8-U game attend the Grade 9 referee course.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: the game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the 8-U age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

**Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: no caution or send off shall be issued to players. If a child is being too rambunctious then the game official will ask the coach to make a substitution of that player to give the child a chance to calm down before returning to play.

**Law 13** Free Kicks: all free kicks shall be indirect. This will keep the game flowing and keep the attention of the kids.

**Law 15** The Throw-In: Pass-In option - some 8-U players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. This leads to endless retakes from one team to the other. Additionally with a pass-in the ball is on the ground and stationary so the 8-U player has a better chance of striking it correctly. This may lead to some intentional passes, thus encouraging teamwork.

**Law 16** The Goal Kick: the kick should be allowed to be taken from anywhere along the goal line over which the ball traveled. This is so the ball can be put back into play quickly. The ball should be placed two or three yards into the field of play to make it easier for the child taking the goal kick to get the ball well into the field of play once it is kicked. The defending players must stand at least five yards away from the ball until it is in play. It is suggested that the defending players stand at least at the halfway line until it is in play. The position of the defending players is so that the attacking team has a chance to advance the ball up field.

**Law 17** The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least five yards away from the ball until it is in play.

- ⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the recommended the maximum roster size is six players. Under the dual field method the recommended the maximum roster size is ten players. This range of roster sizes allows for a club to use either the single field or dual field set up.
- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of at least 50% playing time is required.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See appendix for options.
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

#### ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- More time with the coach
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- More efficient use of field space
- Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- Greater success rate for the players

#### **US Youth Soccer Recommendations**

- Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.
- Coaches of 8-U teams should attend the U6/U8 Youth Module coaching course, the “F” license and the Grade 9 referee course.

## **10-U Modified Rules**

### **US Youth Soccer Official 10 and Under Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees).

## Law 1 – The Field of Play

### **DEVELOPMENT FIELD**

**Dimensions:** The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

**Length:** minimum 55 yards      maximum 65 yards

**Width:** minimum 35 yards      maximum 45 yards

**Field Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of eight (8) yards is marked around it.

**The Goal Area:** 4 yards out from the goal line x 8 yards wide.

**The Penalty Area:** 12 yards out from the goal line x 24 yards wide. A penalty arc with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

**Penalty Mark:** 10 yards

**Flagposts:** Conform to FIFA Laws of the Game

**The Corner Arc:** Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

**Build Out Line<sup>5</sup>:** Equidistant between the top of the penalty area and the halfway line.

**Goals:** Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is twelve (12) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

**Optional:** For the developmental field the goal may be a maximum of 6 feet high by 18 feet wide.

**Safety:** Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

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<sup>5</sup> The build out line is used to promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting. When the goalkeeper has the ball, either during play or from a goal kick, the opposing team must move behind the build out line. At any time the goalkeeper may pass, throw or roll the ball to a teammate, but the goalkeeper does so accepting the positioning of the opponents and the consequences of how play resumes. Punts or drop-kicks are not allowed as this would defeat the purpose of the build out line and reduces the opportunity to play out of the defending third in an unpressured setting. After the ball is put into play, the opposing team can then cross the build out line and play resumes as normal.

## Law 2 – The Ball

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Size four (4). The ball will need to be FIFA Quality.

Optional: use a lightweight<sup>6</sup> size four (4) ball.

## Law 3 – The Number of Players

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A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than seven (7) players, one of whom is the designated goalkeeper. A match may not start or continue if either team consists of fewer than five players.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

N. B.: A player who is suspected to have a head injury<sup>i</sup> leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment.

Playing time: Each player SHALL play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time, which is controlled by the coach. Teams and matches may be coed.

The maximum team roster size is twelve (12).<sup>ii</sup>

## Law 4 – The Players Equipment

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game. Non-uniform clothing, matching the uniform color, is allowed based on weather conditions. Uniforms must distinguish teams. Shinguards are MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks. If needed, teams can be distinguished by scrimmage vests.

### **Safety**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry; with the exception of a medical alert bracelet).

## Law 5 – The Referee

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Registered referee with a minimum U. S. Soccer certification of Grade 9 or parent/coach or assistant coach.

## Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

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None.

Optional: use registered Assistant Referees, if available. If registered Assistant Referees are not assigned, it is permissible to use club linesmen/women (preferably parents) to signal ball out of play only.

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<sup>6</sup> A lightweight version reduces the weight of a size 4 soccer ball while still staying within the standards set by U. S. Soccer. Physical benefits of a lightweight ball include less stress on joints at the moment of impact and young players can make long passes, hard shots and block attempts by opponents.

## Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

---

Conform to the FIFA with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) equal halves of twenty-five (25) minutes. There shall be a half-time interval of up to ten (10) minutes. No added time at the end of either half.<sup>iii</sup>

## Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the defending team is at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

## Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 10 – The Method of Scoring

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 11 – Offside

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the build-out line also serves as an offside line<sup>7</sup>. Attackers cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build-out line.

## Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team at the spot of the offense if a goalkeeper punts or drop-kicks the ball. If the punt occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

When a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

## Law 13 – Free Kicks

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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that all opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is kicked.

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<sup>7</sup> An attacking player would have to be between the build-out line and the opponent's goal line to possibly be in an offside position. By using the build-out line as the offside line, it's far less likely that passes over the top will be made and more space is created for movement off the ball for the second and third attackers.



## Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the penalty mark is ten (10) yards from the goal line.

## Law 15 – The Throw-In

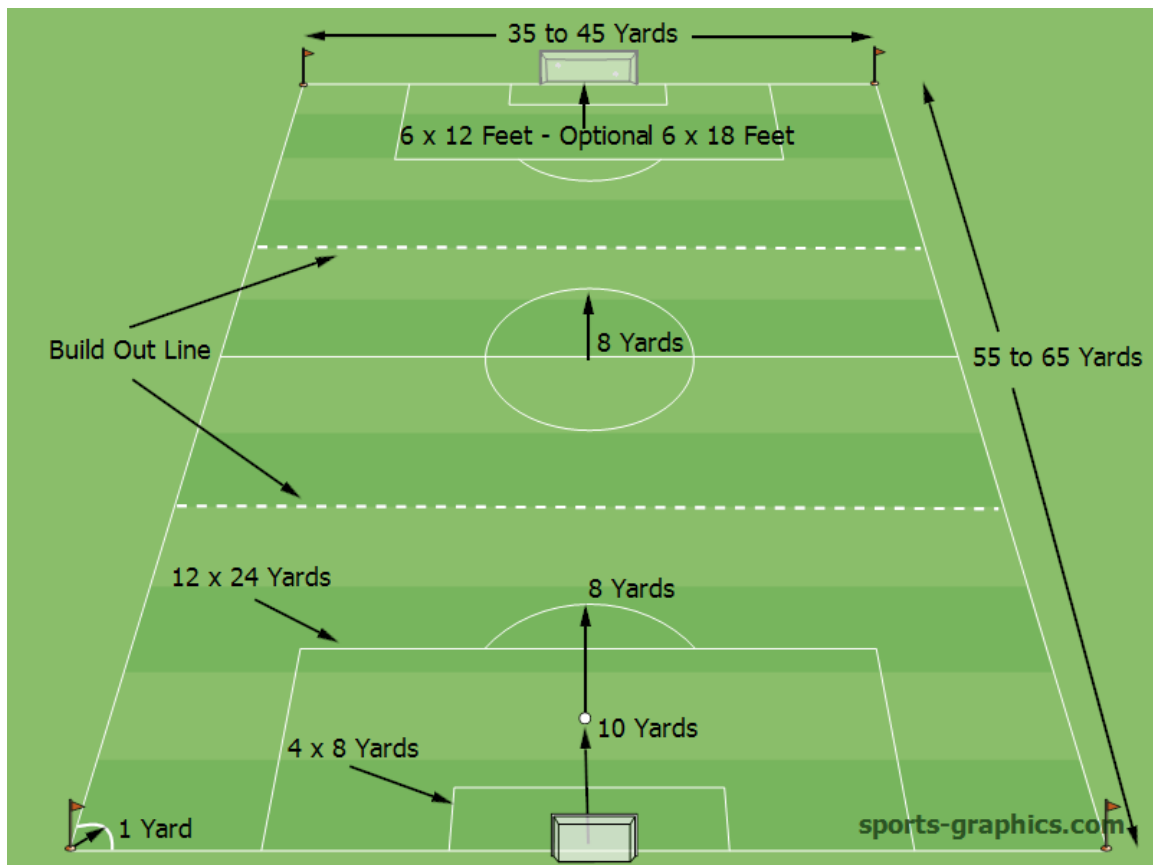
Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 16 – The Goal Kick

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that 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 ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.

## Law 17 – The Corner Kick

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is kicked.



## **10-U ADDENDUM**

### **MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR 10-U**

**Law 1**            The Field of Play: dimensions are smaller to accommodate the seven-versus-seven game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of nine- and ten-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the goal area is smaller than the adult size goal area and is proportional to the 10-U field of play. The penalty area is marked, but is smaller than the adult field size penalty area and within the penalty area is the penalty mark which is two yards shorter than the adult size field marking. The center circle is two yards smaller in radius than the adult size field marking. All other markings are per FIFA.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the 10-U and 12-U age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

**Law 2**            The Ball: must be a size four. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

**Law 3**            The Number of Players: the seven-a-side game now includes the goalkeeper. The smaller number of field players will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their physical and technical abilities. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally, the players will be required to make more tactical decisions. They will experience repeating game situations frequently. The work rate and involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. The need for the players to make the mental and physical transition from offense to defense and vice-versa will be enhanced in this playing environment.

