

BENICIA YOUTH SOCCER

Modified Laws of the Game

Recreational Division

Under 6, 7, & 8 Age Groups

Common Sense and Spirit of the Game

At all times use common sense. The players are young children who want to have fun. Adults are present to make that happen. Adults are role models for children and are expected to exhibit responsible behavior at all times. Coaches are responsible for maintaining proper conduct of their players and parents.

Players play soccer. Parents cheer and provide positive encouragement. Referees protect player safety, inspect player equipment, manage the game, and maintain the flow of the action. Coaches coach the players, tie shoe laces, attend to injured players, rotate substitutes every 2–3 minutes (U8 players can last for 5–10 minutes) and set a positive example for everyone. As goes the coach, so goes the team.

All participants, particularly parents, coaches, and referees must show good **sportsmanship** and, if needed, take action to ensure that others do. Running up the score is poor sportsmanship.

Never argue with the referee's judgment, especially regarding deliberate handling of the ball or throw-in technique. Verbal abuse of players and referees is not tolerated. If repeated instances of verbal abuse occur, the coach or referee should request the offending player, coach, or spectator to leave the field. Referees are authorized to halt or terminate the match if the offending party refuses. All such cases shall be reported to the Age Group Coordinator and Referee Coordinator for follow-up and possible referral to the disciplinary committee for further review.

Parent Referees / Requirements & Responsibilities

Each team is responsible for providing parent volunteers to referee games during the season.

This is very important for the safety of your children and the quality of play during games.

Parent volunteer referees must attend one mandatory training session prior to the season.

- In the U6 & U7 age groups, ***TWO GAMES*** are played simultaneously. Therefore...
- All U6 & U7 teams are required to have ***TWO TRAINED VOLUNTEER REFEREES***.
- All U8 teams are required to have ***ONE TRAINED VOLUNTEER REFEREE***.
- The ***HOME*** team is required to provide ***ALL THE REFEREES*** on game day.
- ***If the HOME team cannot supply the requisite number of referees***, the home team ***COACH*** is required to step off the sidelines and function as a referee.
- The ***HOME*** team is required to provide game balls.
- The ***VISITING*** team is required to switch sides/squads at halftime.

Number of Players

U6 – 3 players (no goalkeeper)	2 games running simultaneously
U7 – 4 players (no goalkeeper)	2 games running simultaneously
U8 – 5 players (including the goalkeeper)	1 game

Teams may play with fewer players by mutual agreement.

Playing Time

Games are four quarters of 10 minutes each. There shall be a 2 minute break between quarters one and two and between quarters three and four. There shall be a 7 minute break at halftime. Teams switch ends of the field at halftime (but not at quarters). The referee shall keep track of time with a stopwatch, unless it is agreed that another party shall keep time with a stopwatch. Available players must play at least 50% of the game.

Player Equipment

The “Five Esses” are mandatory: shirt, shorts, shin guards, shoes and socks. Shirts should be tucked in for the start of the game and at the beginning of each quarter. Shin guards must be *entirely covered* by socks; and must be worn on the *inside* of the socks.

Baseball shoes (with a single front cleat), or shoes with metal cleats are NOT allowed. If a player has these type of shoes, do NOT allow them to take the field. National youth soccer policy forbids them, and they are an insurance liability. It may be difficult to enforce this rule because the kids just want to play and have fun, but once you mention “insurance liability” to the coach, they will understand. Modified shoes that had the front cleat clipped or sawed off are allowed.

Personal adornments such as earrings, necklaces, jewelry, watches, friendship bracelets, and plastic or metal hair ties are NOT allowed. Earrings covered by athletic tape are NOT allowed. Friendship bracelets covered by athletic tape are NOT allowed. Simple *elastic-only* hair ties to hold back pony tails are allowed.

Medical devices such as casts or splints are NOT allowed—at this age, injured players should focus on healing. The ONLY exception to the medical device rule is a medical bracelet which shall be secured to the wrist and covered with athletic tape.

In general, anything that could possibly be dangerous to the player, or any other player, shall NOT be worn. Referees have discretion to use their judgment to decide what is dangerous and prohibit such items.

