

# AYSO Rules Made Simple

## **# Players per Team/Size of Ball**

U5 & U6	3 v 3	No goal keeper	Size 3 ball
U8	5 v 5	No goal keeper	Size 3 ball
U10	7 v 7	6 + 1 goal keeper	Size 4 ball
U12	7 v 7	6 + 1 goal keeper	Size 4 ball
U14, U16, U18	11 v 11	10 + 1 goal keeper	Size 5 ball

At U14 and up a team must have at least 7 players (Including goal keeper) to have the minimum acceptable number of players on the field. The opposing team is NOT obligated to play with the same number, but can if they choose to do so.

## **Length of Games**

U5 & U6	7 minute quarters	2 – 5 minutes between quarters
U8, U10	10 – 12 minute quarters	2 – 5 minutes between quarters
U12	12 – 15 minute quarters	2 – 5 minutes between quarters
U14 – U18	30 minute halves	5 minute minimum half time

## **Mandatory Equipment**

Legal soccer shoes – no metal cleats, no cleat at toe of shoe, tennis shoes OK  
Shin guards – note: without shin guards they cannot play or practice.  
Socks that COVER the shin guards, no exposed shin guards allowed  
Shirt & shorts of team colors  
Check all players' shoes and shin guards prior to each game

## **Unsafe Objects NOT to be Allowed**

Jewelry on fingers, ears, or hair. No hair beads ... at all.  
Necklaces  
Pierced ear rings  
Any other item determined dangerous by the referee

## When Teams Can Substitute Players

U12 and under substitute ONLY after each quarter unless a player is hurt. If a player goes down and may be hurt, the referee should stop the game and allow for a substitution. The restart should be a drop ball at the point where the ball was when the referee stopped the game.

U14 – U18 allow free substitutions on throw ins and goal kicks and after a goal is scored. NO substitutions are allowed during corner kicks or direct/indirect kicks. If the opposing team is taking a throw in and they are not substituting then a team may not substitute. If the opposing team is making a throw in and wants to substitute then both teams can substitute.

Especially at U12 and younger everyone must play a minimum of 2 quarters and no player can play all 4 quarters until everyone has played at least 3 full quarters.

Do not let a player dominate a game by playing the entire game.

## Starts & Restarts

The majority of restarts are throw ins, goal kicks, and corner kicks. A kick off is only done at the beginning of each half (1<sup>st</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> period) and after a score is made. Switch the direction the teams go to score for the second half at U14+ and at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter for U12 and below. That way if there is any advantage due to wind or sun for a given direction then both teams have a chance to enjoy the advantage.

**Kickoffs** are at the start of the first and third quarters and after each goal scored through U12. They are done at halves for U14 and up and after a scored goal. Kicks are taken from the midfield line at the center of the field. Defenders must remain 10 ft away for U10 and under and 20 ft away for U12 and older. Each team must remain in their half of the field until the kicked ball moves forward into the opposing teams half of the field. If a kick off is initially kicked backwards to another team player of the kicking team the kick is to be retaken since it was not legally put into play. A player taking a kick off, or any free kick, can not touch the ball again until another player touches the ball (i.e. a player can not free kick the ball to themselves). Award an IFK to the opposing team if a person taking a free kick touches the ball again before another player touches the ball. A kick off is a DFK which means a score can be made directly from the kick without another player having to touch the ball first.

A **throw in** is awarded to the team that DID NOT last touch the ball before completely crossing the touch lines (side lines). The entire ball must cross a line to be considered out of bounds or ruled a score if kicked into the opposing teams net. The ball on the line is STILL IN PLAY. A throw in is when a player throws the ball back onto the field using both hands taking the ball directly back over the head. Both feet must maintain contact with the ground when the ball is released. A player can touch the line with their feet but can not step over the line. For U10 and under retake throw ins until they get it right. For U12 and up award a throw in to the opposing team if the throw in is not correct. A player taking the throw in can not touch the ball until touched by another player. Blow your whistle and award an IFK if the player making the throw in touches the ball before another player touches the ball. For U12 and up do NOT use the whistle to indicate a throw in. Let the players dictate the pace of the game and quick throws are part of the game. Just call out “white” throw or “blue” throw to let the players know whose team gets the throw in. Do NOT make U12+ players wait for a signal to make the throw in. For U10 and below it may be OK to give a verbal signal to make the throw in.