**Law 5**            The Referee: per FIFA. Clubs are urged to use this age group as a field training opportunity for Grade 9 Recreational Referees. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

**Law 6**            The Assistant Referees: Implement here the referee-in-training program.

**Law 7**            The Duration of the Match: per FIFA with the exception of the halves being 25 minutes each.

**Law 8**            The Start and Restart of Play: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

**Law 11**          Offside: per FIFA with the exception that the build-out line serves as the offside line. This modification allows more space for the attacking team to learn buildup tactics to create quality scoring opportunities.

**Law 12**          Heading of the ball is not allowed.

**Law 13**          Free Kicks: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

**Law 14**          The Penalty Kick: conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is ten yards from the center of the goal line and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight yards from the penalty mark. The distance of eight yards conforms to the radius of the center circle. The distance of ten yards from the center of the goalmouth for

Revised on January 31, 2017

the penalty mark fits within the reduced dimensions of the penalty area and is a reasonable distance for the kick.

**Law 16** The Goal Kick: The defending players must stand at least at the build-out line until the ball is in play. The position of the defending players is so that the attacking team has a chance to play the ball out of their penalty area. Teams are encouraged to inter-pass the ball in order to advance up field.

**Law 17** The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

- ⇒ Roster Size: Under the single field method the maximum roster size is twelve players. Under the dual field method the recommended maximum roster size is fourteen players. This range of roster sizes allows for a club to use either the single field or dual field set up.
- ⇒ Split-Field Model: See appendix for options.
- ⇒ Playing Time: A minimum of at least 50% playing time is required.
- ⇒ No score or standings should be kept.

#### ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- ❑ More time with the coach
- ❑ Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- ❑ More efficient use of field space
- ❑ Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- ❑ Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- ❑ Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- ❑ It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- ❑ Greater success rate for the players

#### US Youth Soccer Recommendations

- ❖ Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- ❖ Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- ❖ No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area. Opposing parent/coaches and players should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.
- ❖ Coaches of 10-U teams should attend the U10/U12 Youth Module coaching course, the “E” license and the Grade 9 referee course.

## **12-U Modified Rules**

### **US Youth Soccer Official 12 and Under Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game can be found at [www.ussoccer.com/referees](http://www.ussoccer.com/referees).

## Law 1 – The Field of Play

### **SMALL-SIDED FIELD**

**Dimensions:** The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

**Length:** minimum 70 yards      maximum 80 yards

**Width:** minimum 45 yards      maximum 55 yards

**Field Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of eight (8) yards is marked around it.

**The Goal Area:** 5 yards out from the goal line x 16 yards wide.

**The Penalty Area:** 14 yards out from the goal line x 36 yards wide. Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made ten (10) yards from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them. An arc of a circle with a radius of eight (8) yards from each penalty mark is drawn outside the penalty area.

**Flagposts:** Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

**The Corner Arc:** Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

**Goals:** Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet.

**Optional:** A 7' x 21' goal is allowed.

**Safety:** Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they satisfy this requirement.

## Law 2 – The Ball

**Size four (4).** The ball will need to be FIFA Quality.

**Optional:** use a lightweight<sup>8</sup> size four (4) ball.

<sup>8</sup> A lightweight version reduces the weight of a size 4 soccer ball while staying within the standards set by U. S. Soccer. Physical benefits of a lightweight ball include less stress on joints at the moment of impact, less impact from heading and young players can make long passes, hard shots and block attempts by opponents.

## Law 3 – The Number of Players

---

A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than nine (9) players, one of whom is the designated goalkeeper. A match may not start or continue if either team consists of fewer than six players.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

N. B.: A player who is suspected to have a head injury <sup>i</sup> leaves the field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment.

Playing time: To develop players need to play, so it is recommended that each player plays a minimum of 50% of the total playing time, which is controlled by the coach.

Teams and matches may be coed.

The maximum team roster size is sixteen (16).

## Law 4 – The Players Equipment

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game. Non-uniform clothing, matching the uniform color, is allowed based on weather conditions. Uniforms must distinguish teams. Shinguards are MANDATORY for both practices and games, and must be covered entirely by socks.

### **Safety**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry; with the exception of a medical alert bracelet).

## Law 5 – The Referee

---

Registered referee with a minimum of a U. S. Soccer Grade 9 certification.

