

Small Sided Games



Short-Sided Soccer



Short-sided soccer is about what is best for young soccer players. It's for coaches, referees, administrators, spectators, and anyone else concerned with the development of 5 to 12 year old soccer players.

Why Short-Sided Soccer?

Because young players need special consideration. Little research or attention has been given this critical period in the development of the under-12 year old players, but most educators agree the early learning experiences are the most important and result in the most retention. Traditionally, youth soccer programs are viewed from an adult perspective, using the 11-a-side game as a reference. But we need to remember these important points about young players:

Children must be treated as children, not as mini-adults.

Children are essentially self-oriented and only relate naturally to a friend or two, not to groups of six or more.

Children cannot sustain prolonged activity and function best with frequent rest periods.

Children have a limited span of attention, so frequent activity changes are necessary.

Children focus best when learning activities are fun.

Almost 70 percent of coaches are first-time coaches-parents with little free time.

Short-sided soccer is a way to ease adults into coaching as well as to ease children into playing. Be creative and remember, children play games to have fun. Short-sided games help ensure children have fun and at the same time, maximize their learning opportunities.

Courtesy of American Youth Soccer Organization.

Under 6 Guidelines



A. THE FIELD

1. Dimensions: Maximum 30 yards long and 15 yards wide (30 yards x 15 yards)
2. Markings: Distinctive lines not required. Field can be marked using 10 flat pro- cones and four regular cones:
3. Goals: Maximum 4 feet high and 6 feet wide (4' x 6')

B. THE BALL

Size three (3)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time: three (3); no goalkeepers
2. Maximum number of players on roster: five (5)
3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player and 75% when possible.
No one should play four periods until everyone has played three
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear*: Tennis shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes
- *Shin guards*: MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 1. registered referee
 2. youth referee
 3. coach
 4. parent
2. Referees should emphasize:

Fun
Fairness
Safety
Learning

NOTE: Referees should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and help players with instructions.

F. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Four five-minute periods
2. Halftime break of five to ten minutes

G. THE START OF PLAY:

The game should be started with a free kick in the middle of the field. The coaches should determine which team starts the game and the opposing team should start the second half. The referee will ensure that opponents are at least five (5) yards from the spot of the free kick.

H. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

1. When the whole ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, it should be thrown in by a player of the opposite team from where the ball crossed the line.
2. When the whole ball passes over the goal line (not into the goal), it should be kicked into play by a player of the opposing team from where the ball crossed the line.

I. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play. Score not kept.

J. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

1. Direct free kick for all fouls, with the opponent's five yards away
2. Referee should explain ALL infractions

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Region standings are not recorded

2. Game scores are not recorded
3. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
4. All players receive participation awards
5. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game
6. Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time
7. Spectators are not allowed behind either goal or within three (3) yards outside the touchline.

Courtesy of American Youth Soccer Organization.

Under 8 Guidelines



A. THE FIELD

1. Dimensions: Maximum 30 yards long and 15 yards wide (30 yards x 15 yards)
2. Markings: Distinctive lines not required. Field can be marked using 10 flat pro- cones and four regular cones:
3. Goals: Maximum 4 feet high and 6 feet wide (4' x 6')

B. THE BALL

Size three (3)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time: three (3); no goalkeepers
2. Maximum number of players on roster: five (5)
3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player and 75% when possible.
No one should play four periods until everyone has played three
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear*: Tennis shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes
- *Shin guards*: MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 1. registered referee
 2. youth referee
 3. coach
 4. parent
2. Referees should emphasize:

Fun
Fairness
Safety
Learning

NOTE: Referees should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and help players with instructions.

F. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Four five-minute periods
2. Halftime break of five to ten minutes

G. THE START OF PLAY:

The game should be started with a free kick in the middle of the field. The coaches should determine which team starts the game and the opposing team should start the second half. The referee will ensure that opponents are at least five (5) yards from the spot of the free kick.

H. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY:

1. When the whole ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air, it should be thrown in by a player of the opposite team from where the ball crossed the line.
2. When the whole ball passes over the goal line (not into the goal), it should be kicked into play by a player of the opposing team from where the ball crossed the line.

I. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play. Score not kept.

J. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

1. Direct free kick for all fouls, with the opponent's five yards away
2. Referee should explain ALL infractions

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Region standings are not recorded

2. Game scores are not recorded
3. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
4. All players receive participation awards
5. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game
6. Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time
7. Spectators are not allowed behind either goal or within three (3) yards outside the touchline.

Courtesy of American Youth Soccer Organization.

Under 10 Guidelines



A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 80 yards long by 40 yards wide (80 yards x 40 yards)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines recommended.
 1. Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines
 2. Center circle with a eight (8) yard radius in the center of the field
 3. Corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius at each corner of the field
 4. Goal area in front of each goal measuring six (6) yards by 15 yards (6 yards x 15 yards)
 5. Penalty area in front of each goal measuring 14 yards by 36 yards (14 yards x 36 yards)
 6. Penalty mark 10 yards from the goal line
 7. Penalty arc extending in an eight (8) yard radius from the penalty mark
3. **Goals:** Maximum 7 feet high by 7 yards wide (7 ft x 7yds)

B. THE BALL

Size four (4)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time: seven (7); one of whom may be a goalkeeper
2. Maximum number of players on roster not to exceed 10

3. Substitutions: Between periods and at halftime
4. Playing time: Minimum of 75% of the total playing time for each player, if possible. No one should play four periods until everyone has played three periods
5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear:* Tennis shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes
- *Shin guards:* MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 1. registered referee
 2. trained youth referee
2. Referees should emphasize:

Fun
Fairness
Safety
Learning

Referee decisions are final and must not be questioned by coaches

F. ASSISTANT REFEREES

Parents may be used

G. DURATION OF GAME:

1. Four 12-minute periods
2. Halftime break of five to ten minutes

H. THE START OF PLAY

No change from regular play except that opponents must be eight (8) yards from the center mark while kick-off is in progress.

I. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

No change from regular play

J. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play

K. OFFSIDE

No change from regular play

L. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

1. No change from regular play
2. Referees will work cooperatively with the coaches and eliminate the need for cautions and send-offs.
Do not show yellow or red cards

M. FREE KICKS

No change from regular play except those opponents must retreat eight (8) yards from the ball during opponents' free kicks

N. PENALTY KICKS

No change from regular play except those opponents must be outside the penalty area and eight (8) yards from the ball before a kick is allowed

O. THROW-IN

No change from regular play

P. GOAL KICK

No change from regular play

Q. CORNER KICK

No change from regular play, except those opponents must be eight (8) yards from the ball

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Region standings are not recorded
2. Game scores are not posted
3. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
4. All players receive participation awards
5. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game

Under 12 Guidelines



A. THE FIELD

1. **Dimensions:** Maximum 90 yards long by 45 yards wide (90 yards x 45 yards)
2. **Markings:** Distinctive lines not more than five (5) inches wide
 1. Halfway line the width of the field, marked equidistant between the goal lines
 2. Center circle with a 10 yard radius in the center of the field
 3. Corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius at each corner of the field
 4. Goal area: Six (6) yards from each goalpost and six (6) yards into the field of play joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line
 5. Penalty area: 18 yards into the field of play, joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line
3. **Goals:** Maximum 8 feet high by 8 yards wide (8 ft x 8yds)

B. THE BALL

Size four (4)

C. NUMBER OF PLAYERS

1. Maximum number of players on the field at any time: nine (9); one of whom will be a goalkeeper
2. Maximum number of players on roster not to exceed 13
3. Substitutions: Between playing periods and for injuries

4. Playing time: Minimum of 50% of the total playing time for each player. (75% highly recommended)

5. No co-ed teams. Separate girls teams should be promoted at this level of play

D. PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT:

- *Footwear:* Tennis shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes
- *Shin guards:* MANDATORY for both practices and games

E. REFEREE:

1. The referee could be either a:
 1. registered referee
 2. trained youth referee
2. Referees should emphasize:

Fun
Fairness
Safety
Learning

Referee decisions are final on points of fact connected with the game

F. ASSISTANT REFEREES

Should be trained as assistant referees

G. DURATION OF GAME

1. Four equal 15-minute periods with two equal halves of twenty-five minutes each
2. Halftime break of five minutes

H. THE START OF PLAY

No change from regular play

I. BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

No change from regular play

J. METHOD OF SCORING

No change from regular play

K. OFFSIDE

No change from regular play

L. FOULS & MISCONDUCT

No change from regular play. The referee will work cooperatively with the coaches to eliminate the need for cautions and send-offs

