



2025 YOUTH SOCCER LEAGUE RULES

GENERAL:

1. The goal and objective of the league shall be to provide enjoyment and instruction of the game of soccer. All coaches should stress good sportsmanship and basic fundamentals. Winning games should not be the primary focus. An atmosphere of learning and fun is the objective of this program.
2. The matters concerning the league of rule interpretation shall be administered by the Apex Parks, Recreation & Cultural Resources (APR&CR) Department.
3. All volunteer coaches shall be selected by APR&CR, and governed by the policies and procedures set forth by APR&CR.
4. All new players shall be selected by the coaches at the pre-season draft. All players returning from the year before will remain on the same team unless they choose to enter the draft. Siblings in the same age division shall be placed on the same team. Coaches will pick in the reverse order of finish from the previous season (see draft procedures below).
5. All coaches shall attend each practice or have their assistant attend in their place. Players shall not be allowed to practice without supervision. Any player that is not officially registered and on the roster through APR&CR will not be allowed to practice.
6. No player shall be dropped from a team without the approval of APR&CR. Coaches shall report to APR&CR any player that missed practice repeatedly.
7. If any team roster drops below the set roster size for that age division, the first player on the waiting list may be placed on that team by APR&CR per the waiting list policy.
8. All rules will be governed by USSF rules except for the local rules stated here.

Apex Parks and Recreation Parental Code of Conduct

- Exhibit socially acceptable behavior at practice sessions, games, and matches or refrain from attending these events.
- Ensure that your children have the proper equipment.
- Ensure that your children arrive and are picked up at the stated time.
- Applaud all good effort and good plays or remain silent.
- Allow the coaches to instruct without outside interference or influence.
- Support the coaches in what they want the players to learn.
- Treat the coaches and league leaders with dignity and respect.
- Ensure that your children receive ample positive encouragement regardless of the outcome of their events.
- Allow your children to play without negative pressure, verbal or physical.
- Ensure that your children do not intentionally injure other players.
- Help your children adhere to the written and unwritten rules of honesty, fair play and good sportsmanship.
- Assist in helping other players, the team, or the program when asked.
- When possible, provide your children with extra instructional opportunities.
- When possible, provide your children with opportunities to learn other sports so that they have a more balanced development.

OPERATING GUIDELINES

Registration

Registration for participation shall be coordinated and conducted by APR&CR. Under unusual circumstances, individuals may be added or deleted to/from the program at the discretion of APR&CR. This shall be done only after taking into consideration those involved and the impact on the league.

Scheduling

Schedules for all regular practices and games (including make-up games), shall be coordinated through APR&CR, based on field availability.

Pre-Season:

- Each team will be provided the same number of practice opportunities per week.
- Any additional practices from the original schedule must be cleared through APR&CR and player attendance should be optional. Players cannot have playing time reduced due to missing additional practices.

Regular-Season:

- Teams will be offered the opportunity to practice once per week, based on facility availability.
- Teams may request to move practices to open slots in the schedule or may trade practice slots with another team. All changes to the established practice schedule must be communicated to and approved by APR&CR.

Post-Season:

- Schedule permitting, a single-elimination tournament will be held for all divisions except the Rookies (5-6) and Pee Wee (7-8). These two divisions will be schedules one additional game for 9 total.

Player Assessments

To be organized and operated by APR&CR according to facility availability and weather.

Draft Procedures

To be organized and operated by APR&CR and the league coaches under the following guidelines:

1. Teams shall draft in reverse order of their finish in the previous season. Teams with no returning players shall be treated as a new team and will start at the top of the draft (see #2).
2. New teams added to the league and teams with no returning players shall be placed at the top of the draft order. These teams will be ranked based on number and age of option players
 - Teams with the fewest option players will draft first.
 - Coin flip will determine draft order of new teams with same number of option players.
3. All teams will be age balanced and have the same ratio of boys and girls (as close as possible, dependent on the make-up of the league).
4. Each team shall be permitted to keep returning players under the following conditions:
 - Options may be awarded to a coach and /or coach's child who has registered to participate. All options must be declared in writing prior to the draft. All options on the oldest age for the league will be protected through the second round. All options on the next oldest age will be protected through the third round. Sibling options will be protected in the last round. A team is allowed two option players.