## Law 6 – The Other Match Officials

---

Use registered assistant referees at the discretion of the competition authority. If such personnel are unavailable then use club linesmen/women, who are only to determine when the ball goes in and out of play.

## Law 7 – The Duration of the Match

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception of the match being divided into two (2) equal halves of thirty (30) minutes. There shall be a half-time interval of ten (10) minutes. No added time at the end of either half. <sup>iii</sup>

## Law 8 – The Start and Restart of Play

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the defending team is at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

## Law 9 – The Ball In and Out of Play

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 10 – The Method of Scoring

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 11 – Offside

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game

## Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

Deliberate heading of the ball is not allowed in U11 games. If a player deliberately heads the ball in a game, an indirect free kick should be awarded to the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the deliberate header occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.

Heading is allowed in 12-U games without limitations.

## Law 13 – Free Kicks

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that all opponents are at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.

## Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game, with the exception that the penalty mark is ten (10) yards from the goal line.

## Law 15 – The Throw-In

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 16 – The Goal Kick

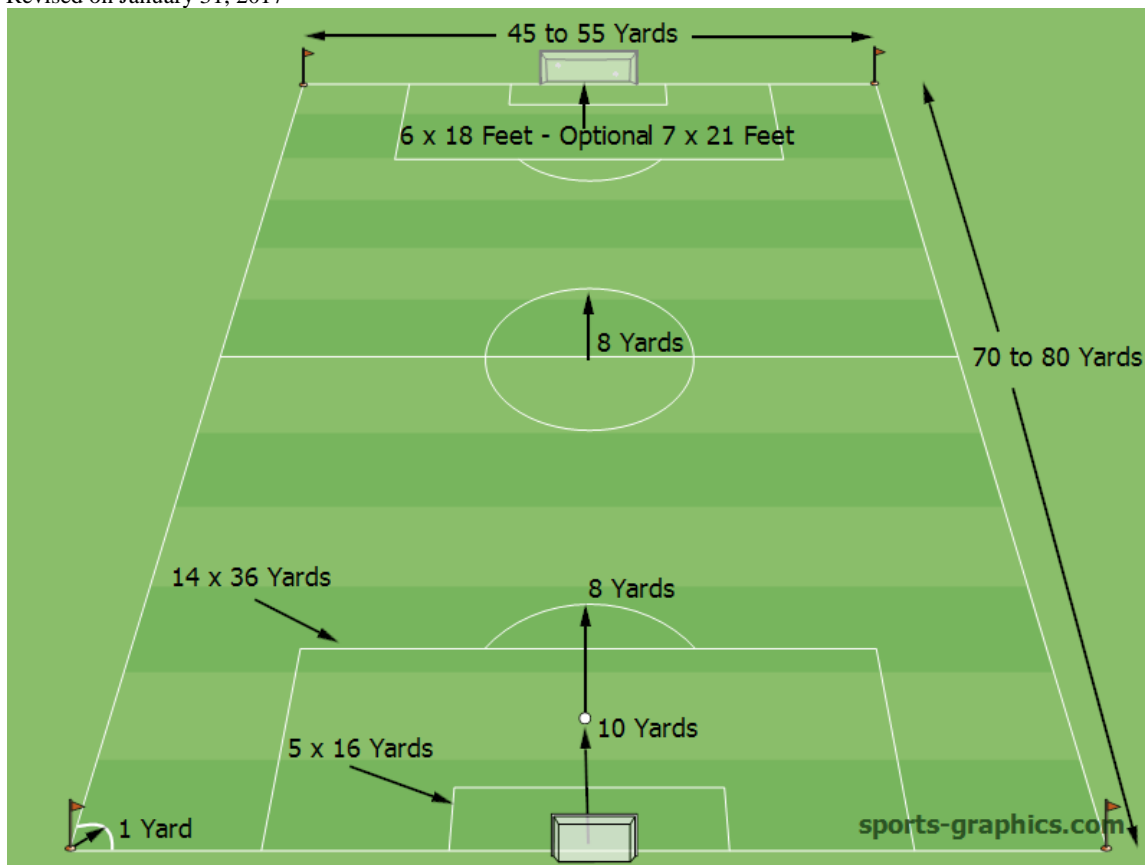
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Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

## Law 17 – The Corner Kick

---

Conform to the FIFA Laws of the Game with the exception that opponents remain at least eight (8) yards from the ball until it is in play.



## **12-U ADDENDUM**

### **MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR 12-U**

**Law 1** The Field of Play dimensions are smaller to accommodate the nine-versus-nine game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of eleven- and twelve-year old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: per FIFA with the exception of the center circle, penalty area, penalty mark and penalty arc.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet, is the same for the 10-U and 12-U age groups. By using the same size goal for both age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

**Law 2** The Ball: must be a size four. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, headed, dribbled, caught, thrown and passed.