Preliminary to Start of Play and Managing the Game

To make it easier to remember on game day, the **HOME** team provides balls and referees, makes all decisions and switches fields. The **VISITING** team starts the game with the kick-off.

Coaches: Conduct proper introductions of adult referees and staff from both teams. The **HOME** team provides size 3 soccer balls for the games.

*If your age group (U6 & U7) plays with squads, split your team into two squads of equal size, and two games will be played at the same time. Home Squad A will play Visiting Squad A for the first half, and Home Squad B will play Visiting Squad B. At half time, the **HOME** team will switch fields so that Home Squad A will play Visiting Squad B, and vice versa.*

*If your age group (U8) does not play with squads, the **HOME** team has choice of sideline.*

Referees: The **HOME** team provides referees for all games.

- *For U6 & U7 games, **TWO REFEREES** are needed, one for each game since there will be two games occurring simultaneously.*
- *For U8 games, **ONE REFEREE** is needed.*
- *Arrive with whistle and stopwatch at least twenty (20) minutes prior to game time.*
- *Conduct an equipment check of players from both teams, specifically looking to make sure players have shin guards, appropriate shoes (without a single front cleat) and no personal adornments such as earrings or metal hair clips.*
- *Check the field to make sure goals are properly secured, fields are lined appropriately and corner flags are present.*

At the start of the game, the **HOME** team will select which goal they want to **ATTACK**. The **VISITING** team takes the kick-off. There is no coin toss. At half time (but not at each quarter), the teams will then switch goals.

Goal Arc, Goal Area and Goalkeepers

The goal arc is a semi-circle around each goal in the U6 and U7 age groups. The goal area is a rectangle around each goal in the U8 age group. Hereinafter the term “goal area” applies to both.

At U6 and U7, there are no goalkeepers. At U8, one player shall be designated as the goalkeeper for each team. Goalkeepers shall wear uniforms distinct from each team and from the other goalkeeper; usually a different colored pinny will work. Goalkeepers may wear gloves, long sleeved shirts and long pants.

A goalkeeper may use his or her hands and arms to touch the ball within the goal area. A goalkeeper is considered to have possession of the ball if they have one finger on the ball. Infractions for pass back or throw back to goalkeeper and the six second rule are not enforced. Referees are advised to encourage goalkeepers to get the ball back into play in a timely fashion.

Players in the goal area are subject to the rules for cherry-picking and goal-tending. See below.

Substitutions

Substitution of players can take place:

U6 & U7 – on the fly (no referee approval needed)

U8 – at any stoppage in play (referee approval **REQUIRED**)

Substitution Procedure for U8 Games

At any stoppage in play, there is a potential opportunity to make a substitution. A coach may substitute players by calling out to the referee “Substitution!” or “Sub, please!” The referee may then give permission for the substitution.

However, a stoppage of play does not guarantee that a substitution will occur: the referee may not hear the coach above enthusiastic cheering or play may restart too quickly. Do ***NOT*** repeatedly shout “Sub!” after the referee has indicated for the restart to take place, when a player is in the process of taking the restart, or after the ball is in play. Be patient and wait for the next opportunity which usually takes only a few seconds.

The player to be substituted onto the field of play should be up and ready before the coach requests the substitution. The substitute should wait until their teammate is off the field of play before entering. The referee should blow the whistle with a quick double-blast to stop play and then acknowledge the substitute request. The referee should also blow the whistle to restart play after the substitute has entered the field and arrived at their position.

Ball In Play

The ball is in play until the ENTIRE BALL HAS CROSSED ALL OF THE LINE, either goal line or touch line, or the referee stops play with a whistle. Play must then be restarted.

Goal Scoring

The ENTIRE BALL MUST CROSS ALL OF THE GOAL LINE between the goal posts and under the crossbar.