Note: A team may not have more than two option players on its roster during a season. Any player designated an option player the previous year who returns to the same team will remain an option player.

5. Based on the total number of players needed to equalize the number on each team, each coach will draft until he reaches this number and then withdraw from the draft.
 - Exception: When a team reaches 6 players on their roster, that team must hold until all other teams reach 6 players. Note: Any team that returns 6 or more players will receive a first-round choice and then have to hold until all other teams have the same number of players.

- If any teams are short players after the draft, players will be assigned to the team at the discretion of APR&CR. Appointments shall be made per draft order and waiting list policy.
- If a player drops from a team prior to games beginning, APR&CR will attempt to replace that player from the established waiting list.

Length of Games

Age Division	Game Length	Time between quarters	Halftime Length
Rookies (5-6), Pee Wee (7-8) & Mites (9-10)	8-minute quarters	2 minutes	5 minutes
Major (11-12), Junior (13-14) & Senior (15-17)	24-minute halves	N/A	5 minutes

The official time is being kept on the field by the referees. The stopwatch that is kept by the timer is not the official game time.

Ties

1. Regular Season Games:

- Any regular season game that ends in a tie will remain a tie.
- League standings will be calculated as a win is worth 3 points and a tie is worth 1 point.

2. For purpose of the next year's draft:

- If team records are identical, the first tie breaker will be head-to-head competition. This will be followed by a coin flip if head-to-head results cannot be used.

3. Tournament Ties:

- Any tournament game that ends in a tie will play one additional quarter with a halfway break to change sides, (Major, Junior and Senior leagues will play 12 minutes). If at the end of this quarter the game is still tied, the teams will go to penalty kicks.

Penalty kicks will be handled in the following manner:

- Each team will shoot 5 kicks from the penalty mark.

- If the game is still tied after each team has taken 5 kicks from the penalty mark, each team will take one additional kick from the penalty mark until the tie is broken.

Cancellations/Inclement Weather/Make-up

In case of inclement weather, a decision will be made by APR&CR. Information may be obtained by calling (weekdays after 4pm, Saturdays after 8am, Sundays after 12pm):

INFORMATION HOTLINE: (919) 249-3348

Make-Up Games:

The department will reschedule games within 3 working days. Please contact us if you have not received your notification within this time period. If possible, games that are canceled due to weather or other conflicts approved by APR&CR will be made up. APR&CR reserves the right to designate which games will be made up. It is the responsibility of the coach to notify his/her players about the make-up date. APR&CR cannot be responsible for contacting players on an individual basis.

Regulation Game: Any game that is stopped at halftime or later will be counted as complete.

Field and Equipment

	Field Size	Goal Size	Ball Size	Players on Field (including Goalie)
Rookies (5-6)	40 yds x 30 yds	6' x 12'	Size 3	7
Pee Wee (7-8)	50 yds x 40 yds	6' x 12'	Size 4	8
Mites (9-10)	70 yds x 50 yds	7' x 21'	Size 4	8
Major (11-12)	80 yds x 55 yds	8' x 24'	Size 5	9
Junior (13-14)	120 yds x 55 yds	8' x 24'	Size 5	11
Senior (15-17)	120 yds x 55 yds	8' x' 24'	Size 5	11

Forfeit

A team will forfeit their game if they are unable to field two fewer player than allowed (example: 6 players (5 players and 1 goalkeeper) in the 8-player leagues). **This includes the fourth quarter when a team cannot field the minimum players because of participation time rule infraction.**

There will be **no grace period** given for any scheduled game.

Substitutions

1. Substitutes may be put into the game for any other player.
2. Players that are going into the game must report at the timers table. They should check-in with their backs turned so the timer can easily see their numbers. Also, please help them know which players are coming out of the game. All this will help in charting your players' time correctly.
3. Any player who has been taken out of the game for any reason other than disqualification may be allowed to re-enter the game any number of times.
4. Goalkeeper substitutions: The new goalkeeper must have all equipment on and ready to play before they enter the game. This is to prevent teams from stalling for time.

Note: Substitutions must be made at the half way point of each quarter for the Rookies (5-6), Pee Wee (7-8), and Mite (9-10) Leagues.

