

NH Sportsplex's Youth Recreational Soccer Rule Book

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*The following rules relate to all leagues play within NH Sportsplex soccer leagues. Anything not found in the following pages default to the IFAB Laws of the Game. We are always open to suggestions, changes, additions, omissions, or requests, and will consider any communications on the rules so long as it's consistent with our core values and the Laws of the Game. *

Players, Coaches, and Substitutes

- 7v7 Games: A team will field not more than seven players at a time (six field players and one goalkeeper).
- 8v8 Games: A team will field not more than eight players at a time (seven field players and one goalkeeper).
- 6v6 Games: A team will field not more than six players at a time (five field players and one goalkeeper).
- Teams must have a minimum of five players for all 6v6 games, minimum of six players to start or continue a game for all 7v7 matches and a minimum of seven players to start or continue a game for all 8v8 matches.
 - Failure to do so will result in a forfeiture, with a 4-0 score.
 - A team may continue to play a game if they fail to show up with the minimum number of players or by dropping below the minimum number of players required.
- The two teams may agree to a forfeit and a “friendly” match will be played.
- The two teams may agree to play “down” against each other for a complete match (6v6 for example) that will be recorded.
 - The opposing team is not required to agree to this option.
- In divisions labelled as Coed each team must always have a minimum two female players on the field for 6v6 matches and 7v7 matches, and a minimum of three female players on the field always for 8v8 matches. A team unable to fulfill this requirement will play short a player for each missing female.
- A team that starts a game with less than six players may start with one female in 6v6, or two females for 7v7 and 8v8 games.
 - EXCEPTION: Divisions that are “male” with “female” teams participating or vice versa, this is not a requirement.

- EXCEPTION: Youth U12 and below are allowed all male, all female, or any mix of players.
- Substitutions for players in all positions are unlimited and are made at ANY natural stoppage. Either team may substitute regardless of who has possession.
- Substitutes must be at the halfway line to be allowed entry into the field of play.
- Each team's roster will be limited to 12 players for 6v6 , 7v7 teams, and 14 players for 8v8 teams. Players are allowed to be rostered on multiple teams, so long as the following guidelines are met:
 - A player does not play on two teams in the same game.
 - A player chooses a "primary" team in each age group. This will be the ONLY team the player will be allowed to compete on in a playoff scenario.
 - Players may NEVER play for a team if they are not rostered.
- Allowed Bench Personnel: The following persons are allowed on the "player" side of the field during a match:
 - Any/all players that are rostered on the team.
 - A maximum of three rostered coaches and/or managers:
- It is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that any adult coach and/or manager possess an approved background check and or SafeSport Certification or equivalent to be on the player's side of the field.
- At least one coach must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
 - It shall be the coaches' responsibility to ensure that all players are properly dressed and equipped, to control the actions of all players on and off the field, and to assist the official in always controlling the match.
 - Coaches, or anyone representing a team as the "responsible party" are required to sign a "coach code of conduct" prior to stepping on the field for their first game.
 - Persons coaching multiple teams only need one on file per person.
- Any coach or manager who is reported to be verbally or physically abusive anywhere on the property shall immediately receive an indefinite suspension from the league. Re-instatement will only be considered upon request to NH Sportsplex management, and a possible in-person meeting to discuss the incident.
 - Incidents may be forwarded to the state association, national center for SafeSport, or local authorities for further review and possible disciplinary action.
 - Persistent arguing of calls will be considered verbal misconduct and are grounds for removal.
 - Communication perceived as negative towards your players or opposing players will be considered grounds for removal.

Player Equipment

- Head bands with metal or plastic, unyielding braces, or anything deemed unsafe for players and their opponents shall be disallowed, Casts are permitted if they are fully covered with soft padding and deemed safe by the officials.
- Watches may only be kept on if they are covered with a protective wrist band and the watch is fully covered.
- All members of the same team should be wearing the same uniform color except for the goalkeeper who is required to be wearing an easily distinguished different uniform/color.