If the offensive team last touches the ball before crossing the goal line being attacked without a goal being scored then the defensive team is awarded a **goal kick**. Any player on the defensive team can take the goal kick. The ball must be stationary on the ground and inside the goal box. The ball is not in play until it is kicked DIRECTLY out of the penalty box. If a player on the team taking the goal kick touches the ball inside the penalty box then the goal kick is retaken because it was not put back into play. If a team defending against the goal kick touches the ball in the penalty area then retake the kick. It was not put back into play because it did not clear the penalty area directly by a goal kick.

If the defensive team last touches the ball before crossing the goal line without a score being made then the offensive team is awarded a **corner kick** from the corner closest to where the ball left the field. There is an arc in each corner and the ball is kicked from the ground from inside the arc. The player taking the kick can not touch the ball again until touched by another player. If the kicker touches the ball again before another player does then an IFK is awarded to the opposing team. Defenders to the corner kick must be 10 ft away from the ball for U10 and below and 10 yards away for U12 and up.

## **Free Kicks**

Usually direct free kicks (DFK) are not awarded below U10 because players seldom intentionally commit penal fouls (pushing, kicking, tripping, shoving, and dissent). Unless a player is seriously and intentionally committing penal fouls to gain an advantage let the game continue. If you make the call blow your whistle and award a DFK to the team fouled at the point of infraction. Defenders must be at least 10 – 20 feet away depending on age when the kick is taken. Give a verbal signal for U10 and under for the kick to be taken. At U12+ once you give a signal for the DFK then the team taking the kick can take it as quickly as they want without any further signal from the referee. DO NOT make U12+ wait for another signal unless they ask you to have the defenders move back away from the ball. If this request is made, move the defenders back and make the kicking team wait for a whistle from the referee before taking the kick. Quick kicks are part of the game and the players should dictate the pace. At U10 and below it's OK to give a verbal instruction to take the kick. DON'T use your whistle to give the signal because it discourages players from learning to play to the whistle.

**Avoid using your whistle.** Simply call out “white throw” or “blue throw” for throw ins. Call out “white corner kick” or “blue goal kick” for the appropriate restart when the ball crosses a goal line without a score. It's important for players to learn to play to the whistle and set the pace of the game – not the referee. Whistles are only to be blown for IFKs, DFKs, injuries and to signal the end of a playing period.

**Direct Free Kick (DFK)** – a free kick that can score a goal directly from the kick without the ball having to touch another player on the field.

**Indirect Free Kick (IFK)** – a free kick that must touch another player on the field before entering the net for a score to occur. If a player kicks the ball directly into the opposing net on an IFK without another player first touching the ball, then a goal kick is awarded to the opposing team.

## **Hand Ball**

One of the most abused calls is the hand ball. If you never make a hand ball call you will be right 85% or more of the time. The hand ball occurs when, in the referee's judgment, a player (other than the keeper inside their own penalty area) INTENTIONALLY plays the ball with any part of their arm or hand. A DFK is awarded when a hand ball foul is committed. The key is making a judgment that it is intentional. Incidental contact with a hand or arm should not be called. Did the ball play the arm or did the arm play the ball is what you should consider. Using arms to protect oneself in a reflexive mode should not be called for younger players. It gets harder to judge as players get older.

## End of Play

At the end of a quarter/half blow your whistle 3 loud blasts to signal the end of the period. To end the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> period for younger players, it is my recommendation to wait until the ball goes out of play (out of bounds, score, free kick) and restart the following 2<sup>nd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> quarter with the appropriate restart. This better simulates halves in soccer.