The clock will be stopped at the halfway point as play allows. All players on the bench must go in the game and stay throughout the rest of the quarter.

Exception: Injured players can be substituted for as necessary

Participation

It is the philosophy of APR&CR that the emphasis of youth recreation should be on participation and skill development rather than winning or losing. Given this statement of philosophy, the following guidelines will govern the Youth Soccer season.

- 1) **Minimum Playing Time:** Each child must play a minimum of 2 quarters per game. If they do not have their minimum minutes by the start of the 4th quarter (12-minute mark for Major, Junior & Senior leagues), **they must start** the 4th quarter and play at least until this rule is satisfied before they go off the field.

- 2) **Maximum Playing Time:** Each child can only play a maximum of 3 and a half quarters per game. At the start of the fourth quarter, (12-minute mark for Major, Junior & Senior leagues), if a player(s) has less than 8 minutes in the Rookies, Pee Wee, Mites Leagues or 12 minutes for the Major, Junior and Senior Leagues to reach the maximum, **they must sit out** at least until the number of minutes left in the quarter matches the number of minutes the player has before they reach the maximum level.

Example: At the start of the fourth quarter, a player has 5 minutes before he/she reaches the maximum playing time, that player will not be allowed in the game until there are 5 minutes left on the clock.

Exception: If a team does not have enough players present for everyone to sit out at least half a quarter, the maximum play rule does not apply.

Reminder: please try to rotate players and playing time. Do not get caught-up in the same rotation of players each and every game. This would cause the same players to have the minimum amount of time each game. Please do your best to play the players equal and let them play as many positions on the field as possible. Remember this is a recreational league that is set-up for the kids to have fun first.

Note: Substitutions must be made at the half way point of the first three quarters for the Rookies (5-6), Pee Wee (7-8), and Mite (9-10) Leagues. Maximum Play Rule will still apply.

The clock will be stopped at the half way point as play allows. All players on the bench must go in the game and stay throughout the rest of the quarter.

Exception: Injured player

- 3) When inclement weather or other circumstances cause the cancellation or postponement of a game, requirements 1 and 2 will be waived. However, if these games are made up, all requirements for participation will be in effect.

Note: Any game that is stopped due to inclement weather is considered official if two quarters are complete (halftime is reached). The final score is the score of the game when stopped.

- 4) Failure to comply with these participation rules shall result in forfeiture of the game in question.

- 5) Protests shall be the responsibility of the coach and must be submitted in writing to APR&CR by 12:00 noon the following workday.
- 6) It is recommended that a coach alternate his substitutes (those who start today should be a substitute next week and vice versa).

When ruling on a protest concerning participation, the coach's intent will be taken into consideration. It is possible circumstances may cause a player to not play the required time. The coach's intent is the determining factor in these situations.

Penalty: For failure to abide by the participation rules above (upheld participation protest), the following penalties shall apply to the head coach:

- 1st offense: suspension of one game
- 2nd offense: suspension for rest of season

Scoring

1. A goal shall be scored when the ball has been legally kicked or passed wholly between the goal posts and under the cross bar.
2. A goal may not be scored directly from a kickoff, or an indirect kick.

Officials

All referees shall be trained and approved by the Department or a contracted booking agent. The referee will have authority over the game and his/her decisions over goals scored, rules, etc. shall be final. Please respect their rights and work with them and the field supervisor to ensure a well-played game.

1. There will be one center official for all games. The Pee Wee, Mites, Major, Junior & Senior leagues will also have 2 sideline officials.
2. Referee(s) shall:
 - Make all decisions for infringement of the rules committed within or outside the boundary lines from the beginning of the game to the end.
 - See that all kickoffs, free kicks and penalty kicks are taken properly.

- Act as timekeeper and allow the full or agreed time, adding any time lost through injury or other causes at their discretion.
- Will caution or issue a yellow card to any player or coach guilty of misconduct or unsportsmanlike conduct. In such a case the referee shall give the name of the offender to the field supervisor who in turn will give a report of the incident to the Department.
- Will send off the field of play and issue a red card to any player or coach who is guilty of violent conduct, serious foul play, the use abusive language, or is guilty of a second cautionable offense in the same match.

