



U8 GUIDELINES

(These are specific to our region – AYSO National differs in some areas)

Rev. September 23, 2008

Just a few points for coaches, referees & parents to remember, especially for those who have experience in other divisions, as to how U8 differs from soccer's standard Laws of the Game.

1. **Duration of game** is forty minutes and is played in 2 twenty-minute halves with substitutions allowed 10 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes. Play should be stopped at a normal stoppage in play. Due to lack of substitutes or hot weather, the referees may use their discretion to allow for a short break for players to get a drink. Be aware that the game clock does not stop during substitution breaks. Coaches should keep their players on the pitch and be prepared in advance to make substitutions quickly and efficiently. While it is fine for players to get a drink during substitution breaks, this is not half-time: snacks should not be handed out at this time.
2. **Goal kicks** are taken from the penalty box (the big box) NOT the goal box (the little box).
3. **Throw-Ins:** If the first attempt was improperly done, a second throw-in should be permitted, following brief corrective instructions by the Assistant Referee. If the second attempt is still done improperly, let it go. Proper technique can be reinforced later at practice by the coach.
4. **Fouls and Other Stoppages:** The following, if deliberately done, are the fouls most likely to occur in U8 games: kicking, tripping, pushing, holding, handling the ball and dangerous play. No slide tackles are allowed. Referees should not stop play for trifling violations. It's a player's game so keep the fun going and let them play. But always stop for safety.
5. **Misconduct:** Misconduct should be rare in U8 games. There is no need for the public cautioning and sending off of young players (Referees should leave their red and yellow cards home). Officials should work cooperatively with the coach when a U8 player may need a "time out".
6. **Free Kicks:** All kicks are direct free kicks, meaning no one has to touch it for it to be considered a goal. If a foul occurs inside the penalty box, the ball is to be

moved outside the penalty box for the free kick. There are no penalty kicks (U8 goalkeepers always have defenders in front of them). In other words, teams defending a free kick may place a "wall" of defenders between the kicker and goal.)

7. **Distance from Ball:** Players should be asked to stand back approximately 6-10 yards from the ball being kicked (for free kicks, goal kicks, kick-offs, etc.) to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent.
8. **Offside** should rarely be called, and then, only in cases of flagrant/intentional cherry picking. The concept of offside is too complicated for U8 players.
9. **Playing time:** 3/4 rule applies to all players on the team (no one plays the entire game unless everyone else has played 3 quarters). No one should play goalkeeper for more than half the game. Any player that does play two quarters in goals must also play the other two quarters on the field.
10. **No score** is publicly acknowledged ("we all win"), but line-up cards should be completed in their entirety and turned in to the game card box on the field. No slaughter rule applies (leading team must pull back to keep score within 5 goals).
11. **Play 7 vs. 7 with goalkeepers.** If the opposing team has fewer than 7 players then you have to play down (play the same number of players). However, there should never be more than 2 subs. Coaches are encouraged to "lend" players to the opposing team to field the proper number of players. Do not play more than 7v7. (See AYSO's *philosophy on short-sided games & the benefit to the players.*)

OTHER NOTES/COMMENTS:

Referees should briefly explain any infringements to ALL the players and help players with instructions. They are the teachers on the field – and should encourage proper play and sporting behavior. Every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

Referees must be registered AYSO volunteers (*meaning completion of safe haven and eAYSO volunteer background check*) & Certified with Basic Referee Training (*see How to Become an SM AYSO Referee on the Referee section of our website.*) Assistant Referees work each sideline and assist the Center Referee with calling the ball in and out of play. The home team should provide the 3 referees. If someone is absent, they can recruit an Assistant Referee from the visiting team. In a pinch, uncertified parents may serve as Assistant Referees. This is a great opportunity for parents to get involved.

Coaches should utilize positive coaching skills (avoid constant coaching, no yelling at players), stay within the designated technical area (coach's box), show respectful attitude toward the referees and HAVE FUN!

Spectators from each team should be on opposite sides of the field. The home team is the second team listed on the game schedule and sits on the East or North side of the field. The visiting team is the first team listed on the game schedule and is assigned the West or South side of the field. Traditionally, the spectators are to stay between the 18-yard lines (between the penalty areas). Spectators also need to be 1 yard back from the touchline, maintaining an unobstructed and safe area for the Assistant Referee and players to run and perform throw-ins. A spectator should never sit or stand behind the goal or goal line. Coaches & assistant referees should encourage this. Avoid coaching players (*coaches coach, players play, parents cheer*), no foul or abusive language or gestures toward any player, coach, referee or other spectators, abide by the Kids Zone guidelines (no smoking, no consumption of alcohol, no dogs, etc.), acknowledge and congratulate BOTH teams on a game well played, and HAVE FUN! Team Managers should help ensure proper sideline etiquette.

You have your field for your specified slot only. If you start late, or take a long half-time break, please make-up that time somehow so you still end on time as a courtesy to all the parents who have games after you. As the official timekeepers, this is the Referee's responsibility. However, if the Referee feels s/he has too much going on to keep track of time, select someone to be the timekeeper.

Coin toss: The "Home team" makes the call; either "heads or tails" in the air. If the call is correct the home team decides what end they will defend. If the call is incorrect then the "Visiting team" decides what end they will defend. Losing the coin toss means you kick off first. Coaches should prepare their captains on what end to choose to defend first.

Ball Size is size 3.

Game Cards: Game Cards are to be completed by each Coach and given to the Center Referee before the game. Absences, substitutions, goalkeeper playing time & goals are all noted by the Referee during the game. Again, the Referee can delegate this role to an Assistant if s/he needs assistance. The Referee signs the completed Game Cards and deposits them in the Game Card box, or as per the Division Commissioner's instructions.

Field Set-Up is the responsibility of all the teams with the first game. Please arrive early to complete this task in time for the players to practice with the goals. Each field has 2 goals & nets, plus 6 flags – 4 on each of the corners, and 1 each at mid-field, about a yard away from the edge of the field (touchline). Stakes are used to secure the goals in the ground & net hooks keep the net taut. Additionally, the Game Card box and Kids Zone sign needs to be placed in a visible location.

Field Take-Down is the responsibility of the teams with the last game on that field. Sometimes, one field may end earlier than another, so be sure to check if yours is the

last game for that field. All field equipment needs to be returned to the storage room, along with the Game Card box and Kids Zone sign. Please ensure all stakes & net hooks are accounted for, so they are not found by children afterwards. The correct number of stakes & hooks are noted on the toolbox in which they are stored. Please also pick-up any trash or recycling.

Thanks for your help and cooperation in making this an enjoyable experience for all the children!