

U8 Program

General Concept

Under-8 soccer is a more structured, yet fun introduction to soccer for the Kids and the Families. This is an age of discovery for the kids. They learn by playing, not by “training” at practice. U8 Teams are single gender kids 6 to 8 years old. This is a wide range of size, ability and maturity. Teams have at most one practice per week. Practice during the week is run by the Coaches. Some MLS coaching help is available upon request. Weekend games are schedule every 60 minutes. Kick-offs occur at the time published in the schedule. Players should arrive at the game field ready to play, 10 minutes before Game time (kick-off). Referees or Youth Referees (if available) run the game. If none is available, a Coach runs the game. All Coaches work with the Referees to make the game Safe, Fun and to encourage Good Sportsmanship. Every player plays a minimum of 3/4ths of each game.

The Field

30 x 50 yards. Goals are 6 yards wide, 6 feet tall. Lines are painted. Corner flags are 5 feet tall. The center circle is 6-yard radius. Goal Area is 6 yards deep and 18 yards wide. No Penalty Area. Coaches stay at least 1 yard back from the field and within 10 yards of the halfway line (center). Coaches and Spectators of both teams share one side of the field. Spectators remain at least 2 yards from the field of play and Never behind the goal line or goal.

The Equipment

Use a #3 soccer ball for games and practices. Home team provides a properly inflated Game ball. Lots of flat cones for marking the fields for practice games.

Player Equipment

Every player needs to wear shin-guards under their socks for BOTH practice and games. No Earring, Friendship bracelets, Hard items in the hair, etc at BOTH practice and games. Safety first! Shoes – Any kind will do: “Sneakers” or Soccer Cleats (recommended). No Toe cleats (Baseball shoes). Each Player should bring a #3 ball to practices but Not games. They should also bring a water bottle. Both should have their names marked on them.

The Practices

The goal is that kids have FUN (Positive Encouraging and Instructional) while learning soccer skills. The once weekly practice should be about 60 minutes long (not to exceed 75 minutes):

- 5 minutes warm-up
- 10 minutes: Learn a new technique
- 25 minutes: Skills based activity or Game (See the U8 coach manual for ideas)
 - Or Two 10-minute Skills based activities or Games
- 5 minutes: Water Break
- 25 minutes: scrimmage (Four 5-minute periods, with a 5-minute half time)

The best practices involve all of the kids all the time. Limit the one-at-a-time drills. The Assistant coach and parents are encouraged to participate actively. 2 Adults MUST be present at all practices. 1 adult of the same gender as the players is recommended. Signed medical release forms for each player are required at all practices and games. A pre-season team Player & Parent meeting (Party) is highly encouraged.

Systems of Play (How to arrange players on the field)

Systems of Play are designed to give the players a framework for their role on the field.

There are three Basic types of players which are arranged in lines across the width of the field.

They are Defenders, Midfielders, and Attackers. The notation is D-M-A to describe a system.

All Players play both defensively and offensively. A typical break down is as follows:

Position	Time Attacking	Time Defending
Defender	25%	75%
Midfielder	50%	50%
Attackers	75%	25%

A typical U8 system when playing 6 vs 6 might be: 3-0-3 (D-M-A) (Simply 3-3)

3 Defenders: Left Defender, Center Defender and Right Defender

0 Midfielders: Left Midfielder and Right Midfielder

3 Attackers: Left Attacker and Right Attacker

When Defending there are three principles employed for U8:

Delay: Stop the attackers advance.

Concentration: Move the attackers to the side of the field confining their space and options.

Depth: Who is the second defensive player to the ball to help regain possession of the ball?

When Attacking there are three principles employed for U8:

Penetration: Advancing the ball past the defender by dribbling, passing and shooting.

Width: Attacking on a wide front across the field of play, spreading the defense and making space.

Depth: Supporting teammates to provide safe passes when the lead attacker get challenged.

A More complex 2-2-2 system allows for more flexibility but is Harder to coach.

NO simulated keepers (lone defender planted in front of the goal) are allowed.

Systems of Play vary team to team. Stick with one system throughout the game and season if possible.

The Game

7 to 8 players on a team, playing 6 vs 6 (or 5 vs 5 if authorized by the league). No Goal Keepers.

If fewer than 6 players show-up, team can play with as few as 4 players.

At most the opposing team can play with one more player (5 vs 6 for example)

Games are about 45 minutes. They include two halves of 20-minutes plus a 5-minute halftime.

Referees/Coaches do a "Pre-game" equipment check 5 minutes before the scheduled kick-off time.

At the midpoint of each half, there will be a brief stoppage in play to allow player substations.

At halftime, player should not eat junk food, but should drink water. (Refill their water too!)

Every player should play every position during the season.

Every player should learn all skills.

Every player should score at least one goal during the course of the season.

Scores are recorded to assist in managing blowouts and to help with balance the next season.

Coaches take steps to limit blowouts (a 5 goal or more delta in score). Some ideas are:

Action needs to be taken as soon as you are ahead by 3 or more goals.

Once a player has scored two goals in a game, move them back to a defensive position.

Encourage players to pass to the weakest player so they can score.

See the web site for other ideas.

