



7U/8U GUIDELINES - FALL 2019

(These are specific to Region 87 – AYSO National differs)

Welcome to the Region 87 7U/8U Soccer Program where the players continue their growth on a larger field, have larger goals, faster play, and the introduction of throw-in's and official referee called games.

For 2019 we have split into single year divisions. 7U and 8U will play only within their individual birth years and the format of play will be 5v5 for the 7U division and 6v6 for the 8U division – NO GOAL KEEPERS in any division.

This is a really fun age to watch and participate in and with the new PDI's that are in place, the goal has been to introduce more options for the players to have touches on the ball and to begin to learn more about the attacking and defending approaches for soccer.

WHILE AYSO HAS 6 CORE PHILOSOPHIES... THE FOLLOWING ARE CORE PHILOSOPHIES THAT WILL LEAD YOU AS A COACH:

- **EVERYONE PLAYS** – We want all kiddos to play... (and have fun!)
- **POSITIVE COACHING** – This is the most important part of your role... encourage your players, they will become more motivated and develop stronger skills
- **GOOD SPORTSMANSHIP** – We strive to create a safe, fair, fun, and positive environment for the players to thrive based upon mutual respect... a win-at-all-cost attitude is not a trait of Good Sportsmanship.
- **PLAYER DEVELOPMENT** – Touches... opportunities... skills that will advance with their movement through the divisions... all starts with you! This is why we play 4v4.

Just a few points for coaches, referees, & parents to remember; especially for those who have experience in other divisions, as to how the 7U/8U program now differs from other divisions and how the Laws of the Game are applied.

The format of play has changed a bit in that we are playing a 5v5 (or 6v6 for 8U) game on a pitch that is approximately 45 yards long and 30 yards wide. We will be playing the National Standard goal of a 4x6 'Bownet' style goal and in this division and we are forming individual teams to compete within each division.

Another key element is that there are no goal keepers and the 'Goal Keeper's Area' is a 'no camping' zone.

The overall format of play will be as follows:

- Each team consists of the programmed play + 2 or 3 substitute players (5v5 would have 7-8 players / 6v6 would have 8-9 players)
- Play is scheduled within each division (no A/B fields like we tried in 2018)
- The Goal is to have balanced teams (an AYSO philosophy) and we will be evaluating the play at week 4 to determine if we need to 're-seed' the games for the more aggressive teams to play each other – this is a policy in flux... so please be flexible on this issue)

Specific Rules:

1. **Duration of game: Each game is forty minutes** and is played in two twenty-minute halves with substitutions allowed in the middle of each half as determined by the Referee (Approx. every 10 minutes). It is the Referee's job to stop play approximately half way through the period. Play should be stopped at a normal stoppage in play for the substitution break. In cases where there is a lack of substitutes or in cases of hot weather, the Referee may use their discretion to allow for a short break for players to get a drink. **THERE ARE NO 'FREE' SUBSTITUTIONS in THESE DIVISIONS.**
2. **The Start of Play and the restart after the Half-time Break:** The start of the game will be determined by a coin toss (or a game of rock-paper-scissors) and the winner will determine the play based upon the current laws of the game. (for 2018 the law was that the winner would determine which goal they wanted to defend first and the loser would kick off in that direction)
3. **Throw-Ins:** When the ball goes out of play across the touch lines (sidelines), the ball will be introduced back into play by a **throw-in**. (we do not do pass-ins in 7U/8U)

In this division we begin teaching the skills of a throw-in and as the season progresses, beginning in week 6, the quality of the throw-in will begin to be held to the normal, age appropriate, FIFA standard and the play may switch to the other team if the throw is unacceptable.

For the first half of the season, if a player does an improper throw-in – such as lifting their feet off the ground, throwing with one hand, standing on the pitch vs. having their feet outside the pitch, etc... the ball will be called back and the player will be given a very quick reminder of the proper way to do a throw-in and

will be given another chance to throw the ball in. Again, during the first half of the season, if the second throw-in still is out of compliance, the referee is required to let the ball go and let play happen. Let it go! Proper technique can be taught at practice later by the coach. Again, let them play.