M. FREE KICKS

No change from regular play

N. PENALTY KICKS

No change from regular play

O. THROW-IN

No change from regular play

P. GOAL KICK

No change from regular play

Q. CORNER KICK

No change from regular play

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Parents, coaches, non-playing players, and spectators to be located not less than six (6) yards outside the touch-line and no closer than 20 yards from the goal line
2. Region standings can be recorded/posted
3. Game scores can be recorded/posted
4. Parents, coaches, and players from both teams exchange handshakes before and/or after each game
5. All players receive participation awards
6. No individual should be allowed to run the length of the field except participants of the game
7. Parents and coaches should encourage players, but not coach or instruct during game time

Courtesy of American Youth Soccer Organization.

Micro Soccer



Micro Soccer® Organization and Rules

Micro Soccer® is used to distinguish the game beyond that of small-sided games, mini-soccer and mod-soccer. Micro Soccer® uses the fundamental team unit - three - as the basis for learning and for having fun. There are variations in the way 3-a-side soccer can be played. The rules of Micro Soccer® and its organization are covered below.

The Rules of Micro Soccer®

1. The field is approximately 30 x 20 yards, although the size can be adjusted over a period of time by trial and error. The dimensions should vary according to player age and abilities. It is not possible to line the fields, use existing field markings, cones and/or Frisbees.
2. If the field is not lined, marker cones are placed on the sidelines, six yards out from goal lines. These mark an imaginary line forming the goalkeeping zone. The goalkeeper can handle the ball inside this zone, but may play (and should be encouraged to do so) beyond the line in a conventional manner, using feet and body but not the hands.
3. Goals are set up using corner flags (preferably freestanding ones), nine feet apart. An ideal method is to use poles or corner flags inserted in large cones.
4. Goals can be scored from anywhere but the ball must pass below the imaginary line across the goal tops.
5. The coach referees, or appoints his assistant or a parent.
6. Time-outs are called every two or three minutes, when substitutions are made.
7. Each team has a goalkeeper, but the goalkeepers are changed at each time-out on a rotating basis so that equal time is established for the goalkeeping function.
8. If there are six players on a team (three on, three off), lines changes can be made periodically so the same three players do not always play together.

9. When the ball goes out of play, the game is re-started by one of the following ways:

- a. Over the sidelines, with a throw-in (or kick-in, if the coach so desires).
- b. Over the goal line, with a goal kick if attacking team last touched the ball; or corner kick if defending team last played ball (goal kick is taken from anywhere in the goalkeeper handling zone; corner from where goal line and sideline meet).
- c. After a goal is scored, re-start the game with a goal kick. Alternatively, with the youngest players, mark a center spot, and re-start with a kick-off from the center.

Note: Goals cannot be scored directly from a goal kick, a throw-in, a kick off or a free kick. There are no penalty kicks in Micro Soccer®.

10. If a foul throw is committed, a coach explains the correct method and lets the offender re-take the throw. Discretionary power is then given to the referee if another foul throw is committed but, most times, it won't be called.

11. Because of the small field size and the end-to-end nature of the game, the ball may go out to play frequently. Coaches should encourage parents to participate as *ball parents* to help the flow and the enjoyment of the game. Any players on the sidelines should be encouraged to help get the ball back in play quickly. On gymnasias, artificial turf, all weather and other hard surfaces the ball will run more quickly. If possible, compensate by widening the playing area or by reducing the air pressure of the ball.

12. Practice sessions (and games) are *no longer* than 35 to 40 minutes. Because of this, parents are encouraged to stay for both practices and games and to participate in practice sessions.

13. All infringements - tripping, handling, etc. - are punished by an indirect free kick (i.e., ball must be passed before a shot can be taken). There are no penalties (players of this age are completely honest and do not commit deliberate fouls; and the "indirect" free kick encourages passing and co-operation).

14. All opposing players must be at least five yards from the ball on free kicks, corner kicks and goal kicks.

Courtesy of Tony Waiters, World of Soccer.

Soccer field

