



# AYSO National Rules & Regulations

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# Content

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>AYSO National Rules &amp; Regulations</b>                       | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>I. MATCH CONDUCT</b>  | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>II. TEAMS</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>III. REGISTRATION</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>IV. TRANSFER OF TEAM MEMBERS</b>                                | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>V. DURATION OF REGISTRATION</b>                                 | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>VI. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT</b>                                      | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>VII. OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT</b> | <b>10</b> |
| <b>VIII. INCIDENTS AND INJURIES</b>                                | <b>10</b> |



# AYSO National Rules & Regulations

The American Youth Soccer Organization (“AYSO”) within its operating framework of Sections, Areas and Regions, offers a variety of player program options for delivering a quality soccer experience to all participants. Additionally, alternative soccer play programming may include indoor soccer, futsal, AYSO Playground Soccer, AYSO Schoolyard Soccer, jamboree format or monitored pick-up play, Soccerfest, camps, technical training, skills clinics and other offerings across the Organization.

AYSO primarily delivers outdoor soccer match play. The following Rules & Regulations shall be used for Region, Area, Section and tournament play within AYSO. Some flexibility in these rules may be allowed for other forms of match play with the approval of the Area Director and Section Director.

## I. MATCH CONDUCT

AYSO matches shall be conducted in accordance with the current FIFA Laws of the Game and decisions of the International Football Association Board (IFAB) in effect on August 1 each calendar year and the US Soccer Player Development Initiatives, with the following exceptions and clarifications:

### A. COMPETITION

1. Coaches, officials and spectators shall not enter the field of play unless requested by the referee.
2. Except for small-sided matches (Article I.H), a scheduled match shall not commence nor be continued unless both teams can field at least seven eligible players.

### B. DURATION OF MATCHES

1. Matches shall be of two equal halves, not to exceed the following maximum durations:

| Division          | Maximum Duration of Half |
|-------------------|--------------------------|
| Playground Soccer | Not Applicable           |
| Schoolyard Soccer | 10 minutes               |
| 6U                | 10 minutes               |
| 8U                | 20 minutes               |
| 10U               | 25 minutes               |
| 12U               | 30 minutes               |
| 14U               | 35 minutes               |
| 16U               | 40 minutes               |
| 18U               | 45 minutes               |

2. Half-time periods shall be a minimum of five and a maximum of ten minutes as designated by the referee.

3. Player Safety is paramount. Water breaks are allowed at the referee's discretion when heat conditions warrant this consideration.
4. Where necessary due to scheduling time constraints, the duration of the two halves is to be reduced by an equal amount to allow for substitution in accordance with Article I.C.1.

### C. PLAYING TIME AND SUBSTITUTION

1. Except as noted in Article I.C.3 all eligible team members in attendance at AYSO matches must play at least half of the match, excluding overtime.

Such participation is controlled as follows:

- a. Approximately midway through each half the referee shall permit substitution. This normally occurs during a regular stoppage in play, and the match is resumed with the appropriate restart (i.e. throw-in, goal kick, corner kick, kick-off, free kick, penalty kick or dropped ball). On occasion the referee may need to stop play for substitution while the ball is in play, in which case the match is resumed with a dropped ball.
  - b. Substitutions may also be made at half-time and at the start of any overtime periods.
  - c. When the referee signals for substitution, the coaches should have all substitutes entering the match immediately report to the referee or the designated assistant referees, who shall note on the lineup cards those team members substituting.
  - d. During such stoppages, the coach of each team may substitute as many team members, or none, including previously substituted team members, as long as all eligible team members meet the minimum playing requirements.
  - e. The referee shall allow for any time lost due to substitution or other cause by stopping his/her watch or adding playing time. (See Article I.B.3. regarding reducing the length of halves to permit proper substitution.)
2. Substitution for injury:
    - a. If a player is injured, the coach may provide a substitute for the player, in which case the injured player may not return until the beginning of the next "quarter". Only the player who is injured is credited with a "quarter" played regardless of the actual time played.
    - b. The coach may choose to not substitute and "play short" thereby allowing the injured player to return during the "quarter" in which he or she was injured.
    - c. The player must receive a signal from the referee in order to return to the match.
  3. Late arriving team members shall be substituted as follows:
    - a. If the team member arrives during the first "quarter", the team member must play a minimum of two of the remaining three "quarters".
    - b. If the team member arrives during the second or third "quarter", the team member must play a minimum of one "quarter".
  4. Signed lineup cards must be completed by the referee and forwarded to the Regional Commissioner or his/her designee.