Starting in Week 6, the Referee will be following the FIFA rules and will give the ball to the other team to complete a throw-in if the initial throw-in is done improperly. (Remember, these are 6 and 7-year-old kids, so please keep in mind their skill set and age appropriate expectations)

Referees should give quick explanations when necessary and minimize interruptions. Keep the game moving and fun.

4. **Fouls and Other Stoppages:** Deliberate fouling should be rare in 8U games. If a player is having issues, please gently work with them – this is not intended to be competitive soccer, so coaches please be mindful about how much you push these players. WE DO NOT SHOW CARDS IN THIS DIVISION.
 - a. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball, and dangerous play may occur and if it does, quickly deal with it without focusing on the player more than is necessary to get a quick understanding of the issue and then get the game started again. there should be few, if any, reasons to stop play in 8U games.
 - b. If a player is “not playing well with others” or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing plane, or butterfly), the Referee should restart play with an indirect free kick or a dropped ball as appropriate.
 - c. Exercise common sense. The Referee should briefly explain infractions and stand back and let’m play.
5. **Free Kicks:** The Referee will stop play for any foul that they determine should be addressed by a stop, a discussion, and a restart.
 - a. All restarts in 8U where the ball starts on the pitch shall be **Indirect Free Kicks** at this age. (this is opposite the old rules when we had goal keepers)
 - b. **There are no penalty kicks** (in which only one player defends the goal – the whole team is always there).
 - c. **Anytime a foul occurs within the ‘goal keepers’ area (the ‘6’ yard area) the ball will be brought out to the ‘6’ for the restart.**
6. **Distance from Ball:** Players should be asked to stand back roughly 3-5 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.

7. **Offside** should never be called. We do not introduce offside play or penalties until a player is in the 10U division.
8. **Playing time: Region 87 follows the 3/4 rule**. The 3/4 rule applies to all players on the team (no one plays the entire game unless everyone else has played 3 quarters). Unlike other AYSO divisions, in the 7U/8U division referees do not have the visiting team on their pitch the whole game and thus they will not be recording player participation on game cards and will not know who plays or does not. **It is the responsibility of coaches to make sure that everyone plays**.
9. **A goal**, as in all age group games, is awarded when **the ball completely crosses the goal line** into the goal. The goal of soccer is to for the attacking team to score goals, and for the defending team to stop, delay, and take the ball away, so a goal should be celebrated. In 7U/8U games, they are not recorded to determine who wins.
10. **This is a 40 minute ‘Soccer Party’ for the kids**. We want to encourage this to be a fun and profitable experience for the kids... thus, if your team is dominating the other team, think about maybe switching players around, moving kids to the other team and /or mixing it up if you have one dominant player. Remember, we don’t keep score... but the kids tend to and we want this to be a good experience for all.
11. **A reminder that play is 5v5 for 7U and 6v6 for 8U with no goalkeepers**. If the opposing team has less than 4 players then the coaches should work together to ensure that the play is fair. For our 8U division, 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.

We CANNOT play more than 5v5 for 7U and 6v6 for 8U – we are under special rules to allow us to play 6v6 for the 8U division – so we cannot violate the 5v5 for the 7U or the 6v6 for the 8U.

12. **End Line and Goal Keeping Space**: Since there are no goal keepers in this division, there shall be no player who is ‘camping’ in the Goal Area (the area within the 6 yard line box at the goal mouth). During play, any player may enter and play through the area, and any defender may enter the area as needed to defend against an attack, but there shall be no goal keeping.

If the ball crosses the end line and is last touched by the attacking team, the defending team shall take a goal kick from the 6 and the ball does not enter play until the ball passes outside the ‘Penalty Area’. (There are no Penalty Kicks in 8U).