**Law 3** The Number of Players: The nine-a-side game includes the goalkeeper. The smaller number of field players will provide the opportunity for the children to further develop their physical and technical abilities. These are valuable traits for all soccer players to develop. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more tactical decisions. They will experience repeating game situations frequently. The work rate and involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. The smaller field dimensions and number of players on the field of play will require more concentration on transition, which a vitally important tactical concept for the players to learn.

**Law 6** The Other Match Officials: if this option is used then use registered assistant referees or club linesmen/women.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: per FIFA with the exception of the halves being 30 minutes each.

**Law 8** The Start and Restart of Play: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

**Law 13** Free Kicks: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

**Law 14** Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that the penalty mark is ten yards from the center of the goal line and that players other than the kicker and defending goalkeeper are at least eight yards from the penalty mark. The distance of eight yards conforms to the radius of the center circle. The distance of ten yards from the center of the goalmouth for the penalty mark fits within the reduced dimensions of the penalty area and is a reasonable distance for the kick.

**Law 17** The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The distance the defending players must be away from the ball until it is kicked is the same as the radius of the center circle.

- ⇒ Roster Size: The maximum recommended roster size is sixteen.
- ⇒ Playing Time: refer to the Effective Playing Time chart.

#### ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

- More time with the coach
- Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense
- More efficient use of field space
- Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field
- Children are physically more efficient in smaller space
- Children are actively involved for a longer period of time
- It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal
- Greater success rate for the players

#### **US Youth Soccer Recommendations**

- ❖ Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.
- ❖ Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.
- ❖ Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.
- ❖ No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.
- ❖ Coaches of 12-U teams should attend the U10/U12 Youth Module coaching course, the “E” license and the Grade 9 referee course.



## Playing Time

### *Effective Playing Time Relative to Game Format and Roster Size*

These tables show effective playing time relative to game format and roster size. The figures are presented as a) percentages of total playing time and b) as actual minutes played. Both figures assume equal rotation of players. At the youth level, a minimum goal of 70% playing time is recommended.

Roster Size >		4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Game Format	Game Duration															
4v4 (5/6U and 7/8U)	4 x 8 minutes	100% 32	80% 26	67% 21	57% 18	50% 16										
7v7 (9/10U)	2 x 25 minutes				100% 50	86% 52	75% 37	67% 34	60% 30	55% 28						
9v9 (11/12U)	2 x 30 minutes						100% 60	89% 54	80% 48	73% 44	67% 40	62% 38	57% 34	53% 32		
11v11 (13/14U)	2 x 35 minutes								100% 70	92% 64	85% 60	79% 55	73% 51	69% 48	65% 46	61% 43
11v11 (15/16U)	2 x 40 minutes								100% 80	92% 74	85% 68	79% 64	73% 59	69% 56	65% 52	61% 49
11v11 17/18U)	2 x 45 minutes								100% 90	92% 83	85% 77	79% 72	73% 66	69% 62	65% 59	61% 55

Table provided by Dr. Thomas Turner, technical director for Ohio Youth Soccer – North, chair of the US Youth Soccer technical committee and national instructor for both U. S. Soccer and US Youth Soccer.

## **COACH AND REFEREE CERTIFICATION CHARTS**

### **RECOMMENDED COACHING CERTIFICATION**

1. Setting minimum coaching standards while being cognizant of risk management issues.
  - a. **“Y” License / Certificate:** National Instructional Staff, state Directors of Coaching, state Instructional Staff, club directors of coaching, professional club coaches/trainers
  - b. **“A” License:** professional, college, National Teams/Staff, Regional Coaches, state Directors of Coaching, ODP state Head Coaches, club head coaches/directors of coaching.
  - c. **“B” License:** state Instructional Staff, ODP Assistant Coaches, club age group head coaches, all premier level coaches for the 16-U and older age groups
  - d. **“C” License:** all premier level coaches for 14-U and above
  - e. **“D” License:** all premier level coaches for 12-U and above
  - f. **“E” License:** all recreation level coaches for 10-U and above
  - g. **U10/U12 Youth Module Certificate:** for all U10 and U12 team coaches
  - h. **“F” License:** for all coaches of players 8-years-old and younger
  - i. **U6/U8 Youth Module Certificate:** for all U6 and U8 team coaches
  - j. **Level 1 Goalkeeper Certificate:** all coaches working with U10 to U19 teams.
  - k. **Level 2 Goalkeeper Certificate:** all coaches working with U13 to U19 teams.
  - l. **Level 3 Goalkeeper Certificate:** all coaches working with U16 to U19 teams

### **RECOMMENDED REFEREE CERTIFICATION**

U. S. Soccer guidelines:

**Grade 9 Referee** - Small Sided and Recreational Youth

**Grade 8 Referee** - Competitive Youth

**Grade 7 Referee** - Amateur Adult

**Grade 6 State Referee** - Most Competitive Games within State and Region

Obviously in some of the small-sided games use of a registered referee is not warranted, but if a referee is assigned it gives the perfect opportunity to get additional field experience for the Grade 9.