**D. OFFICIATING**

1. Referees shall officiate in accordance with the current versions of *AYSO Rules & Regulations* (the rules of competition), the *FIFA Laws of the Game* (AYSO Edition) and decisions of the IFAB.
2. Referees shall officiate in a manner inducing clean competition and good sportsmanship, placing great emphasis on the welfare of the players. If a player is injured, the referee, at his/her discretion, may stop play to ensure the welfare of the player even if the ball has not gone out of play.
3. The *Laws of the Game* are intended to provide that matches should be played with as little interference as possible, and in this view it is the duty of referees to penalize only deliberate breaches of the Law. Constant whistling for trifling and doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of spectators.

**E. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF COACHES, REFEREES, OFFICIALS, OTHER VOLUNTEERS, SPECTATORS, TEAM MEMBERS AND OTHER PARTICIPANTS**

1. It shall be the duty of each coach, referee, official, other volunteer, spectator, team member and other participant to:
  - a. Conduct himself/herself in a manner becoming a member of AYSO and consistent with the AYSO Six Philosophies and the highest standards of conduct.
  - b. Work together as a team in support of the children playing the match and in alignment with the Stewards of the Game and Kids Zone programs to promote a safe, fair, fun environment.
  - c. Comply with and promote compliance with the Bylaws, Rules & Regulations and policies, including those related to registration, certification and training.
  - d. Encourage clean competition and good sportsmanship.
  - e. Prohibit and abstain from making negative comments and complaints about officiating.
  - f. Present a healthy and safe athletic environment for team members, including but not limited to, not consuming alcoholic beverages, using tobacco products or smoking or simulating smoking or the use of tobacco products during practices or matches or in the immediate vicinity of the soccer fields.
2. It shall also be the duty of each coach to:
  - a. Effective August 1, 2015, all coaches in all age divisions shall be trained consistent with the AYSO National Coaching Program standards for the age/skill level of the team he/she will coach; and train and coach the team to the best of his/her ability.
  - b. Remain within the coaches' area (Article I.G.2) during the match; a maximum of two coaches is permitted for each team.
  - c. Limit his/her sideline participation during AYSO matches to comments that are positive and/or encouraging, with limited supportive instruction.
  - d. Upon team formation, and during all subsequent team gatherings, practices, scrimmages, and matches (Regional, Inter-Regional, Area, Sectional, National and tournament play), have in his/her possession all signed forms, rosters, waivers and/or

identification cards as may be required by AYSO policies so as to verify registration of team members or confirm volunteer qualifications.

**F. SIZE OF BALL**

Ball size for each division shall be as follows:

| Age Division                    | Size | Circumference    | Weight    |
|---------------------------------|------|------------------|-----------|
| AYSO Schoolyard Soccer, 6U & 8U | 3    | 23.0-25.0 inches | 10-12 oz. |
| 10U & 12U                       | 4    | 25.0-26.5 inches | 12-14 oz. |
| 14U, 16U & 18U                  | 5    | 26.5-28.0 inches | 14-16 oz. |