Post-Game Cheers, Team handshakes and parents "tunnels" are expected

U8 Game Procedures

General Concept

Under-8 soccer is a more structured, yet fun introduction to the sport for the Kids and the Families. This is the first introduction for players and coaches to some of The Laws of the Game. Coaches work closely with the Referees to make this Safe, Fun and encourage Good Sportsmanship.

U8 Referees

Referees or Youth Referees (if available) run the game. If none is available, Coach runs the game. Referees wear official Referee Uniforms and comfortable shoes (Cleats are optional)

U8 Referees Procedures

Before the game, the center Referee will recruit two assistant referees (parents) as line judges. 5 minutes before the kick-off, below the whistle and at mid-field line up both teams. Get a line-up card from each coach. Get a game ball from the Home team. Check its inflation. Check each player: no Jewelry, no toe-cleat (any kind of shoe is OK) and Shin-Guards under the socks. Have the teams shake hands. Get the captain from the visiting team to call the coin toss. The winner picks the goal to attack and the loser gets the kickoff. Note this on the Line-up card. Half way through both halves (After 10 minutes), stop play (Not the clock) for a player substitutions. After the 20-minute half, whistle to stop play for a 5-minute halftime. At second half the team will switch goals. A kick-off is taken by the team that won the coin toss. As goal occur, record on the correct line-up card which player scored. As calls are made, explain everything to the players. At the end of the game, whistle to stop play. Total the final score and submit scores per instructions. Watch the post-game player handshake to insure Good Sportsmanship.

Laws of the Game for U8

Ball In and out of Play (Law 9) and Scoring (Law 10)

Anytime the ball completely crosses a touchline (side-lines) it is out of play.

A Throw-in (Law 15) from the touchline is the restart
(Taken by the defenders. The attackers are the ones that last touched the ball)

Anytime the ball completely crosses a goal line it is out of play.

A goal is scored if it completely crosses the goal line and enters the goal. A kick-off by the defender follows.

All other times:

If the ball was last touched by an attacker, a Goal Kick (Law 16) is awarded to the defense.

If the ball was last touched by a defender, a Corner Kick (Law 17) is awarded to the attackers.

Fouls & Misconducts (Law 12)

When a player carelessly trips, kicks, pushes, holds, strikes or deliberately handles the ball the other team gets a "Direct Free Kick" (Law 13). That is they get to kick the ball from that spot. If there are tears or other issues, the player may leave the field to be attended by a coach or parent. No formal cautions or Send-offs are issued (No card shown). However, player and coaches should be talked to about infractions to help correct and educate the players.

- If violent conduct / offensive language occurs, the coach will remove the player.
- For other misconducts, work with the player's coach to correct the behavior. If the player persists, then work with the coach to remove the player.
- If a coach become unruly or abusive, he can be asked to leave the area off the grass at CSP.
- File a written game report about why the player or coach was asked to leave.

The Kick-off (Law 8)

Taken from the center of the field.

All players must be in their own half of the field. Opposing players are at least 6 yards from the ball (The center circle is the boundary).

No Double touches by the kicker.

If this happens, a direct free kick is awarded to the other team from the spot of the double touch.

Direct Free Kicks (Law 13)

All opposing players are 6 yards back from the ball.

No Direct Free Kicks can occur within 6 yards of the opponent's goal.

To avoid this, place the ball at the edge of the goal area nearest the spot of the infraction.

Allow the defense to line up on the goal line to protect their goal.

A goal may be scored from a Direct Free Kick.

No Double touches by the kicker

If this happens, a direct free kick is awarded to the other team from the spot of the double touch.

Throw-in (Law 15)

Taken from the touchline (side-lines) within 1 yard of the spot the ball left the field of play.

Ball thrown using 2 hands, in one motion from behind and directly over the head. Both feet on the ground, on or behind the line at the point of the release of the ball.

Re-tries are allowed Opening Weekend and only once per player.

No double touches by the player taking the throw-in.

If this happens, a direct free kick is awarded to the other team from the spot of the double touch.

Goal Kick Kicks (Law 16 – Modified for U8)

The ball crosses the goal line, not into the goal, last touched by an attacker, a Goal Kick follows

The ball is kicked from the edge of the goal area.

All the opposing players must be outside the goal area and at least 6 yards from the ball.

Teammates of the kicker may be any place on the field.

No Double touches by the kicker.

If this happens, a direct free kick is awarded to the other team from the spot of the double touch.

Corner Kicks (Law 17)

The ball crosses the goal line, not into the goal, last touched by a defender, a Corner Kick follows

The ball is placed on the corner arc nearest the side of the field that the ball went out of play.

All defenders must be at least 6 yards away.

Teammates of the kicker may be any place on the field.

No Double touches by the kicker

If this happens, a direct free kick is awarded to the other team from the spot of the double touch.

OffSide (Law 11)

The offside law was created to provide for "Fair Play".

It made it illegal to plant a player in front of the other team's goal to cherry pick scores.

In U8 the letter of this law is not enforced, however, the spirit of the law is enforced.

If a player continually ends up planted down field or near of their opponent's goal, the Referee/ Coach will take measures to encourage the player to move back into play.

If the player continues to infringe, the referee will request coach intervention.

Penalty Kick (Law 14)

There are no penalty kicks in U8.

If the defending team commits any foul inside the goal area, a direct kick is awarded to the attacking Team.

This is taken from the edge of the goal area using the procedure of a Direct Free Kick.