

8U Guidelines

The Ball: A size 3 ball is used for 8U games.

The Players:

- **No goalkeepers.**
- **Substitutions:** Between periods, at halftime and for injuries.
- **Playing Time:** Minimum of two periods per game and no player should play four periods until everyone has played three.
- **Teams:** Separate girls and boys teams should be promoted at all levels of play.

Player Equipment:

Shoes and shin guards (covered by the socks), are mandatory at all practice and games.

Duration of Game: Four 10-minute periods. Halftime break of 5 minutes.

The Start of Play:

The game should be started with a kick-off in the middle of the field.

The Kick-off:

Opponents must be eight yards from the center mark while kick-off is in progress.

Ball In and Out of Play:

The ball is out of play in all age group games when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line), either on the ground or in the air.

Method of Scoring: A goal is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal.

Fouls:

The following, if done deliberately, are the fouls most likely to occur in 8U games: kicking, tripping, pushing, holding, handling the ball, and dangerous play. Players at this age often kick one another as they yet to possess total coordination. Officials must remember that there is no need to stop play for technical violations that do not interrupt the flow of the game. Keep the fun going and let them play. Explain how to play better; never shame. However, some players may need a 'time out,' and coaches must be aware and work cooperatively with each other.

Free Kicks:

All free kicks are indirect kicks. The ball must touch another player before a goal is scored. No scores are allowed if the ball goes into the goal directly from a free kick. Opponents must be at least ten feet from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks. Free kicks awarded to

the attacking team inside the defending teams goal area are to be taken from the nearest point on the goal area line parallel to the goal line.

Offside: No offside.

Throw-In: Opponents should be ten feet from the ball.

Goal Kick:

A goal kick is awarded to the opposing team when the attacking team touches the ball last before it crosses the goal line. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area. The opposing team must be at least ten feet away from the ball when the goal kick is taken and must clear the penalty area.

Corner Kick:

A corner kick is awarded to the opposing team when the defending team touches the ball last before it crosses the goal line. The opposing team must be at least ten feet from the ball when the corner kick is taken.

Hand Ball:

A hand ball infraction occurs when a player handles the ball deliberately. The 'hand' includes the entire arm up to the top of the shoulder. Instinctive, self-protective reactions are not penalized at this young age. Accidental contact (ball striking hand or arm with no intent by the player) is not an offense and should not be penalized.

No Heading:

Consistent with the US Soccer mandates on heading the ball, heading is banned for all divisions 12U and below in both practices and matches. Any heading results in an indirect kick for the opposing team.

Pushing or Shoving:

Pushing fouls can potentially become problematic. The criteria for a foul remains the same regardless of the age level. An offense becomes a foul when it is committed in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless, or using excessive force. Players may touch other players, and are allowed to feel around them to know where other players are. Older players often run with their arms outstretched. This is acceptable, so long as they do not shove or push off. Often, a gentle reminder that pushing is dangerous is all that is needed.

8U Officials:

Officials should briefly explain any infringements to the player(s) and encourage proper play and sporting behavior. As with all games, every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from stoppages for doubtful infractions. Let them play and enjoy.

Assistant Referees/Club Linesmen:

Untrained volunteers who may be affiliated with one of the teams may be recruited to assist the referee with calling the ball in and out of play only. This is an opportunity for parents to get involved.