IF the ball enters the goal from a kick that was taken outside the Penalty Area (the white line that runs completely across the pitch about 1/3 in – NO goal has been scored. This is treated just as if the ball had gone over the end line. The restart is a GOAL KICK and not a restart from the center. *** the reason is that if there is a player who can shoot from distance, the entire purpose of the new format is wasted and is no fun for anyone else.

There is no buildout line for 8U.

If the ball crosses the end line and is last touched by the defending team, then the attacking team shall do a corner kick and the defending team players can be within the goal area until the ball has had its natural progression. Again if the play is outside the goal area, there should not be a player inside the goal area acting as a goal keeper.

13. *AYSO is committed to following the National Player Development Initiatives for the younger players.*

The goal is MORE TOUCHES and more opportunity for the players to interact with the ball and begin to develop a 'relationship' with the ball and the game.

The fundamentals are focused on helping the players:

- Gain early basic ball control skills
- Advance the ball past opposing players by dribbling, passing and shooting towards the goal (the early principles of PENETRATION)
- Defend by slowing down the attack by closing gaps/denying space (the early principle of DELAY) and working to take the ball back

And, always... for attacking the overall goal is to score!

AND REMEMBER... THIS IS A SOCCER PARTY FOR BOTH THE PLAYERS AND YOURSELF!

OTHER NOTES/COMMENTS:

Referees:

There is a requirement for a fully qualified referee to be on each pitch or a game cannot be played. Regional Referees, or higher, are required and this is a great opportunity for a new referee to get the feel of the game due to the pace of play.

All Referees must be:

- 1) a registered **Volunteer**
- 2) **Safe Haven** certified
- 3) **CDC Concussion** Certified and
- 4) Trained as a **Regional Referee** (possibly On-Line PLUS face to face Regional Referee Companion Course)

Referees must be registered AYSO volunteers (meaning completion of safe haven and eAYSO volunteer background check EVERY YEAR.)

Further, this is a unique area where a youth referee can find their comfort zone as they advance in their confidence and skills

The games are intended to be an opportunity for the very youngest of our players to experience the fun of playing. The barest of minimum rules are needed and should be applied with a generous amount of flexibility.

Let the players have the freedom to play with minimum interruption.

Referees should briefly explain any infringements to ALL the players and help players with instructions. They are the teachers on the field – they 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.

You have your field for 1 hour – on the hour. 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.

Ball Size is size 3.

Players' equipment: Footwear: Soccer shoes, tennis shoes or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

Shin guards are MANDATORY and must be covered entirely by socks. Shin guards go against bare skin and socks go over the shin guards.

Coin toss: The “Home team” decides what end they will defend for the first half. This means that the Visiting Team will kick off first. Coaches should prepare their captains on what end to choose to defend first.

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 4 flags – 4 on each of the corners. *** Please leave the BOWNET Bag for the goal at the back of the goal so the end of day crew can easily put the net away.

Additionally, the Kids Zone sign (if available) 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 Kids Zone sign. Please also pick-up any trash or recycling.

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

Questions & Answers for 7U/8U

Q. What happens when a player on offense moves the ball into the goal area? Can a defender enter the goal area to defend?

A. Yes, the defender can and should defend as long as they are chasing an offensive player into the goal area. The goal area markings are intended to prevent players from “camping out” in front of the goal and therefore de facto acting as a goal keeper. ‘Think that the goal area is ‘quick sand’ or ‘lava’ and the kiddos can enter and move through, but cannot stand within the space.

Q. What if a player doesn’t throw the ball in to play correctly on the first try?

A. Players are still trying to learn this skill. To that end, if the first try doesn’t follow the rules don’t whistle the play and let the play flow for the first half of the season otherwise there will be more whistles than play. (Practice pass-ins as necessary the following week at practice.) Beginning game six, (the second half of the season), there should be no more improper throw-ins and if one occurs, play should stop and should result in a change of possession with the other team now taking possession and completing the pass-in.

Q. Are there goal kicks and corner kicks at this age group?

A. Yes, we are really trying to introduce many concepts that make sense to younger players as to how the game is played at all age levels. Unlike first half throw-ins, there are no redo’s for corner kicks. There is a redo for goal kicks only when the ball is not kicked out of the penalty area (the larger painted box outside the goal). That redo is necessary because it is an infringement to the rules.

