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# **Short-Sided Games Guide for Referees**

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# Introduction

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The AYSO National Referee Advisory Commission in cooperation with the National Coach Advisory Commission has prepared this information as a guide for referees to conduct short-sided games. The information contained in this guide is intended to support the specific recommendations of the AYSO National Coach Advisory Commission for short-sided play. Thank you for volunteering your time and talents as a referee and for helping young AYSO players learn to love and play the beautiful game of soccer.

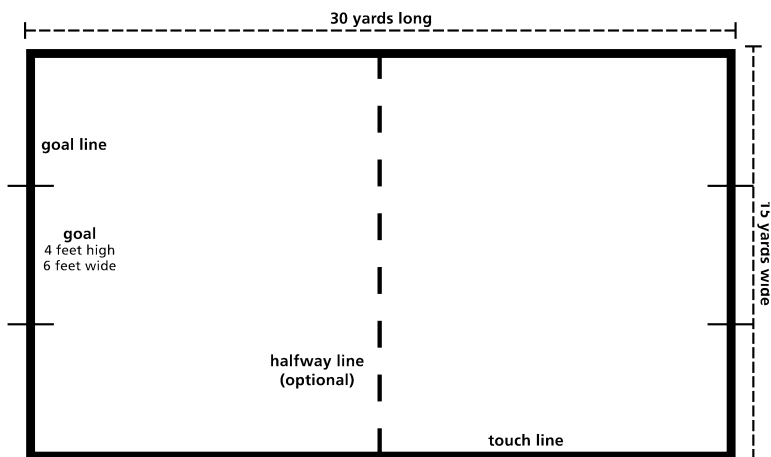
# Under-5 Guidelines

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The following guidelines include the only elements of the Laws of the Game that apply to the AYSO U-5 Division:

## The Field:

The recommended field size for U-5 games is 30 x 15 yards marked with lines or cones. See diagram.



## The Goals:

The goals in U-5 games should be a maximum of 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, or two tall cones set 6 feet apart. If goal structures are used, they must be properly positioned (centered on the goal line) and anchored securely to the ground.

## The Ball:

A size 3 ball is used for U-5 games.

### **The Teams:**

Each U-5 team should have a maximum of 4 on the roster. Games are played with 3 players per team on the field (3v3) and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters. Separate boys and girls teams are recommended at all levels.

### **Player Equipment:**

Shoes and shinguards covered by socks are mandatory at all practice and game activities. 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.

### **The Start of Play:**

To start the first and second halves, and following each goal, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the center of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game, and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

### **The Kick-off:**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least 5 yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent be a minimum of precisely 5 yards from the ball as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

### **Ball In and Out of Play:**

The ball is out of play when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line) either on the ground or in the air. In U-5 games, the game supervisors for the week will determine when the ball is out of play. When the ball goes out of play in U-5 games across the touch line (side line) or the goal line (end line) without a goal being scored, a throw-in is awarded at the point it crossed the line.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-5 games are twenty minutes and are played in two 10-minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **Throw-in:**

When the ball goes out of play in U-5 games across the touch line (side line) or the goal line (end line) without a goal being scored, a throw-in is awarded at the point it crossed the line. The throw-in is awarded to the team that didn't touch the ball last.

In U-5 games, when a throw-in is taken from behind the goal line, the thrower must not be between the goal posts.

Whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go...teach proper technique later. Again, let them play with minimum interruption. Keep the game moving and fun.

### **Method of Scoring:**

A goal is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone. In U-5 games, goals are not recorded to determine who wins, as everyone is a winner.

### **Fouls and Other Stoppages:**

Deliberate fouling should be rare in U-5 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U-5 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 train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin with a free kick or as may be appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it. Stoppages must not become a lengthy ceremony.

### **Free Kick:**

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in U-5 games. When this is necessary, correct the situation and then restart with a free kick for the deserving team. The opposing team should be at least 5 yards from the ball in U-5 games. All free kicks in U-5 games are direct free kicks which means, if you're lucky, a

goal can be scored directly from the kick without the ball having to be touched or played by another player on the field.