## ***ORGANIZATIONS***

US Youth Soccer

[www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org)

(800) 476-2237

United State Soccer Federation (U. S. Soccer)

[www.ussoccer.com](http://www.ussoccer.com)

(312) 808-1300

United States Soccer Foundation

[www.ussoccerfoundation.org](http://www.ussoccerfoundation.org)

(202) 872-9277

U. S. Adult Soccer Association

[www.usasa.com](http://www.usasa.com)

(800) 867-2945

United States Futsal Federation

[www.futsal.com](http://www.futsal.com)

National Soccer Coaches Association of America

[www.nscaa.com](http://www.nscaa.com)

(800) 458-0678

Soccer America

[www.socceramerica.com](http://www.socceramerica.com)

(800) 997-6223

Better Soccer – More Fun

[www.betersoccermorefun.com](http://www.betersoccermorefun.com)

Positive Coaching Alliance

[www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org)

American Sport Education Program

[www.asep.com](http://www.asep.com)

The Aspen Institute

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/issues/health-sport/>

## ***COACHING RESOURCES***



<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/coaches/>

## ***ARTICLES***

You may access the archived coaching articles on the US Youth Soccer web site ([www.usyouthsoccer.org](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org)) by clicking on this link:

<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/USYouthSoccerResourceCenter.asp>

## ***VIDEOS***

Gain access to the US Youth Soccer multimedia resources here:  
<http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/multimedia/>

## **APPENDIX**

### **Risk Management Statement**

Parents should expect that participation in youth sports would help their children develop emotionally, socially, physically and safely. These benefits occasionally are overshadowed by the damaging behavior of adults. Therefore US Youth Soccer strongly recommends the following:

...that all people working with the youth soccer players in your state association have a ***criminal record (background) check*** prior to their participation with the children. This goes for coaches, assistant coaches, parent helpers, team managers and referees.

...that all coaches and assistant coaches working with the youth soccer players in your state association have current ***Basic First Aid and CPR Certification*** prior to their participation with the children.

...that all coaches and assistant coaches working with the youth soccer players in your state association have the ***appropriate level of coaching education, certification and/or licensing*** prior to their participation with the children.

...that all referees and assistant referees working with the youth soccer players in your state association have the ***appropriate level of referee education, certification and/or licensing*** prior to their participation with the children.

#### **Reminders for prevention of criminal acts:**

- *Never leave young children unsupervised, even in a “safe” place.*
- *Never leave a child alone awaiting transportation after a practice or game. Be sure that they depart with their parents or designated individual.*
- *Never allow a child to go unescorted to the public restroom.*
- *Approach strange adults who appear to be observing children at play or practice.*
- *Avoid being left alone with players who are not your children.*

## **CODE OF CONDUCT FOR SOCCER SPECTATORS**

1. As spectators we will refrain from booing or yelling at officials at any time during a match because we are aware of the following:
  - a. Such behavior on our part sets a poor example of sportsmanship.
  - b. Such behavior reflects negatively on our community, our team, our players and us.
  - c. Most youth soccer officials have had limited experience and formal training and do the best job they can, given these limitations.
  - d. Most soccer officials make correct calls even though we sometimes see the incident otherwise.
  - e. If officials do make incorrect calls during a match, the following circumstances usually apply:
    - i. The number of poor calls usually balances out for both teams.
    - ii. No one is perfect.
    - iii. The officials don't have the same observation point afforded the spectators sitting in the bleachers.
    - iv. An occasional incorrect call seldom affects the outcome of a match.
    - v. There are more effective channels for correcting poor officiating than verbal abuse during the match.
    - vi. We don't really know how difficult it is to officiate a soccer match until we've run on the 'pitch' in the official's 'boots.'
2. During a match we will refrain from yelling at players on either team because we are aware of the following:
  - a. They are young people, not soccer professionals, who, due to limited playing experience and great enthusiasm, may make mistakes.
  - b. Encouragement and praise should be made in public; constructive criticism is best made in private.
  - c. The coach is the best equipped to analyze and correct deficiencies in soccer skills. Our attempts to be helpful in this respect may only confuse the players.
  - d. The golden rule applies. Treat other players with the courtesy, respect and consideration, which we want other supporters to show our own players.
3. At soccer matches we will refrain from being argumentative or using abusive language towards supporters of the players on the opposing team because we are aware of the following:
  - a. Others are judging us on our actions and words. We will always strive to insure that the results of this judgment are a verdict of **SPORTSMANSHIP**.
  - b. We will conduct ourselves in such a courteous and restrained manner that if called upon to do so, we could line up in front of the bleachers after the match and shake hands with each supporter of the opposing team in the same way players are expected to do after each match.
4. If our team loses, we will demonstrate our ability to cope with the loss in both deed and word, because we are aware of the following:
  - a. In soccer, as in other aspects of life, it is not always possible to win no matter how supreme the effort.