**G. FIELD OF PLAY**

- The dimensions and markings of the field of play and goals shall be at the discretion of the Region and, whenever possible, conform to the *FIFA Laws of the Game* for 13U and older or to AYSO/US Soccer Player Development Initiative small-sided match requirements as follows:

| Field Sizes by Age Division       |                          |           |           |            |                     |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------------------|
|                                   | Schoolyard<br>6U, 7U, 8U | 9U, 10U   | 11U, 12U  | 13U, 14U   | 15U,16U,<br>17U,18U |
| Length (Yards)                    | 25 to 35                 | 60 to 65  | 70 to 80  | 100 to 130 | 100 to 130          |
| Width (Yards)                     | 15 to 25                 | 35 to 45  | 45 to 55  | 50 to 100  | 50 to 100           |
| Center Circle Radius (Yards)      | 5                        | 8         | 8         | 10         |                     |
| Goal Area Length/Width (Yards)    | None                     | 4 by 8    | 5 by 16   | 6 by 20    |                     |
| Penalty Area Length/Width (Yards) | None                     | 12 by 24  | 14 by 36  | 18 by 44   |                     |
| Goal Line to Penalty Spot(Yards)  | None                     | 10        | 10        | 12         |                     |
| Goal Size Height/Width (Feet)     | 4 by 6                   | 6.5 by 18 | 6.5 by 18 | 8 by 24    |                     |

- A coaches' technical area on each side of the halfway line shall be marked by two lines off the field of play and perpendicular to the touch line. The area shall be as long as the diameter of the center circle. Where possible, the coaches' technical area shall include two additional lines, with one line parallel to and at least one yard from the touch line, and a second parallel line no more than three yards from the touch line.



3. The field shall be marked, where possible, with a spectator control line parallel to the touch line at a distance of at least three yards from the touch line. Coaches and officials should help the assistant referees keep spectators behind the spectator control line and between the top lines of the penalty area.
4. Spectators shall not be allowed behind the goal lines, with the exception of photographers who have received authorization from the referee, and who shall remain quiet and sufficiently back from the goal lines.

#### H. SMALL-SIDED MATCHES

1. US Soccer has mandated for its member associations small-sided matches as part of the Player Development Initiatives. Match play shall be governed by the *FIFA Laws of the Game* as modified by AYSO (with permission), the *AYSO National Rules & Regulations* and the age appropriate AYSO Coach Manual.
2. Small -sided games are permitted for all divisions.

#### I. HEADING THE BALL

1. Consistent with the US Soccer mandates on heading the ball, heading is banned for all division players 11U (12U and below for programs without single age divisions) and below in both practices and matches.

Heading for players in 14U is limited to a maximum of thirty (30) minutes per week with no more than 15-20 headers, per player. There is no restriction on heading in matches.

2. An indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team if a player age 10 or younger, deliberately touches the ball with his/her head during a match.
  - a. The indirect free kick is to be taken from the place where the player touched the ball with his/her head.
  - b. An indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team inside the opposing team's goal area, must be taken on the goal area line at the point nearest to where the player touched the ball with his/her head.
3. Neither cautions nor send-offs shall be issued for persistent infringement or denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity related to the heading infractions.

#### J. THROW-INS

1. For 6U to 8U, the throw-in is replaced with the pass-in. Opposing players must be at least two yards from the ball until it is kicked.
2. Training of throw-in technique may begin at 9U and up.

**K. GOALKEEPER PUNTS**

1. For 9U to 12U, the goalkeeper shall not punt the ball.
2. An indirect kick will be awarded to the opposing team at the spot of the offense if a goalkeeper for 9U to 12U deliberately punts the ball during a match.
3. An indirect free kick awarded to the attacking team inside the opposing team's goal area must be taken on the goal area line at the point nearest to where the goalkeeper punted the ball.

