

U6 GUIDELINES

(These are specific to our region – AYSO National differs)

Just a few points for coaches, referees & parents to remember, especially for those who have experience in other divisions, as to how U6 differs from soccer's Laws of the Game. The games are intended to be an opportunity for the very youngest of our players to experience the fun of playing. The barest of minimum rules are needed and should be applied with a generous amount of flexibility.

1. **Duration of game** is twenty minutes and is played in 2 ten-minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes. Play should be stopped at a normal stoppage in play for the substitution break. Due to lack of substitutes or hot weather, the referees may use their discretion to allow for a short break for players to get a drink.

2. **Throw-ins:** When the ball goes out of play, in U6 games, across the touch lines (sidelines), a throw-in is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn't touch it last. In U6 games, whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go! Proper technique can be taught at practice later by the coach. Again, let them play. Referees should give quick explanations when necessary and minimize interruptions. Keep the game moving and fun.

3. **Fouls and Other Stoppages:** Deliberate fouling should be rare in U6 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U6 games. If a player is "not playing well with others" or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing plane or butterfly), the Referee should refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or throw-in as appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it or flip a coin to decide but do not make it a lengthy ceremony. Exercise common sense. The Referee should briefly explain infractions and stand back and let 'em play.

4. **Free Kicks:** Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in U6 games. A player may pick the ball up and start running with it or want to keep it away from the other players or perhaps there is a pile of kids on the ground kicking at both the ball and each other. The Referee should stop play and correct the situation, then restart with a free kick for a deserving player. All free kicks in U6 games are direct free kicks, which means, if you're lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick. There are no penalty kicks (in which only one player defends the goal – the whole team is always there).

5. **Distance from Ball:** Players should be asked to stand back roughly 5 yards from the ball being kicked (for free kicks, goal kicks, kick-offs, etc.) to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent.

6. **Offside** should never be called. It is too complicated for U6 players.

7. **Playing time:** 3/4 rule applies to all players on the team (no one plays the entire game unless everyone else has played 3 quarters). Unlike other AYSO

divisions, U-6 division referees do not record player participation on game cards and will not know who plays or does not. It is the responsibility of coaches to make sure that everyone plays.

8. **A goal**, as in all age group games, is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone; but in U6 games, they are not recorded to determine who wins. Everyone wins in U6 games. The no slaughter rule still applies, however (leading team must pull back to keep score within 5 goals).

9. **Play is 5 vs. 5 with no goalkeepers**. If the opposing team has less than 5 players then you have to play down (play the same number of players). However, there should never be more than 2 subs. Coaches are encouraged to “lend” players to the opposing team to field the proper number of players. Do not play more than 5 v 5. (See AYSO’s *philosophy on short-sided games & the benefit to the players.*)

OTHER NOTES/COMMENTS:

Referees: There is no need for fully qualified referees to manage U-6 games. One or both of the coaches should “officiate”. The games are intended to be an opportunity for the very youngest of our players to experience the fun of playing. The barest of minimum rules are needed and should be applied with a generous amount of flexibility. Let the players have the freedom to play with minimum interruption.

You may be fortunate and have a referee available to officiate the game:

Referees should briefly explain any infringements to ALL the players and help players with instructions. They are the teachers on the field – they should encourage proper play and sporting behavior. Every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

Referees must be registered AYSO volunteers (*meaning completion of safe haven and eAYSO volunteer background check*). Assistant Referees work each sideline and assist the Center Referee with calling the ball in and out of play. The home team should provide the 3 referees. If someone is absent, they can recruit an Assistant Referee from the visiting team. In a pinch, uncertified parents may serve as Assistant Referees. This is a great opportunity for parents to get involved.

You have your field for 1 hour – on the hour. If you start late, or take a long half-time break, please make-up that time somehow so you still end on time as a courtesy to all the parents who have games after you. As the official timekeepers, this is the Referee’s responsibility. However, if the Referee feels s/he has too much going on to keep track of time, select someone to be the timekeeper.

Spectators from each team should be on opposite sides of the field. Spectators must stand/sit at least 1 yard away from the touchlines – Have the coaches &

assistant referees encourage this. Team Managers should help ensure proper sideline etiquette.

Ball Size is size 3.

Players' equipment: Footwear: Soccer shoes, tennis shoes or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

Shin guards are MANDATORY and must be covered entirely by socks. Shin guards go against bare skin and socks go over the shin guards.

Coin toss: The "Home team" makes the call; either "heads or tails" in the air. If the call is correct the home team decides what end they will defend. If the call is incorrect then the "Visiting team" decides what end they will defend. Losing the coin toss means you kick off first. Coaches should prepare their captains on what end to choose to defend first.

Field Set-Up is the responsibility of all the teams with the first game. Please arrive early to complete this task in time for the players to practice with the goals. Each field has 2 goals & nets, plus 4 flags – 4 on each of the corners. Additionally, the Kids Zone sign (if available) needs to be placed in a visible location.

Field Take-Down is the responsibility of the teams with the last game on that field.

