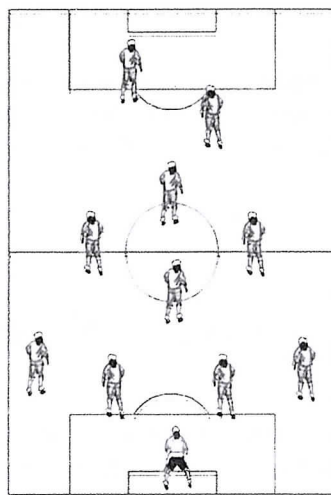


Systems of Play (Formations)

A *system of play* is the *formation of players* or placement of players on the field at the start of the game. The system selected by the coach is most commonly determined by his/her players' abilities (strengths and weaknesses). The coach also selects a system that will provide balance all over the field...players up top, players in the middle, players in the back; players on the right and players on the left.

We use numbers to define a system of play and describe the formation from back to front. For example, a 1-4-4-2 system (formation) includes the goalkeeper, 4 players in the back, 4 players in the midfield and 2 players up front (top); 11 players total. How the coach positions the players determines the shape of the team. Formations must provide geometrical shapes that allow for different playing angles and distances for the players.



We could not discuss systems of play without discussing age appropriate playing numbers. The younger the players, the smaller the playing numbers and the smaller the field, thus, the less complicated the system of play. For instance, 6U teams play with 4 players. With only 4 players on the field, potential shapes are: diamond, square, etc. At this age, the shape of the team is not as important as the opportunity for the players to exercise and get touches on the ball.

The age appropriate playing numbers as recommended by US Soccer and US Youth Soccer are as follows:

6U Games	4v4	4 field players	NO goalkeeper
8U Games	4v4	4 field players	NO goalkeeper
10U Games	7v7	6 field players	1 goalkeeper
12U Games	9v9	8 field players	1 goalkeeper
13U+ Games	11v11	10 field players	1 goalkeeper