

## **U8 Modified Rules**

### **US Youth Soccer Official Under 8 Playing Recommendations**

US Youth Soccer recommended modifications to the FIFA Laws of the Game.

FIFA Laws of the Game - <https://www.ussoccer.com/referees/laws-of-the-game>

**Please note the U8 addendum and appendix.**

#### **Law 1 – The Field of Play**

Dimensions: The field of play must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

Length:            minimum 25 yards    maximum 35 yards

Width:            minimum 20 yards    maximum 30 yards

Field Markings: Distinctive lines not more than (5) inches wide. The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. The center mark is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of four (4) yards is marked around it.

The Goal Area: A goal area is defined at each end of the field as follows: Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal line three (3) yards from the inside of each goalpost. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of three (3) yards and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line. The area bounded by these lines and the goal line is the goal area.

The Penalty Area: none.

Flag posts: none.

The Corner Arc: Conform to FIFA.

Goals: Goals must be placed on the center of each goal line. They consist of two upright posts equidistant from the corners and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar. The recommended distance between the posts is eighteen (18) feet and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is six (6) feet. Goals may be smaller in dimension.

**Law 2 – The Ball: Size four (4).**

**Law 3 – The Number of Players:** A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than five players – Goalkeepers are introduced at this level, and are included in the 5 players on each team.

Substitutions: At any stoppage of play and unlimited.

Playing time: Each player shall play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. Teams and matches may be coed. In the event that it's not possible to play all players for 50% of the time, all players should play equal time.

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**Law 4** – The Players' Equipment: Conform to FIFA. Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.

**Law 5** – The Referee: An OFFICIAL (Game Manager or Coordinator or Parent or Coach or Grade 9 referee) may be used. All infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player.

**Law 6** – The Assistant Referees: None.

**Law 7** – The Duration of the Match: The match shall be divided into four (4) equal, twelve (12) minute quarters. There shall be a two (2) minute break between quarters one and two and another two (2) minute break between quarters three and four. There shall be a half-time interval of five (5) minutes.

**Law 8** – The Start and Restart of Play: Conform to FIFA, with the exception of the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

**Law 9** – The Ball In and Out of Play: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 10** – The Method of Scoring: Conform to FIFA.

**Law 11** – Offside: None.

**Law 12** – Fouls and Misconduct: Conform to FIFA with the following exceptions:

All fouls shall result in a direct free kick.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team, at the spot of the infraction, if a player intentionally makes contact with the ball using his or her head.

The referee/coach/parent must explain ALL infringements to the offending player. No cards shown for misconduct.

**Law 13** – Free Kicks: Conform to FIFA with the exceptions that all kicks are direct and all opponents are at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

**Law 14** – The Penalty Kick: None.

**Law 15** – The Throw-In: Conform to FIFA with the exception that an improperly performed throw-in can be retaken once.

**Law 16** – The Goal Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents must remain outside the goal area and at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

**Law 17** – The Corner Kick: Conform to FIFA with the exception that opponents remain at least four (4) yards from the ball until it is in play.

## **U8 ADDENDUM**

### **MODIFIED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GAME FOR U8**

**Law 1** The Field of Play: dimensions are smaller to accommodate the four-versus-four game and are appropriate for the movement capabilities of six- and seven-year-old children. These adjusted dimensions provide more practical space allowing players to be successful.

Field Markings: the center circle gives the players a concrete marking on where to be for the kick-off. The corner arc gives the young player a concrete place to put the ball to kick it back onto the field of play. While kids this young will execute corner kick plays to a modest degree taking a kick from the corner is a reasonable way for them to put the ball into play and provides continuity with all other age groups. However, the center circle and the corner arc for U8 Small Sided Games are not mandatory field markings.