Start and Restart of Play & Indirect Kicks

All starts and restarts of play—kick-offs, free kicks, goal kicks, corner kicks and pass-ins—are indirect kicks. All indirect kicks share all of the following rules:

- All opposing players must be 3 yards (6 yards in U7 & U8) from the spot of the kick.
This rule must be strictly enforced before the kick is taken for player safety.
INFRACTION: The kick is retaken.
- If an indirect kick goes directly into the goal without being touched by another player, a goal is NOT awarded, and the defending team is awarded a goal kick. Another player (from either team) must touch the ball before it enters the goal for a goal to be awarded.
- If the player taking the kick touches the ball a second time (“double touch”) before it has touched another player, a free kick is awarded to the opposing team.
- *If a free kick is awarded to the defending team in the goal area*, the kick may be taken from anywhere in the goal area.
- *If a free kick is awarded to the attacking team in the goal area*, the kick shall be taken on the goal area boundary line straight out and furthest away from the goal line.
- When a free kick is taken from the goal area, if an opponent enters the goal area; or if the ball is touched by an opponent before it leaves the goal area; or if the ball fails to leave the goal area and enter the field of play for any reason, the kick shall be retaken.

Each type of indirect kick has additional rules as indicated below.

Kick-Off

Play is started or restarted with a kick-off at the beginning of each quarter and after a goal is scored. The *VISITING* team kicks off in the first and third quarters; the *HOME* team in the second and fourth. After a goal is scored, the opposing team restarts play with a kick-off.

- The team with the kick-off places the ball in the middle of the center circle. The ball is in play when it is kicked **forward**; the ball **must** be kicked forward.
- All players must stay on own half of field until ball is kicked, and defenders must stay out of the center circle. The center circle has a 3 yard radius (6 yards in U7 & U8).
- The kick is retaken if an infringement of the rules occurs.
- This rule must be strictly enforced.

Goal Kick

Play is restarted with a goal kick when the ball crosses the defenders goal line, is last touched by the attacking team, and no goal is scored.

- The defending team is awarded a goal kick and places the ball within the goal area.

Corner Kick

Play is restarted with a corner kick when the ball crosses the defenders goal line, is last touched by the defending team, and no goal is scored.

- The attacking team is awarded a corner kick and places the ball within or on the corner arc nearest where the ball crossed the goal line.

Free Kick

Play is restarted with a free kick when the referee stops play for a foul or other infringement of the laws of the game. The team whose player was fouled gets a free kick.

- The team awarded with a free kick and places the ball as appropriate (see above).
- There is no penalty area in U6, U7 or U8, so there are no penalty kicks either.

Pass-In (U6 & U7 Age Groups)

In the U6 & U7 age groups, a pass-in (*not a throw-in) is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touch line, either on the ground or in the air.

Pass-ins are safer for the youngest players (ball is on the ground, not above head level) and better for game flow (no time wasted or tears cried during retries for improper throw-ins). The ball is placed on the touch line, distance from the spot is respected, and the free kick is taken.

- The team awarded the pass-in places the ball on the touch line nearest where the ball left the field of play and takes the free kick.
- *Note: Proper throw-ins will be focused upon at the U8 level.

Throw-In (U8 Age Group)

In the U8 age groups, a throw-in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball when the whole of the ball crosses the touch line, either on the ground or in the air.

- A proper throw-in has five (5) components when the ball is released. The thrower
 1. faces the field of play
 2. has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line
 3. holds the ball with both hands
 4. delivers the ball from behind and over his head
 5. delivers the ball from the point where it left the field of play
- If a player is unable to correctly throw-in the ball after two attempts, the restart is a throw-in by the opposing team. Referees are encouraged to give guidance regarding proper throw-in technique, though coaches bear ultimate responsibility for their players.
- Opponents must be 3 yards from the player taking the throw-in.

Fouls and Misconduct

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following seven offenses in a manner considered by the referee to be *careless* (normal for a contact sport), *reckless* (without regard to opponent safety) or *using excessive force* (with intent to endanger opponent safety):

- *Kicks, trips, strikes* or attempts to kick, trip or strike an opponent;
 - *Jumps at, charges, pushes* or *tackles* an opponent.
- * Note: Slide tackles are always dangerous play, even if successful, and must be disallowed.
* Note: Any contact with a goalkeeper who is in possession of the ball is considered an offense.