## Injuries

Stop play immediately by blowing your whistle if someone is seriously hurt. Let coaches treat their players. To restart after an injury use a drop ball at the point the ball was in play when you stopped the game. This is like a jump ball in basketball. One player from each team faces each other and the referee drops the ball between them. The ball is in play when it touches the ground. All other players are 10 – 20 feet away age appropriate.

## Advantage

All serious fouls should be called at U10 and below. For U12+ you can apply advantage. If a team is fouled and maintains possession and is still advancing down field then apply advantage and let the game continue without making a call. Let everyone know by shouting out “PLAY ON” or “ADVANTAGE”.

## Offside

The purpose of the offside rule is to prevent a team from having a player “camp” in front of an opponent’s goal waiting for an easy score. To make an offside call, first you must determine if a player is in an offside position when the ball is played to them by a team mate. For an offside position to occur at the U10 and up level (don’t worry about offside at U5/U6/U8) all three conditions must occur:

1. the offensive player must be in the offensive half of the field AND
2. the offensive player must be closer to the opponent’s goal line than the ball AND
3. the offensive player must be closer to the opponent’s goal line than the NEXT TO LAST defender

For an offside penalty to be called, all the above must be true and the player in the offside position must **GAIN AN ADVANTAGE** by being in the offside position **when the ball is played** to them by a teammate. If the player is behind or even with the next to last defender when the ball is played and races past the defender to get to the ball first then this is part of the game and no offside is called. A player in the offside position can not come back onside to receive a ball played to them by a team mate.

There is no offside of U8 and below, just don't let a player stand in front of the net waiting for the ball to come to them.

At U10 and up call offside. When offside is called an IFK is awarded to the defending team at the point of infraction.

## **Penalty Kick**

Anytime a foul is committed that would be awarded a DFK and the foul is committed by the defending team in their own penalty box then a penalty kick is awarded to the offensive team.

The person taking the kick is identified to the keeper. The ball is placed on the ground halfway between the goal box and the penalty box in the center of the field.

The keeper must remain with their feet on the goal line until the ball is kicked, but they can move side to side along the goal line.

All other players must remain outside the penalty box until the ball is kicked.

If the kicker misses and no one touches the ball then a goal kick is awarded. If the keeper deflects the ball out of bounds over the goal line with no score made then a corner kick is awarded.

## **Weather**

Soccer is played in the rain. If there is lightning then have the players leave the field. Only the Regional Commissioner can cancel games due to weather. Coaches and refs – show up every game. Please also tell your parents/players to show up every game.

## **Special Rules for U6 & U8**

AYSO does not allow the use of goal keepers for U6 & U8. However, having a wide open net with no defenders within a designated area can also discourage players when the game scores become lop sided. AYSO Region 423 **does not** allow a U6 or U8 player to be designated as a goal keeper so that they can use their hands to control the ball while inside their own penalty area. Starting in the Summer of 2010, U6 and U8 players can play defense anywhere on the field and U6 & U8 players can shoot from anywhere on the field. No player can use their hands on defense, but there will be no limitation of where on the playing field the ball can be legally touched by either the offensive or defensive team.

## **Final Thoughts**

Use words of encouragement with U10 and below. Don't be afraid to coach them on the rules of the game. Use retakes to instruct as needed. Tell players why you are making a call. At U12 and up the expectation is that players know the rules of the game. Only talk to players to maintain control of the game. Let them know you see something even if a call isn't made. Fouls are judgments and not clear cut and soccer is a nonviolent contact sport. Aggressive play for the ball and not against another player is part of the game and incidental contact is part of the game.

Don't allow heading below U12.

Don't allow slide tackles below U14.

Remember the 7 most important words in the rules of the game

"If in the opinion of the referee....."

A referee's call is final. Once the ball is put back into play no call can be reversed. If you make a mistake and catch it before the restart then correct yourself. If you second guess yourself after the ball is in play then "play on".