Goals: the goal, 6 x 18 feet or smaller, is the same for the U6 to U8 age groups. By using the same size goal for these age groups clubs will have to buy fewer goals and there will be greater flexibility in the use of fields. A big goal without a goalkeeper should mean a few more goals for kids whose shooting technique is primitive along with their eye-foot coordination. Let's give them the broad side of the barn at which to shoot, the more goals the merrier. Finally the shooting odds for the U8 age group are one versus seven, so let's give them a chance by having a larger target. However, manufactured goals are not mandatory for U8 Small Sided Games. Clubs are free to use cones, Pug goals or other items to designate the goal for this age group. Any goal must be properly anchored to the ground.

**Law 2** The Ball: must be a size four. The smaller ball is lighter and more easily kicked, received, dribbled and passed.

**Law 3** The Number of Players: we introduce goalkeepers in the U8 age group so players understand the concept in preparation for more competitive situations, like Select or Travel play, which routinely begins at the U8 or U9 level. The smaller number of players takes into account the egocentrism of this age group and therefore allows each child more opportunities for shooting, passing and dribbling the ball. With fewer players on the field each child has an increased number of contacts with the ball and has more actual playing time. Additionally the players will be required to make more decisions and experience repeated game situations frequently. The involvement of players will be more consistent. While learning both offense and defense, players will become well rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of teammates. Children in the U8 age group will intentionally play in pairs. The smaller number of players on the field will make it easier and more likely that passing and receiving will occur.

There should not be a minimum number of players for U8 and U6 and clubs, administrators, coaches and referees should be encouraged to allow players from the team with sufficient numbers to 'loan' a player or two to the team that is short players and then PLAY.

**Law 5** The Referee: a referee is not really needed for this age group. Instead a parent or a coach should officiate the game. All rule infringements shall be briefly explained to the offending player. It is strongly recommended that the adult officiating the U8 game attend the Grade 9 referee course.

**Law 6** The Assistant Referees: none are needed.

**Law 7** The Duration of the Match: the game is divided into four quarters. Clubs may make the quarters shorter in duration if necessary. Quarters are played in the U8 age group to accommodate the attention span and physical limitations of the children.

**Law 10** Goal Scored: shall conform to FIFA.

**Law 11** Offside: there shall be no offside called during these games.

**Law 12** Fouls and Misconduct: no caution or send off shall be issued to players. If a child is being too rambunctious then the game official will ask the coach to make a substitution of that player to give the child a chance to calm down before returning to play.

**Law 13** Free Kicks: all free kicks shall be direct. This will keep the game flowing and keep the attention of the kids.

**Law 14** The Penalty Kick: there will not be any penalty kicks called.

**Law 15** The Throw-In: some U8 players do not yet have the eye-hand coordination to execute a throw-in to the letter of the law. However, some U8 players have sufficient eye-hand coordination to attempt the throw-in. One 'do-over' per thrower should be the normal response if the throw-in is incorrect. The adult officiating the match should explain to the child how to execute the throw-in correctly.

**Law 16** The Goal Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play once it has left the goal area.

**Law 17** The Corner Kick: per FIFA. The defending players must stand at least four yards away from the ball until it is in play.

#### ADVANTAGES OF PLAYING SMALL SIDED GAMES

More time with the coach  
Energetic workouts due to playing both offense and defense  
More efficient use of field space  
Matches can be played simultaneously across a full size field  
Children are physically more efficient in smaller space  
Children are actively involved for a longer period of time  
It takes less time to score a goal or advance to goal  
Greater success rate for the players

#### **US Youth Soccer Recommendations**

Opposing coaches, players and parents should shake hands after each match.

Parent/coaches, non-participating players and spectators should be there to enjoy and encourage the activity of the youngsters.

Spectator and team benches should be on opposite sides of the field.

No alcoholic beverages or tobacco products will be consumed or allowed near the playing area.

No slide tackles to be allowed in this age group.

Coaches of U8 teams should attend the U6/U8 Youth Module coaching course and the Grade 9 referee course.

## Suggested Set-up for 4v4 Fields