### **Under-5 Jamboree One-With-One Guidelines**

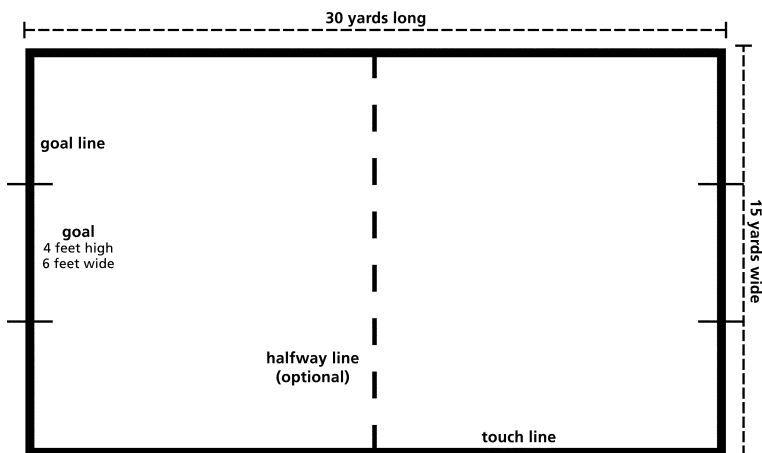
Each Jamboree session will end with a 20 minute short-sided game (3v3) where the same rules apply as described above. Most importantly, allow the players to play without coaching or teaching as this experience is designed to expose them to soccer, not to begin developing them. The two objectives of the program are to allow the players to enjoy the activities, and let the game be the teacher.

# Under-6 Guidelines

The following guidelines include the only elements of the Laws of the Game that apply to the AYSO Short-Sided Games Program for U-6 games:

## The Field:

The recommended field size for U-6 games is 30 x 15 yards marked with lines or cones. See diagram.



## The Goals:

The goals in U-6 games should be a maximum of 4 feet high and 6 feet wide, or just use tall cones set 6 feet apart. If goal structures are used, they must be properly positioned (centered on the goal line) and anchored securely to the ground.

### **The Ball:**

A size 3 ball is used for U-6 games.

### **The Teams:**

Each U-6 team should have a maximum of 5 on the roster. Games are played with 3 players per team on the field (3v3) and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters. Separate boys and girls teams are recommended at all levels.

### **Player Equipment:**

Shoes and shinguards covered by the socks are mandatory at all practices and game activities. 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.

### **Officials**

Certified referees/officials are optional in U-6 games. Just as players at this age are discovering the game of soccer, this is a good opportunity for older siblings, family and friends to discover the enjoyment and rewards of volunteering, while also learning about the game. If certified referees/officials are not used in U-6 games, the coaches will manage the games. If certified referees/officials are used, the referees/officials must be trained and certified as U-8 Officials or higher.

U-6 games are intended to be an opportunity for very young players to experience the fun of playing with minimum interruption and maximum flexibility. Every effort should be made to keep the game moving and free from unnecessary stoppages. Officials/referees in U-6 games should encourage proper play and sporting behavior and thus provide an opportunity for players, coaches, officials and spectators to have a positive AYSO experience. Let them play and enjoy.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-6 games are twenty minutes and are played in two 10-minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **The Start of Play**

To start the first and second halves and following each goal, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the middle of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

### **The Kick-off**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least five yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent always be five yards from the ball, as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

### **Ball In and Out of Play**

The ball is out of play when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line), either on the ground or in the air. The team that didn't touch it last gets either a throw-in (from the touch line) or, in U-6 games, a kick-in (from the goal line). The official in U-6 games will determine when one of these restarts is necessary and should then interfere as little as possible in the restart. It's their game; let them play. The coach can work on technique later.

### **Method of Scoring**

A goal is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone, but in U-6 games, they are not recorded to determine who wins. Everyone wins in U-6 games.

### **Fouls and Other Stoppages**

Deliberate fouling should be rare in U-6 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U-6 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 train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or throw-in as appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it. Exercise common sense, stand back and let them play.

### **Free Kicks**

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to “sort things out” in U-6 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. Stop play and correct the situation then restart with a free kick for a deserving player. All free kicks in U-6 games are direct free kicks which means, if you’re lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick.

### **Throw-in**

When the ball goes out of play across one of the touch lines (side lines), a throw-in is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn’t touch it last. The coach should let the player take the throw-in and whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go! Proper technique can be taught later. Again, let them play with minimum interruption.

### **Kick-in:**

When the ball goes out of play across one of the goal lines (end lines) and a goal is not scored, a kick-in, in U-6 games, is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn’t touch it last. As with the throw-in, the coach should let the player take the kick-in with as little ceremony or interference as possible. Keep the game moving and fun.

### **Under-6 Jamboree Guidelines**

During the U-6 Jamboree 3 v 3 scrimmages, the same rules apply as described above. The “Master Coach” will instruct the volunteer coaches or parents how to keep the games going with as little interference as possible.