A free kick is also awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following three offenses:

- *Holds* or *spits at* an opponent;
- *Handles the ball deliberately* (except for the goalkeeper within his or her goal area)

Fouls should be briefly explained to the offending player. (e.g. “That was a foul because you tripped/kicked/pushed your opponent.”) The free kick is taken from the spot of the foul with exceptions as noted above if the offense occurred in the goal area.

Normally, a reckless foul would be disciplined with a caution (yellow card) while a foul using excessive force would be disciplined with a send-off (red card), but we do not show cards for discipline at this level. Referees have discretion to verbally caution the player (and coach) depending on severity of incident. Keep the game and age of the players in perspective.

If a player persistently commits careless fouls, or blatant reckless fouls, or any fouls with excessive force, referee shall stop play and request the coach to immediately substitute the offending player off the field. The referee shall explain to the coach why they have made the request to substitute the player off the field. If a foul was committed using excessive force, the referee may prohibit the offending player from returning to the field of play for the remainder of the game to protect player safety. Any case where a player is prohibited from returning to the field warrants a report to the Age Group Coordinator and Referee Coordinator.

The following offenses merit a player being sent-off the field without the ability to return for the remainder of the game (a substitute is allowed):

- Violent conduct;
- Serious foul play (using excessive force);
- Spitting at an opponent or any other person;
- Using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures.

Dropped Ball

Play is restarted with a dropped ball for all stoppages of play not mentioned above (e.g. injuries, dog interfering with the ball).

- The dropped ball occurs where the ball was located when play was stopped.
- One player from each team, at the referee's discretion, may participate.
- The ball is in play when it hits the ground.
- If the ball is touched by one player before it hits the ground, a free kick will be awarded to the opponents of the player who touched the ball.
- If both players touch the ball, then restart with another dropped ball.

- Care should be taken that players do not kick each other, and if necessary the ball may be fairly rolled or bounced into play away from the players contesting the dropped ball.
- A dropped ball to restart the game after play has been stopped inside the goal area takes place on the goal area line nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.

Cherry-Picking and Goal-Tending

The offside rule is not enforced in the U6, U7, and U8 age groups. Goalkeepers are not permitted in the U6 & U7 age groups. Given these rule modifications, players are not allowed to take unfair positional advantage by standing near or in the goal area. Attacking players who do this may be cherry-picking; defending players who do this may be goal-tending. Goalkeepers in U8 are exempt from the goal-tending rule.

- Attacking and defending players may NOT enter the goal area while the ball is in the other half of the field. This is intended to encourage attacking soccer and teamwork by creating more touches on the ball, passing triangles and scoring opportunities.
- In U6 & U7 age groups, attacking players may NOT enter the goal arc at any time.
- Repeated cherry picking or goal-tending is unsporting behavior.
- A goal scored as a result of cherry-picking shall be disallowed and a goal kick awarded to the defending team.
- A goal denied as a result of goal-tending shall result in a free kick awarded to the attacking team at the edge of the goal area.

Major differences between U6, U7, & U8

U6

- 3v3 (2 games at a time)
- Field has a defined goal arc on field (attacking players may not run through the goal arc at any time)
- Does not have a goalkeeper
- Restart for a touch line violation is a *pass-in* (not a throw-in)
- Substitutions on the fly (no referee permission needed)
- 3 yard radius from the ball for free kicks

U7

- 4v4 (2 games at a time)
- Field has a defined goal arc on field (attacking players may not run through the goal arc at any time)
- Does not have a goalkeeper
- Restart for a touch line violation is a *pass-in* (not a throw-in)
- Substitutions on the fly (no referee approval needed)
- 6 yard radius from the ball for free kicks

U8

- 5v5 (1 game at a time)
- Field has a defined goal area (attacking players may run through the goal area, though the cherry-picking rule still applies)
- Has a goalkeeper who may handle the ball within their goal area
- Substitutions at any stoppage of play (with referee permission)
- Restart for a touch line violation is a *throw-in*; technique is enforced by referees, so coaches must instruct players
- 6 yard radius from the ball for free kicks