



U12 GUIDELINES

(These meet AYSO National's U12 Guidelines – and exceed it some areas.)
Revised November 14, 2008

Just a few points for coaches, referees & parents to remember, especially for those who have experience in other divisions, as to how U12 sometimes differs from the standard *Laws of the Game*. When not mentioned here, the standard *Laws of the Game* applies.

1. **Duration of game** is sixty minutes and is played in 2 thirty-minute halves with substitutions allowed approximately 15 minutes into each half. Play should be stopped during a normal stoppage in play. Be aware that the game clock does not stop during substitution breaks. Coaches should keep their players on the pitch and be prepared in advance to make substitutions quickly and efficiently. While it is fine for players to get a drink during substitution breaks, this is not half-time: snacks should not be handed out at this time. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes. Due to lack of substitutes or hot weather, the referees may use their discretion to allow for a short break at any time during the game for players to get a drink.
2. **Goal kicks** are taken from the goal area. Standard rules apply.
3. **Throw-Ins:** Second chances are not given for improper throw-ins for U12 players. An improper throw-in results in a throw-in for the opposing team. The referee must judge if indeed the throw-in violated the spirit of the Throw-in Law or if the violation was trifling and not worthy of stopping play. Keep the game moving and minimize unnecessary interruptions.
4. **Fouls:** Referees should not stop play for trifling violations. It's a player's game so keep the fun going and let them play. But always stop for safety.
5. **Misconduct:** This is a term used in the *Laws of the Game* to cover behavior that is in serious conflict with the spirit of the game and good sportsmanship. Acts that are considered misconduct are specified in Law 12 and are also classified in two groups: those for which a player is *Cautioned* and those for which a player is *Sent Off* (required to leave the field and prevented from further participation in the match).
 - a. A player is *cautioned* and shown the yellow card if s/he commits any of the following seven offenses:
 - i. Is guilty of unsporting behavior
 - ii. Shows dissent by word or action
 - iii. Persistently infringes the *Laws of the Game*
 - iv. Delays the restart of play

- v. Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick, or throw-in
 - vi. Enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission
 - vii. Leaves the field of play without the referee's permission
- b. A player is *sent off* and shown the red card if s/he commits any of the following seven offenses:
- i. Is guilty of serious foul play
 - ii. Is guilty of violent conduct
 - iii. Spits at an opponent or any other person
 - iv. Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area)
 - v. Denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
 - vi. Uses offensive, insulting, or abusive language and/or gestures
 - vii. Receives a second caution in the same match

In AYSO, red and yellow cards are not used in the U6, U8, or U10 divisions. We do issue cautions and send-offs in U12. That being said, in Region 20, we are in accord with this statement by AYSO in "Guidance to Coaches and Referees": *Children who are under 12 years of age should not be formally cautioned or sent off unless there are exceptional circumstances. Referees should consider whether children in this age group are fully aware of their actions and should consult and work with the coach to get the desired behavior. Young players can usually be controlled by a verbal admonishment, thus avoiding the need to display the cards.*

Although the Laws of the Game require that "a player who has been sent off must leave the vicinity of the field of play and the technical area," youth players who are sent off must be allowed to remain on the sideline, under the control of their coach.

- 6. **Distance from Ball:** Players need to stand back approximately 10 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.
- 7. **Offside** – standard rules apply.
- 8. **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). No one should play goalkeeper for more than two quarters.
- 9. **Score** is publicly acknowledged in U12. No slaughter rule applies (leading team must pull back to keep score within 5 goals). Penalties will be assessed to teams violating this policy.

- 10. Play 11 vs. 11 with goalkeepers.** If the opposing team has fewer than 11 players then you may, at your option, choose to play down (play the same number of players). However, there should never be more than 3 subs. If a team does not have a minimum of 7 players at the start of the game (allowing a 5 minute grace period) or does not maintain a minimum of 7 players, then it will forfeit the game. A 0-1 forfeit loss will be assigned to the forfeiting team. Once the decision is made regarding the official outcome, a “friendly” game is played, where the outcome has no bearing on standings, but is played simply for the enjoyment of playing. Coaches are encouraged to “lend” players to the opposing team to field the proper number of players in a friendly match.

OTHER NOTES/COMMENTS:

Referees should briefly explain any infringements to ALL the players and help players with instructions. They are the teachers on the field – and 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*) & certified with Basic Referee Training or higher (*see How to Become an SM AYSO Referee on the Referee section of our website.*) Assistant Referees work each sideline and assist the Center Referee with calling the ball in and out of play. U12 Center Referees should be certified with Intermediate Referee Training.

Referees in U12 do not referee their own children’s game, but are scheduled for other games in the division. The home team is responsible for providing at least one Center Referee or Assistant Referee during the weekend of play.

A 0-1 forfeit loss will be assigned to any team that fails to provide their referee when scheduled to do so.

A “friendly” game may be played, where the outcome has no bearing on standings.

A team that forfeits 3 games due to failing to provide a referee team will be ineligible for the playoffs.

Coaches should utilize positive coaching skills (avoid constant coaching, no yelling at players), stay within the designated technical area (coach's box), show respectful attitude toward the referees and HAVE FUN!

Spectators from each team should be on opposite sides of the field. The home team is the second team listed on the game schedule and sits on the West or North side of the field. The visiting team is the first team listed on the game schedule and is assigned the East or South side of the field. Traditionally, the spectators are to stay between the 18-yard lines (between the penalty areas). Spectators also need to remain at least 1 yard back from the touchline, maintaining an unobstructed and safe area for the Assistant Referee and players to run and perform throw-ins. Coaches & assistant referees should encourage this. A spectator should never sit or stand behind the goal or goal line. Avoid

coaching players (*coaches coach, players play, parents cheer*), no foul or abusive language or gestures toward any player, coach, referee or other spectators, abide by the Kids Zone guidelines (no smoking, no consumption of alcohol, no dogs, etc.), acknowledge and congratulate BOTH teams on a game well played, and HAVE FUN! Team Managers should help ensure proper sideline etiquette.

You have your field for your specified slot only. Referees must make sure the game starts on time as a courtesy to all the teams that have games afterward. Coaches and players should be ready to start the game on time. If a game must start late, the referee may shorten the halftime interval or may choose to play shorter halves, but both halves must be equal in length.

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.

Ball Size is size 4.

Game Cards: Game cards are to be completed by each Coach or Team Manager prior to the start of game warm-ups. To complete the game card, coaches must write the full name and number of each player on the team in order of uniform number and give the game card to the Center Referee before the start of the game. Absences, substitutions, goalkeeper playing time & goals are all noted by the Referee during the game. Again, the Referee can delegate this role to an Assistant Referee if s/he needs assistance. The Referee signs the completed game cards and deposits them in the Game Card box, or as per the Division Commissioner’s instructions.

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. At JAMS, each field has 2 goals & plus 6 flags – 4 on each of the corners, and 1 each at the halfway line, about a yard away from the edge of the field (touchline). Additionally, the Game Card box and Kids Zone sign need to be placed in a visible location. Please pick-up any debris on the field.

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 Game Card box and Kids Zone sign. At JAMS, please move the goals along 17th Street fence, behind the North Field. Lock to each other AND a fence post. Please also pick-up any trash or recycling.

No other changes from play as specified in FIFA Laws of the Game.

Coaches have an abbreviated copy of the FIFA Laws in their U12 Coaching Manual.

Referees are given a copy in Basic Referee Training.

Everyone is welcome to download a full copy of the AYSO Edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game from the Coaches section or the Referee section of our website.

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