- Players with discipline will be asked for name verification and cross reference on the roster.
 - Players not listed could lead to forfeits.
- In the event opposing teams clash in color, it will be the home team's responsibility to change colors.
 - If neither team can change colors, pinnies will be provided upon request.
- Shin guards are mandatory at every level.
- No jewelry is allowed, although medical tags are acceptable.
- Outdoor cleats, indoor shoes ("flats"), turf shoes, and sneakers are permitted. Baseball cleats and any shoe with metal studs are not allowed on the turf.

Start of Play

- A. The guest team (listed second on the schedule) will take the opening kick-off. The home team (listed first on the schedule) will take second half kickoff.
- The team who did not kick off in the first half will kick off in the second half.
- At the beginning of the game, the referee will signal for the game to start, and one player will take the kickoff.
- The kicker shall not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player.
 - The penalty shall be an indirect free kick from the point of infraction.
 - The ball may travel forward or backward at the start of a play.

Duration of Regular Season Game

- A full game will consist of two 25-minute periods, with a running clock. To remain on time, the clock will not stop for any reason.
- Half time will be between 2-3 minutes in length, as determined by the referee, guided by the need to end, and start games on time.
- Games will start at the scheduled times.
 - Teams failing to show, or teams who are late for a scheduled match, will receive a forfeiture of the game with a 4-0 score.
 - In this case, teams may intermix rostered players from the same league and use the referee, if desired, for a "friendly" match.

Ball in and Out of Play

- These rules apply to both teams if the game is only held in the front building.
- The ball is out of play when the ball has fully crossed outside of the touchline or endline. For balls out of bounds on the sides, it will be a throw in. For balls out of bounds on the end line, it will be a corner kick on the appropriate side or a goal kick, where the ball may be placed anywhere on the goal box line.

- **GOAL KICKS:** the defending team may not enter the penalty area until the ball is played. The attacking team may receive a pass in the penalty area.
- For YOUTH 6v6 games (u8 & u10), the defending team must retreat to the midfield line and may not enter the opponents defensive end until the first pass is made.
- Re-starts for all goalie violations will be on the nearest spot at the top of the penalty area and will be indirect, (or direct Penalty Kick when warranted).
- The kicker shall not touch the ball a second time until it has been touched by another player. The result is an indirect free kick for the opponent.
- Play stops when the ball hits off the referee unless, at the discretion of the referee, there is an advantage to the team in possession. Restart will be a drop ball for the team in possession at the spot of the contact without opposition from the other team.

Methods of Scoring

- A goal is scored when the entire ball has crossed the goal line prior to the final whistle.
- A goal cannot be scored directly from kickoff.

Goalkeeper Restrictions

- Goalie throws may be thrown at any distance. A goalie throwing directly into the opponents' goal without touching another player will be restarted as a goal kick.
- The goalie may not dropkick or punt the ball.
 - After playing the ball with his/her hands in the box, the goalie may immediately play the ball with his/her feet only after the ball is no longer bouncing.
- The goalie will have a maximum of 6 seconds to place the ball on the floor or distribute the ball after having it in his/her hands.
- The goalie may not play the ball with his/her hands when intentionally passed back by a teammate's foot.
 - The result will be an indirect free kick to the opposing team at the top of the penalty box, closest to where the goalkeeper picked up the ball.
- The goalie may dribble the ball into the box from outside the penalty area, and then pick the ball up.

Fouls and Misconduct

- All fouls and misconduct will follow standard practices concurrent with the IFAB Laws of the Game, unless otherwise stated.