- b. When victory eludes us, we must learn to accept it as graciously as we do our triumphs.
  - c. It may be just possible that a loss is due to the fact that the opposing team played the match better than our team.
  - d. Our players should learn from our reactions to a loss that:
    - i. We feel they played their best; which just wasn't good enough on this particular day.
    - ii. They should hold their heads up high; there is no shame attached to honest effort – win or lose.
    - iii. There is always something to learn from a loss.
    - iv. There is nothing gained from brooding; players should be encouraged to put the match behind them and look forward to the next opportunity to play.
    - v. Seeking scapegoats, such as 'biased officials', 'poor turf', or 'poor performance by one or two teammates' is not a mature or healthy reaction to the loss. Such a crutch prevents acceptance of reality.
5. Whether away from or at the field, our words and actions should convey a philosophy of soccer which includes:
- a. The real purpose of soccer competition is to have FUN, to be able to participate to improve skills, to learn sportsmanship, to develop a sense of responsibility and self-discipline, to develop a group loyalty and comradeship, to learn to compete within established rules, to accept decisions of authorized officials, to seek interpretation or change through proper channels and to develop sound minds and bodies.



## **“YOUTH ACADEMY APPROACH” to Pre-Teen Player Development**

*Below you will find options for your club to set up a game day environment for children's games that will reduce the emphasis on the score and will allow the children to enjoy their participation with the emphasis on play.*

The "Academy Approach" is the same as saying "Scrambled". US Youth Soccer encourages coaches, clubs/organizations to utilize this format. With the 'Player' being the focus of all the decisions at the 6-U to the 10-U age groups, formal teams in the classic sense are NOT the most developmentally appropriate avenue for development of these players.

The “Academy Approach” has to do strictly with the setting up of an organized recreational soccer program. The main idea is no organized league play and using a "non results oriented" philosophy. We preface this "best practice" with research from sports and child psychologists, and pediatricians, who state "recreational soccer" should be organized (if it is to be organized at all for children under the age of 8) to allow the kids to play because they love to participate, not have to win, and the goal is to compete to do your best rather than compete to "be the best".

One of the issues that will come up is the number of coaches it will take to implement this small-sided games format. In the typical American sport a coach can have a direct impact on the result of the game. In soccer a coach's job is done during training because when it comes to the game, it is truly the players' game. This is one reason why a coach in the small-sided game atmosphere can and should be more of the “guide on the side” and not the “sage on the stage”.

If you look at the field setup with the 6-U, 8-U, and 10-U ages it is possible that one “primary” coach could work with the two groups of players from their team at the same time. Looking at the 6-U and 8-U models specifically, on one field could be the “primary” coach and the other could be an assistant/parent volunteer. At half time, the two coaches simply switch fields. So really the number of coaches stays the same in the “Split Game” model. With the 10-U's take your roster of 14 players and split them into two groups, so you would only have two subs instead of 8. A coach could watch both matches at the same time and rotate players.

Another option is for one primary coach to stand in between the two playing fields and watch both games simultaneously while rotating players in and out.

This is a different approach than the normal type of league with teams competing against one another, but still one in which development can be considered an option because remember that kids at the ages of 6-U and 8-U can say the word “team”, but do they really know what it means? The parent(s) do, but in the end, the players just want to participate and have fun. So, instead of having twenty different colors of uniforms, an organization could just have reversible t-shirts and the players turn them inside and out when playing.

- Example: You have 600 players in the 6-U and 8-U age groups based on roster sizes of 6 to 8, which breaks down to approximately 74 to 75 teams. This would result in having 6 to 7 time slots needed to play matches on a Saturday afternoon.



- • **Sample Schedule**
- • Teams 1-12 Play from 8:00-8:40
- • Teams 13-24 Play from 8:45-9:25
- • Teams 25-37 Play from 9:30-10:10
- • Teams 38-50 Play from 10:15-10:55
- • Teams 50-62 Play from 11:00-11:40
- • Teams 62-74 Play from 11:45-12:25

The following is an explanation of how to structure a program without forming teams.