The Game

1. Before the Game:

- Coaches shall participate in a coin toss to decide which team shall kickoff and selecting the goal which team is to defend.
- Coaches shall turn a line-up card to the timer before the game starts.
- At the beginning of the second half, teams shall change ends and attack the opposite goal.
- Goalkeepers must wear the jersey that does not match either team's jerseys.

2. Beginning of Game:

- Game shall start by an indirect kick from the center of the field in the direction of the opponent's goal.
- After a goal is scored, the team scored against shall kickoff.

3. Players / Goalkeepers Privileges:

- A player may dribble, volley, block, trap, or pass the ball. At no time may a player touch the ball with his/her hands.
- Goalkeeper's privileges within the penalty area:
 - Pick the ball up
 - Punt the ball
 - Drop kick the ball
 - Throw the ball
 - May not delay the game by holding the ball indefinitely
- Goalkeeper safety: when a goalkeeper comes out to make a play on the ball, the offensive player must be within playing distance of the ball to make an attempt on the ball. Otherwise, the offensive player must yield to the goalkeeper regardless of the

distance between the ball and the goalkeeper. (Note: this rule applies only if the goalkeeper has already made a move towards the ball, including bending to pick the ball up while standing. It does not apply if the goalkeeper is not attempting to save the ball.) If the player does not yield, he/she can be called for a dangerous play (indirect kick) and issued either a yellow or red card.

Note: This rule is in place for the safety of the players, it is however a rule that will be to the discretion of the referee if the play is fair and safe for all players involved.

4. Offsides

- A player is in an offside position when he/she is ahead of the ball while the ball is being played by a member of his/her team unless the following occurs:
 - Player is in their own half of the field
 - There are two opponents nearer their goal line than the player in question.
- Penalty for offsides: an indirect free kick shall be awarded at the spot where the foul occurred. A player will not be penalized for being offsides unless, in the referee's judgement, he/she is seeking an advantage or is denying the other team an advantage.

5. Goalie and Goal Kicks (Rookies (5-6) & Pee Wee (7-8) divisions only)

- Whenever the goalie gains possession of the ball or there is a goal kick, all players from the opposing team must retreat to behind midfield. This will give the team with the ball a chance to clear it away from their goal.

6. Fouls and Penalties

- A player shall not trip, kick, stroke, hold, push or jump at an opponent or use unnecessary roughness, or handle the ball.
- The referee may suspend any player or players from the game for unsportsmanlike conduct or unnecessary roughness. A player or players so disqualified may not re-enter the game. The team must play short one player the rest of the game if they have no substitute ready.
- A penalty kick shall be awarded if the foul is made by the defensive team in the penalty area.

7. Slide Tackle: Slide tackling is not allowed.

8. **HEADERS** – In an effort to protect young players against concussions, the following rule has been implemented, as recommended by the United States Club Soccer Federation:

- Players in the Rookie (5-6), Pee Wee (7-8), Mite (9-10), and Major (11-12) leagues shall not engage in heading, either in practice or games.
- If any player in the Rookie (5-6), Pee Wee (7-8), Mite (9-10), or Major (11-12) league intentionally heads the ball during a game, the play shall be considered a dangerous play and an indirect kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. If the deliberate header occurs within the penalty box, the indirect kick shall be taken at the nearest point outside of the penalty box.
- If a player intentionally heads the ball a second time, the player will be given a yellow card and sent off the field to review the play with his/her coach. A substitute player may be inserted in his/her place.

Sideline Area

- The only personnel permitted on the sidelines are:
 - Players
 - Head coach
 - 2 assistant coaches
- All sidelines should be cleaned by the team that occupied them at the end of the game. This is the responsibility of the head coach.
- Coaches must remain on the sideline when the game is in play.
Exception: To attend an injured player - head coach only, with the specific permission of the referee.

Conduct / Sportsmanship

- 1) No coach or player shall belittle or berate the players or coaches of another team. This type of action will not be tolerated.

First offense: Warning

Second offense: Ejection from game of offending person and/or head coach.