- Intentionally heading the ball shall only be allowed in age groups U-12 and older. For age groups younger than U-12, a “foul” will be assessed to a player who has intentional contact with the ball with any part of the head.
 - The restart will be an indirect free kick awarded to the non-offending team.
- Yellow Cards: are given according to the IFAB Laws of the Game. Anyone receiving a yellow card will receive a 2-minute penalty where the offending team will play a player down. Player may re-enter the pitch under the following conditions:
 - The opposing team scores a goal during the two minutes.
 - The two minutes are up (referee will invite player or substitute for the player back onto the pitch).
 - Spitting on the field is a yellow card offense.
 - A yellow card may also be issued to a coach. A team whose coach has been issued a yellow card must designate a player to serve the penalty and play down for the 2- minute penalty.
 - If a coach delays pulling a player off, the referee will select a player to serve to avoid timewasting.
- Goalies must serve their own penalties.
- **PLAYER’S MAY NOT GO TO THE GROUND AT ANY TIME. SLIDING/SLIDE TACKLING IS NOT ALLOWED. A YELLOW CARD WILL BE ISSUED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE REFEREE.**
 - **EXCEPTION:** A goalkeeper may slide out hands first while in the box to make a save.
- Red Cards: are given according to the IFAB Laws of the Game. Anyone receiving a red card will result in a 5-minute penalty served by the offending player’s team. Player receiving the red card may not re-enter the match. The team may play back to “full strength” only after the five minutes have been served, but not after a goal has been scored. **ALL 5-MINUTE PENALTIES MUST BE FULLY SERVED.**
 - A red card may also be issued to the coach. A team whose coach has been issued a red card must designate a player to serve the penalty and play down for the 5-minute penalty.
 - The coach will need to leave the facility and will be suspended automatically for the remainder of the session.
- Any player receiving two (2) red cards in one session will be suspended from participation in any league the player is playing in for the remainder of the session at a minimum.
 - Any red card received in the game immediately prior to the start of playoffs will result in that player being ineligible for any playoff games in any division that the player is participating in.
 - Players who are issued a red card must leave the playing area immediately. They will be permitted to remain within the facility only if their actions and behavior are no longer disruptive or inappropriate as determined by NH Sportsplex officials and staff.
 - All red cards are subject to further suspensions (a minimum of 1 game, which applies to all leagues, age groups and divisions in which a red-carded player participates). The offending player or coach’s team must play short-handed for a full 5-minute penalty.
- Any coach or spectator who enters the field during an altercation on the field will automatically be ejected, removed from the facility, and will be suspended for the remainder of the session for all teams they are a part of.
 - A person guilty of fighting a 2nd time will be suspended for a minimum of the remainder of the season.
- The completion of a late first-half penalty must be served at the start of the 2nd half.

- Any team intentionally providing inaccurate information about the carded player's name will face additional disciplinary action.
- The referee will log each card in the scorebook and will inform the manager on duty about any red cards prior to leaving the building.
- NH Sportsplex Management reserves the right to expel/dismiss teams from participation.
 - This decision will be based upon individual issues and circumstances.
 - Coaches will be informed when their team is on a probationary status. This may be done by letter, telephone call, email, and/or a meeting with the coach or coaches. It shall be the coach's responsibility to convey all information relevant to the probation to the players' parents and anyone else who may be associated with the team.
- Refunds of the league fee, whether complete or partial, will not be given to the team or to individual players in the event of the expulsion/dismissal from league play.

Penalty Kicks

- A penalty kick issued by the referee must be taken even if time has expired.
- All penalty kick rules are consistent with the IFAB Laws of the Game.

Playoffs

PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE NO PLAYOFFS IN THE YOUNGER YOUTH DIVISIONS (U8 & U10)

- Unless otherwise communicated by the league, the second to final week of the session will consist of a preliminary semi-final game.
 - Every team will participate in at least one playoff game, whether that be a semi-final or championship game.
- Unless otherwise communicated by the league, the final week of a session will consist of a full championship game. All other teams in the division will play a consolation game in their final game of the session.
- If the score is tied at the end of regulation in a knockout game (Championship or Semi-Final where stated), the result will go straight to kicks from the spot (shootout). A shootout will break the tie.
 - Shoot-out: Teams must declare to the referee and clearly define who will be the THREE penalty takers for each team.
 - Players do not need to be on the field at the end of regulation to be eligible to take a kick.
 - The winner of a coin toss will choose to shoot first or second.
 - The official will be given an ordered list of the shooters by each team, which will include both the shooters' names and jersey numbers.
 - Shooters will gather at mid-field; goalies will wait near the corners away from sightlines of the shooter.