### **6-U: Academy Format**

1. Players will be broken into large practice groups based on Neighborhood/School for the purpose of practice sessions.
2. ALL the players in a particular Neighborhood/School practice group will practice at the same time and location.
3. Several volunteer supervisors/coaches will be identified to assist with each Neighborhood/School training group. The ratio of coach to player at this age should be kept between 7 or 8 to 1.
4. At least one Staff Coach or experienced and licensed coach from the club will supervise the once per week practice for each Neighborhood/School practice group. This coach will set up the practice session prior to the practice and communicate the session to the volunteer supervisors/coaches. They will also work with the volunteer supervisors/coaches providing 'on site coach training'.
5. Weekly games can be a traditional 32-minute 4-quarter game.
6. The Academy format allows 'new' players to be signed up and added at any time.

### **8-U: Academy Format**

The 8-U age group will follow the same format as the 6-U age group above with these variations.

1. These Neighborhood/School practice groups will be between 24 and 32 players each.
2. Several volunteer coaches will be identified to assist with each Neighborhood/School training group. The ratio of coach to player at this age should be kept between 8 or 10 to 1.
3. Weekly games can be a traditional 48-minute 4-quarter game.

**10-U: Academy Format**

The 10-U age group will follow the same format as the 8-U age group above with these variations.

1. Several volunteer coaches will be identified to assist with each Neighborhood/School training group. The ratio of coach to player at this age should be kept between 12 or 14 to 1.
2. Volunteer coaches will conduct TWO practice nights per week for each Neighborhood/School practice group.
3. Weekly games should be competitively balanced. Players should play with a NEW group of players each week. Games consist of two 25-minute halves.
4. For clubs that only play games INTRA-CLUB, there are two options:
  - a. Each week the rosters for games will be randomly divided from all the players in the Neighborhood/School group to ensure competitively balanced games. This list will be posted on the club web site the Wednesday before a Saturday game.
  - b. Teams are established from the Neighborhood/School groups and then scheduled a 3 game seeding schedule. Following these three games a final 5 to 7 game schedule is drawn up with the idea of ensuring competitively balanced games.
5. For clubs that play games INTER-CLUB. Teams can be established from the Neighborhood/School groups and then scheduled accordingly. A 3 game preseason-seeding schedule is highly encouraged to ensure competitively balanced games.

Contributing to this appendix were Mr. Vince Ganzberg, Mr. Peter McGahey and Mr. Rick Meana.

# How We Play on Game Day

## *Play to win AND develop*

USA Style of Play | Mind (tactical) – Ball (technical) – Body (physical)

We will not win by:

- ⊗ Cheating
- ⊗ Violent or reckless play
- ⊗ Using physical or mental intimidation
- ⊗ Disrespecting our opponents
- ⊗ Disrespecting the match officials
- ⊗ Playing kick ball (boot it)

We will win by:

- ↻ Playing with the American style of play
  - Speed of Play
  - Tactical Awareness
  - Technical Execution
  - Confident Mentality
  - Positional Skills & Responsibility
  - Professional Habits
  - Ambitious Going Forward
  - Aggressive in Defense
- ↻ Playing with intelligent and skillful soccer
- ↻ Playing within the rules
- ↻ Giving our all to support our teammates
- ↻ Trying our best to use what we learned in training
  - Do your job
- ↻ Respecting our Teammates, our Opponents and the match Officials



We play with:

- ✓ A smile on our faces
- ✓ Laughter in our hearts
- ✓ A passion for the game





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<sup>i</sup> Per U.S. Soccer's Concussion Initiative, if a player is suspected to have a head injury the referee\* is instructed to stop play allow for treatment/evaluation as needed. If the player leaves field of play for additional evaluation, a substitution can be made in that moment. The player with the suspected head injury may not return to game unless a Health Care Professional (HCP) or Certified Athletic Trainer (ATC) has cleared the player. Any coach or parent insisting on returning the player to game without approved clearance will result in the referee\* ending the game.

\*Since there is no referee in 4 vs. 4, this responsibility falls to the coaches and parents involved.

<sup>ii</sup> The Youth Academy philosophy emphasizes player development over team development and focuses on the technical development of each child without the pressures of short-term match outcome. This club based format is in the best interest of both the short-term and long-term development of the children. In most instances, the youth academy format does not have set teams. Instead, the players all register with the club, but not a specific team. US Youth Soccer supports this approach for the 6 and Under age group.

<sup>iii</sup> During weather conditions of extreme heat and humidity a water break halfway through each half is acceptable if both coaches agree or the break is prescribed by the local competition authority.

