



Loudoun Soccer Game Day Tips – Systems of Play (4v4)

The following information is designed to assist coaches in Loudoun Soccer's Rec program in organizing their team for game day. These are recommendations, and coaches may organize their teams as they see fit as long as they adhere to the club's policies regarding playing time, goalkeeper rotation, etc.

Systems of Play

This is a team's formation, or the positional arrangement of players on the field. In soccer parlance, the system of play is identified by the number of players within each line on the field (goalkeeper, defender, midfielder, forward). For example: a common 11v11 lineup is a 1-4-4-2 (1 goalkeeper, 4 backs, 4 midfielders, 2 strikers).

US Soccer utilizes a player number system (#1-11) to identify players by a positional number, instead of a positional name (e.g. #1 is the goalkeeper, #2 is the right back or defender, #9 is the forward or striker). Given the smaller format of 4v4 and the age of the players, using the positional number system is not advised for this age group.

For Grades 1-2 playing 4v4, the preferred formation is a 1-2-1, which forms a diamond shape.

	<p>1-2-1 (Diamond)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 Defender, 2 Wingers, 1 Striker• Can refer to positions as "sides" of the diamond (bottom, top, right side, left side) in lieu of positional numbers, which can be confusing.• Most balanced formation in terms of attacking and defending• Natural diamond and triangle shapes throughout the formation• Can teach as a 3-1 ("Kite" formation, requiring #7 and #11 to push up to join the attack).
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Formation Teaching Tips:

When introducing team shape, avoid creating artificial restrictions (e.g. defenders cannot cross the midfield line, etc.), as the positional lines should be connected within the flow of the game (backs should support the midfield, who in turn should support the striker). The modern game requires all players to attack and defend – not just specific positions.



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Players in Grades 1-2 will struggle understanding shape, as their spatial awareness is still developing (this is why we tend to see “swarm” soccer). The focus at this age should be more on having fun than implementing tactical strategies.

That being said, you may focus on teaching the following:

- Players should “find different” space from their teammates and opponents. Create “windows” between defenders and the touchlines (boundaries) for passes to be played through.
- On restarts (kick-ins, goal kicks, etc.) players can find their team shape (“create your diamond”).
- Encourage players to find and identify the various patterns on the field (a teammate nearby, or the triangles and diamond created within their shape).
- Encourage players to stay “connected” – pushing up and dropping back as a team. The defender should not be in front of their own goal (as a defacto goalkeeper), nor should the striker stay high up the field to “cherry-pick” goals.