- Teams will alternate kickers only until such time as a win is clearly defined. (Note that all kickers might not need to kick, depending on previous results.)
 - If the score is still tied at the conclusion of 3 kicks per team, a sudden death shootout begins.
 - The 4th person from each team are the first 2 shooters in the sudden death shootout. If the score is still tied, this is repeated until such time as a winner can be declared or until at least one bench is emptied.
 - If every player from one team has shot and the other team still has players on the bench, it is that team's choice as to whether all the remaining players will be exhausted before players shoot a 2nd time. A team may elect to have every player shoot.
- Consolation games that end in a tie will be recorded as a tie.

Additional “House” Rules

- THERE ARE NO OFFSIDES
 - EXCEPTION: Offside will be called in youth games (U12-HS) according to the Laws of the Game.
- Teams may not enter the facility until 15 minutes prior to the scheduled kickoff.
- If a team goes up by 5 goals, the team that is allowed is permitted to add an additional player onto the pitch. If the team that is behind scores a goal to go back to -4, that team must take off the extra player.
- 11v11 matches, players must be 10 yards away from an opponent for all free kicks. For all 9v9 and 6v6 matches, players must be five yards away from an opponent for all free kicks (walls).
- Every ball over the touchline (sideline) will be a throw in.
- Size four balls will be used for U12 divisions and below. Size five balls will be used for all divisions above U12.
- No vaping, smoking, chewing tobacco, or like products are permitted on the premises.
- No pets allowed inside on the turf surfaces.
- Official time will be kept by the referee, no stoppage time will be added.
- If teams are not ready to kickoff at the start of the scheduled time, the referee will announce that the game is starting and will start the clock.
- If the ball hits the ceiling above the plane where it is still considered “in-play”, the result will be an indirect free kick directly below the location where the ball struck the ceiling.
- Tiebreakers for seeding:
 - Points (3 points for a win, 1 for a tie, zero for a loss)
 - Head-to-head (three teams or more, this will not apply)
 - Goal differential (maximum of four per game)
 - Goals allowed
 - Shutouts
 - Coin Flip

Weather Alerts / Cancelled Games / Inclement Weather

- Unless otherwise stated, games will be played in NH Sportsplex. All games will be expected to be played. If the facility chooses to close, NH Sportsplex staff and administration will notify all teams of the facility closure. In these circumstances, every effort will be made to make up games but are not guaranteed.
- Teams choosing not to show up for the scheduled game time must notify NH Sportsplex Management of Staff immediately.
- If a team notifies NH Sportsplex, they will not be attending a scheduled match, the receiving team may still use the space for team training, etc. **THESE GAMES WILL NOT BE MADE UP.**

NH Sportsplex League Culture

- The following rules apply to all league games in all offered sports, at all ages. They are simple to follow:
 - Spectators are not allowed to talk to any referees or officials during gametime.
 - Cheering is okay, and encouraged!
- Coaches are not allowed to argue with officials, argue with opposing coaches, or scream at their players, period.
- Players are not allowed to argue with the referees.
- Anyone not willing to adhere to these simple rules will be asked to leave by the NH Sportsplex staff.
- Requested referee diffusion procedures to coaches and players only:
 - 1. Please remind the player or coach of the league rules and expectations
 - 2. Issue a yellow card
 - 3. Issue a dismissal if needed
- Please note, at the discretion of the referee – cards can be issued immediately, especially with youth referees afraid to confront an adult coach.
- What to expect from the NH Sportsplex staff if you are an unruly spectator:
 - 1. A request to remain quiet and reminder of the league rules
 - 2. A request to leave the facility
- Please note that – at the discretion of the league staff – a spectator may be asked to leave without warning. We are actively working on changing the culture of youth sports. Please be helpful in supporting this environment.