Sometimes, one field may end earlier than another, so be sure to check if yours is the last game for that field. All field equipment needs to be returned to the storage room, along with the Kids Zone sign. Please also pick-up any trash or recycling.

Thanks for your help and cooperation in making this an enjoyable experience for all the children!

Questions & Answers for U6

Q. What happens when an offensive person carries the ball into the goal box? Can a defender enter the box to defend?

A. Yes, the defender can and should defend as long as they are chasing an offensive player into the box. The goal box intention is to prevent players from "camping out" in front of the goal and therefore de facto acting as a goal keeper.

Q. What if a player doesn't throw the ball in correctly on the first try?

A. Players are still trying to learn this skill. To that end, if the first try doesn't follow the rules, e.g. both feet on the ground, two hands, overhead, etc. give the player one redo or second try. If it is still a miss throw, don't whistle the play, let the play flow for the first half of the season otherwise there will be more whistles than play. (Practice throw ins as necessary the following week at practice.) Beginning game six, second half of the season, there should

be no more redo's and an improper throw in should result in a change of possession with the other team throwing the ball in.

Q. Are there goal kicks and corner kicks at this age group?

A. Yes, we are really trying to introduce many concepts that make sense to younger players as to how the game is played at all age levels. Unlike throw ins, there should be no redo's for corner kicks. There is a redo for goal kicks only when the ball is not kicked out of the penalty area. That redo is necessary because it is an infringement to the rules.

Q. What happens if one team is far more skilled and the scoring is getting out of hand?

A. History tells us this could very well happen. If there is a five goal differential, the coach of the team that is ahead should take immediate measures to STOP further scoring until the gap closes under five goals. Some suggestions to accomplish this: put your strongest players in the back, not up front in a better scoring location; score only after there has been 3-4 passes linked together before shooting; dribble and shoot only with the weaker foot - generally the left foot; take a player off the field and play a man down is acceptable **but not encouraged and only as an absolute last resort as it takes a player out of what he is there to do - PLAY and HAVE FUN**; this is really a last resort. Teams that are down 6-0, 8-0 are not having fun. Remember we are all volunteers for our children. Scores and winning at this age is not important. Participating, learning and having fun is the objective.

Q. Who provides referees and who is the official timekeeper?

A. The HOME TEAM shall provide the referee (sometimes the coach) and the referee shall also be the OFFICIAL timekeeper.

Q. How many coaches can be on the field at once?

A. Each team is allowed only one coach on the field at a time. A coach is permitted to referee and coach at the same time if he/she is the home team (the preferred way would be to have two different people so each can focus on just a single responsibility). If the home team coach decides the assistant will referee so the head coach can coach on the field, then the assistant coach must act solely as referee and not another coach. Remember only one coach on the field at a time. Beginning game six, the second half of the season, coaches will be asked to move and coach from the sideline. They will no longer be allowed to coach being on the field.

Q. With this tight timeline, how can the kids enjoy the after game snack and celebration?

A. This is still a really important aspect of soccer that the kids anticipate and enjoy. Snack time, encouraging comments from game should be enjoyed, simply move away from the immediate playing and spectator areas to be considerate of the next team's game.

Q. To make it easier to break down after games maybe we should just go behind the goal to watch and be out of the way?

A. Players, coaches and parents are not allowed to gather behind the goals. This is very distracting to the ongoing game.

Q. Our game was later in the day and there were old bottles left from previous games. How can we address that situation?

Ultimately it is the coaches' responsibility to be sure the field is free of trash and bottles. It is suggested that the parent who is responsible for snacks that game day, also bring a trash bag so all trash is picked up and disposed of properly before the next game.

Q. I noticed in some games kids were back "playing goal". I thought there were no goal keepers?

A. It is understandable that players want to come back and get in front of the goal to defend. It wouldn't be the first time that a player got distracted, is day dreaming and simply camped out right in front of the goal.

The solution: Defenders are NOT allowed to camp out in the "immediate goal area" (area lined on the field). Defenders are NOT allowed to go into that area unless the ball has entered. Once that has happened they are free and encouraged to enter that area and defend their goal.

Q. Can you give us some guidance as to on field coaching during the game vs. just letting the kids play?

A. There probably is some room left for interpretation, but here is our recommendation to you. Example: delaying the game for 30-45 seconds so that the team is coached and perfectly lined up for a throw, a goal kick and center off etc. **is not a good idea.** More general coaching during the game that takes a few seconds is more appropriate: try not to kick with your toe, score at this end, pass to teammate, remember to stay out of the defensive goal, your turn to throw in or take the goal kick, etc. The barest minimum of rules should be used with a generous amount of flexibility. Try to keep interruptions to the minimum so the players have the freedom for continuous play. Practice is more the time for rules, technique and coaching. **Game time is for pleasure and play expressing what they have learned during practice week.**

Q. Are there "penalty kicks" at this age group if a player handles the ball?

A. At this age group and especially without goal keepers, there are NO penalty kicks. If a foul occurs, place the ball parallel to the infringement outside the penalty box and continue with a direct free kick. Defending players should be at least ten yards behind the ball but not into the goal box.