Q. What happens if one team is far more skilled and the scoring is getting out of hand?

A. History tells us this could very well happen. If there is a five goal differential, the coach of the team that is ahead should take immediate measures to STOP further scoring until the gap closes under five goals.

Some suggestions to accomplish this: put your strongest players in the back and not up front in a better scoring location; score only after there has been 3-4 passes linked together before shooting; dribble and shoot only with the weaker foot - generally the left foot; take a player off the field and play a man down is acceptable **but not encouraged and only as an absolute last resort as it takes a player out of what he is there to do - PLAY and HAVE FUN**; this is really a last resort.

Teams that are down 6-0, 8-0 are not having fun. Remember we are all volunteers for our children. Scores and winning at this age is not important. Participating, learning and having fun is the objective.

Q. Who provides referees and who is the official timekeeper?

A. The HOME TEAM shall provide the referee and the referee shall also be the OFFICIAL timekeeper.

Q. How many coaches can be on the field at once?

A. Each team is allowed only one coach on the field at a time for the first three weeks of play. Remember only one coach on the field at a time. **Beginning in game 7, coaches will be asked to move and coach from the sideline. They will no longer be allowed to coach being on the field.**

Q. With this tight timeline, how can the kids enjoy the after-game snack and celebration?

A. This is still a really important aspect of soccer that the kids anticipate and enjoy. Snack time, encouraging comments from game should be enjoyed, simply move away from the immediate playing and spectator areas to be considerate of the next team's game. (WE play the 6U program adjacent to the restrooms at Cooks, and there are picnic tables in the shade right there for after play festivities. Please move there once your game is complete.

Q. To make it easier to break down after games maybe we should just go behind the goal to watch and be out of the way?

A. Players, coaches and parents are not allowed to gather behind the goals. This is very distracting to the ongoing game. – this policy begins at 6U and goes all the way up to 18U.

Q. Our game was later in the day and there were old bottles left from previous games. How can we address that situation?

Ultimately it is the coaches' responsibility to be sure the field is free of trash and bottles. It is suggested that the parent who is responsible for snacks that game day, also bring a trash bag so all trash is picked up and disposed of properly before the next game.

Q. I noticed in some games kids were back "playing goal". I thought there were no goal keepers?

A. It is understandable that players want to come back and get in front of the goal to defend. Additionally, It wouldn't be the first time that a player got distracted and is actually day dreaming and simply camped out right in front of the goal.

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The solution: Defenders are NOT allowed to camp out in the “immediate goal area” (area lined on the field). Defenders are NOT allowed to go into that area unless the ball has entered. Once that has happened they are free and encouraged to enter that area and defend their goal.

Q. Can you give us some guidance as to on-field coaching during the game vs. just letting the kids play?

A. There probably is some room left for interpretation, but here is our recommendation to you.

Example: delaying the game for 30-45 seconds so that the team is coached and perfectly lined up for a throw, a goal kick and center off etc. **is not a good idea.** More general coaching during the game that takes a few seconds is more appropriate: “try not to kick with your toe”, “score at this end”, “pass to teammate”, “remember to stay out of the defensive goal”, “your turn to throw in or take the goal kick”, etc... are all good and appropriate things to help the players.

The barest minimum of rules should be used with a generous amount of flexibility. Try to keep interruptions to the minimum so the players have the freedom for continuous play. Practice is more the time for rules, technique and coaching. **Game time is for pleasure and play expressing what they have learned during practice week.**

Q. Are there “penalty kicks” at this age group if a player handles the ball?

A. At this age group and especially without goal keepers, **there are NO penalty kicks.** If a foul occurs, place the ball parallel to the infringement outside the penalty area and continue with an indirect free kick. Defending players should be at least five yards (full size is 10 yards) from the ball but not into the goal area.

NOW GO HAVE FUN!