**L. BUILD-OUT LINE (9U AND 10U)**

1. The build-out line shall be placed across the field equidistant between the top of the penalty area and the halfway line.
2. The opposing team must move behind the build-out line for a goal kick or when the goalkeeper has possession. At any time, the goalkeeper may pass, throw or roll the ball to a teammate who is behind the build-out line.
3. The goalkeeper or the player taking the goal kick does not have to wait for the opposing players to move behind the build-out line. The play from the goalkeeper or from the goal kick must be played to a teammate behind the build-out line. After the ball is put into play, the opposing team can then cross the build-out line and play may resume as normal. The first touch is from the goal kick or the pass from the goalkeeper.
4. The build-out line shall be used as the line to determine offside. Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and the build-out line.

## II. TEAMS

### A. TEAM NAMES

1. Team names shall bear no resemblance to a religion, race, ethnicity or nationality.

### B. TEAM PARTICIPATION

1. Teams shall participate only in matches approved by their respective Regional Commissioners and/or presiding AYSO governing authority.
2. Participation in tournaments requires a signed roster.
3. Participation in tournaments or soccer play outside of the United States requires US Soccer approval.

### C. TEAM SIZE

1. The following are the recommended team sizes:

| Age Division                 | Players per team on field    | Maximum no. of team members | Minimum no. of team members |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 18U                          | 11-a-side                    | 18                          | 12                          |
| 16U                          | 11-a-side                    | 18                          | 12                          |
| 14U                          | 11-a-side                    | 15                          | 12                          |
| 12U                          | 9-a-side                     | 12                          | 10                          |
| 10U                          | 7-a-side                     | 10                          | 8                           |
| 8U                           | 4-a-side<br>(No goalkeepers) | 6                           | 5                           |
| 6U                           | 4-a-side<br>(No goalkeepers) | 6                           | 5                           |
| AYSO<br>Schoolyard<br>Soccer | 4-a-side<br>(No goalkeepers) | 6                           | 5                           |

2. All divisions may play optionally with teams of smaller sizes for mini-soccer, indoor soccer or small-sided matches.
- D. The maximum number of team members listed in Article II.C may be increased with approval of the Area Director, but no more than would allow each team member to play at least half of each match.
- E. Each primary season, every effort shall be made to balance team strengths within each age division, within a reasonable geographical area.
- F. A Region or Area shall not form leagues on a major and minor basis within any age division.
- G. The only team member(s) a head coach may specify be on his/her team is his/her own child or children.

### III. REGISTRATION

- A. The standard age divisions for the Boys and Girls programs are as follows:

| Age  | Division               |
|--|------------------------|
| Ages 3, 4 or 5 by the date of program commencement | AYSO Playground Soccer |
| 5 years but not younger than 4 years               | AYSO Schoolyard Soccer |
| 6 years and Under                                  | 6U                     |
| 8 years and Under                                  | 8U                     |
| 10 years and Under                                 | 10U                    |
| 12 years and Under                                 | 12U                    |
| 14 years and Under                                 | 14U                    |
| 16 years and Under                                 | 16U                    |
| 18 years and Under                                 | 18U                    |

- B. The effective date of age determination shall be calendar year or the registrant’s age as of December 31 in the same year as the end of AYSO competition and end of Membership Year in accordance with US Soccer Player Development Initiatives mandates. Any variance requested by Regions or Areas must have Section Director approval, comply with US Soccer mandates, be memorialized in the Region’s or Area’s Policies and Protocols, and be duly registered with AYSO’s National Office.
- C. Individuals who shall reach nineteen years of age by December of the end of the Membership Year are not eligible to participate.
- D. AYSO Playground Soccer is a program for learning fundamental motor skills and physical literacy using soccer as a theme. AYSO Playground Soccer shall not have competition in training (1v1, 2v2) or match play of any kind.
- E. AYSO Schoolyard Soccer and 6U divisions are primarily for the introduction of soccer skills.
- F. In Regions where there are not enough registrants to make any or all standard age divisions, divisions may be combined so that teams may be formed.
- Such divisions shall be classified on the basis of the oldest registrant and shall not, after the start of the season of play, be reclassified to a lower age division should the oldest registrant(s) then be removed from the roster.
- G. Regions with a sufficient number of registrants within a standard age division may, with the approval of the Area Director and Section Director, form single-year sub-divisions within the standard age divisions defined in Article III.A.
- H. No potential team member may register without the written consent of his/her parent or guardian, unless the registrant is of the age of majority in his/her respective state.
- I. A registrant becomes an official team member upon:

1. Payment of the National Membership Fee and payment to the Region of its required registration fee, and
  2. Placement on a team by the Regional Commissioner or the Regional Commissioner's designated representative.
- J. The Regional Commissioner is responsible for assuring the eligibility of all team members on teams within the Region. Upon request of the Regional Commissioner or Area Director, a team member must present his/her birth certificate or other legal proof of age.
- K. Boys and girls may play on the same teams where there is an insufficient number of registrants to establish separate teams with reasonable application of Article III.D. It is strongly recommended, however, that separate boys and girls teams be instituted and maintained wherever possible.

#### IV. TRANSFER OF TEAM MEMBERS

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A team member may transfer from one team to another within a Region, or from one Region to another, after the following three conditions have been met:

- A. Approval of both coaches of the teams involved.
- B. Approval of Regional Commissioner(s) or his/her designee.
- C. Approval of team member and parent/guardian; parent/guardian approval is not required if team member is of the age of majority in his/her respective state.

#### V. DURATION OF REGISTRATION

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- A. The period of official membership shall be from August 1st through the following July 31st each year.
- B. The AYSO competition year or soccer calendar coincides with the Membership Year. Competition may begin on August 1 of the Membership Year and ends on July 31 of the Membership Year.

#### VI. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

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- A. Each chartered AYSO Region shall provide for team members to wear a matching team uniform consisting of a jersey, shorts and socks. See the AYSO National Uniform Brand Specifications posted on [ayso.org](http://ayso.org) and housed with the Marketing Department at the National Office.
- B. No person, company or business entity may use any of the AYSO trade names, trademarks or logos for any use other than AYSO-authorized activities without the prior written consent of the National Office. This includes, but is not limited to, having the AYSO Traditional logo stamped on soccer balls, soccer shoes or other equipment, or used in association with the products or services of any person. Those types of activities weaken any national licensing program and may violate license agreements then in force. Any approved use shall require that an ® should be placed next to the AYSO registered trade name or trademark or, if the trade name is not registered, a ™ should be placed next to such trade name or trademark. These symbols serve notice that the trade names and trademarks belong to AYSO.
- C. Athletic footwear (with or without cleats) are permissible in all AYSO competitions subject to the referee's approval regarding their safety under Law 4.

- D. Team members must wear shinguards that provide a reasonable degree of protection, and that are completely covered by their socks, to participate in any practice or match. The lone exception is sanctioned beach futsal soccer tournament play where players may opt out of wearing shinguards.
- E. Team members shall not be allowed to practice or participate in any match with any type of cast or splint. Removal of any type of cast or splint at the field or surrounding area in order to participate shall disqualify the team member from practice or match participation.
- F. Players shall not wear anything that is dangerous to either themselves or other players subject to the referee's approval under Law 4.

## VII. OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY OF UNIFORMS AND EQUIPMENT

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The custodianship and disposition of equipment and supplies purchased by an individual Region shall be the responsibility of that Region.

## VIII. INCIDENTS AND INJURIES

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- A. All incidents, injuries or property damage involving an AYSO participant or occurring at an AYSO event shall be reported to, and by, the Regional Commissioner or safety director on the AYSO Incident Report Form in accordance with the directive of AYSO. Incident Report Forms with the appropriate attachments shall be delivered to the Risk Management Department of the National Office at the earliest possible opportunity.
- B. Subject to the terms and conditions from the current carriers of AYSO's insurance policies, there is a limited time for filing claims. It is the responsibility of the claimant to initiate and complete the process.