Penalty: Any time a player, coach or spectator is ejected by an official or APR&CR staff member, they must leave the playing site immediately. That person shall be automatically suspended for a minimum of the next game the team plays in. More games can be added to the suspension at the determination of the Department. A suspended coach or parent may not be present at the playing site for the game(s) in which they are suspended. Failure to abide by this will result in further disciplinary action. A suspended player may be allowed to attend the game to support their teammates, at the discretion of the Department. Game suspensions may apply to regular season games, tournament play, and may, at the discretion of the Department, be carried over to the next season the player or coach registers for.

- 2) Harassment of officials and field supervisors will not be tolerated. Questions should be asked by the Head Coach only and done so calmly about rule interpretations only. Judgment calls are not to be argued. Failure to comply with this rule will result in immediate ejection of the guilty party and possible forfeiture of the game. **No warnings will be given.**
- 3) Coaches are accountable for the behavior of their assistant coaches, players, parents, and related supporters. Game officials may penalize the coach per above for any unsportsmanlike conduct.
- 4) Players will be allowed to cheer for their own team and not jeer the other. This includes songs, cheers, etc.
- 5) Consumption of tobacco products (including e-cigarettes) or alcohol is prohibited in the vicinity of any Town-sponsored athletic event, including on the field, the sidelines, and in the bleachers.

Reminder: The purpose of this program is to teach soccer, have fun, and learn sportsmanship. Players look to their coaches as role models and the things players see you do leave lasting impressions as they continue to play the game in later years. We're all human, and as such we all make mistakes including referees, coaches and parents. It's the kids' games so let them be the ones that benefit most!

Protests

The following procedure shall be used for all protests involving APR&CR Youth Soccer league.

- 1) Protests will be allowed for rule misapplication only. No discussion will be permitted concerning judgment calls or the referee's integrity.
- 2) Protest must be noted by the field supervisor before the coach leaves the field.
- 3) All protests must be submitted in writing to APR&CR by 12:00noon the next working day. All protests should include:
 - A brief description of the play involved and the ruling that was made.
 - A rule reference (page and statement) detailing what ruling should have been made.

- A \$25 protest fee will be returned if the protest is upheld. If the protest is declined, this money will be set aside to buy equipment for the league.
- 4) Protests will be ruled on by the Program Supervisor.
 - 5) Notification of protest ruling will be given within one week after submission.
 - 6) APR&CR reserves the right to deny completion of protested game if it has no bearing on league standings or is not in the best interest of the league.

Uniform

APR&CR will issue each player of each team a uniform. The uniform will consist of a game jersey. Each player must wear this jersey, unaltered, to each game. Each coach will be given extra shirts, for emergency fill-ins. Shirts must be tucked in during play. APR&CR Staff will make final determination of a player's eligibility to play.

Note: altered uniform is when a player defaces the shirt in any way.

Examples: cutting sleeves or adding name to game jersey.

Coaches are responsible to make sure that every player is wearing an official uniform that will satisfy this rule.

Players must wear and provide themselves: shorts, shin guards and shoes. **No player will be allowed to participate in a practice or game without shin guards.**

Jewelry / Equipment

No jewelry allowed once play has begun. The referee may ask that a player take off all jewelry. Also, by rule they may ask a player with glasses to wear a protective strap while they are playing. Players with earrings will have to either take the earrings out or wear tape over them to be able to play.

- Note: Taping over earrings is only acceptable in the case of new earrings and must be approved by the referee and Field Supervisor.
- Hair adornments, including beads, may be worn by players, provided they are secured in a bun and do not present a safety hazard to the player, teammates or opponents.

Also allowed are:

- Head bands no wider than 2 inches and made of nonabrasive unadorned single-colored cloth, fiber, soft leather or rubber may be worn.
- Head wear worn for religious reasons that is not deemed dangerous to the player or surrounding players
- Rubber (elastic) bands may be used to control hair.

The referee shall not permit any player to wear equipment in their judgment, is dangerous or confusing to other players. This includes, but not limited to, items such as:

- A guard, cast or brace made of hard or unyielding materials when worn on the elbow, hand, finger, wrist or forearm. **Note: any player wearing a hard cast will not be permitted to play, no exceptions, no wrapping with padding.**
- Equipment which is unnatural and designed to increase a player's height or reach or to gain an advantage.