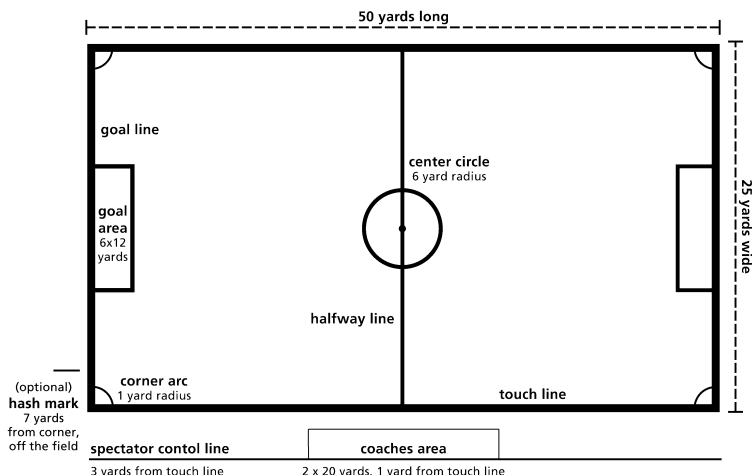
# Under-8 Guidelines

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The guidelines for U-8 games in the AYSO Short-Sided Games Program are the same as for U-6 games and no other elements of the Laws of the Game apply, with the following modifications or additions:

## The Field:

The recommended field size for U-8 games is 50 x 25 yards with the following field markings: Halfway line, 6 yard radius center circle, 1 yard radius corner arcs and 6 x 12 yard goal areas. See diagram.



## The Goals:

The goals in U-8 games should be a maximum of 6 feet high and 6 yards wide.

## The Ball:

A size 3 ball is used for U-8 games.

### **The Teams:**

Each U-8 team should have a maximum of 7 on the roster. Games are played with 5 players per team on the field (5v5). Goalkeepers may be used in U-8 games.

### **Officials:**

AYSO certified U-8 Officials or higher are required for U-8 games. The U-8 Official 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.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-8 games are forty minutes and are played in two 20-minute halves with substitutions allowed 10 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **Kick-off:**

Opponents must be at least 6 yards from the ball during the kick-off in U-8 games.

### **Fouls:**

The following, if deliberately done, are the fouls most likely to occur in U-8 games: kicking, tripping, pushing, holding, handling the ball and dangerous play. Do not stop play for trifling violations. It's a player's game, so keep the fun going and let them play.

### **Misconduct:**

Misconduct should be rare in U-8 games. There is no need for the public cautioning and sending off of young players (leave your red and yellow cards home). Officials should work cooperatively with the coach when a U-8 player may need a "time out".

### **Free Kicks:**

All free kicks in U-8 games are direct free kicks. Opponents must be at least 6 yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks. Free kicks awarded the attacking team inside the defending team's goal area are to be taken from the nearest point on the goal area line parallel to the goal line.

### **Throw-in:**

A second throw-in should be allowed in U-8 games if the first attempt was improperly done. Following brief, corrective instructions, a second attempt should be permitted. If the second attempt is still done improperly, let it go. Proper technique can be reinforced later by the coach. Keep the game moving and minimize interruptions.

### **Goal Kick:**

A goal kick is awarded the opposing team, in U-8 age groups and older, when the attacking team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The goal kick may be taken from any point inside the goal area. The opposing team must be at least 6 yards from the ball when the goal kick is taken in U-8 games.

### **Corner Kick:**

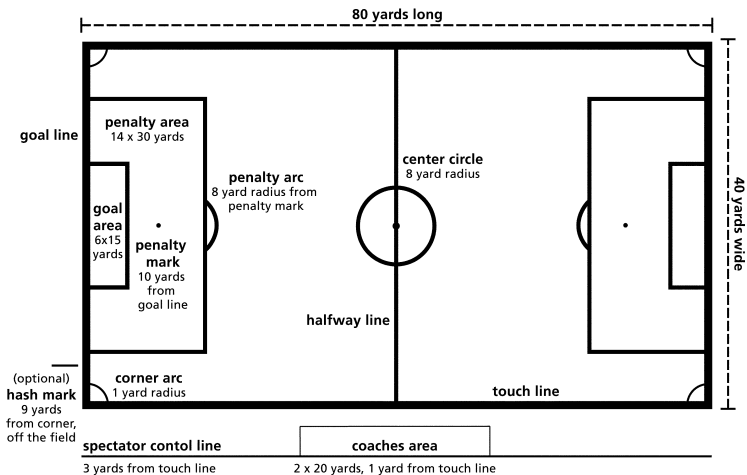
A corner kick is awarded the opposing team, in U-8 age groups and older, when the defending team is last to touch the ball before it crosses the goal line but not scoring a goal. The opposing team must be at least 6 yards from the ball when the corner kick is taken in U-8 games.

# Under-10 Guidelines

The guidelines for U-10 games in the AYSO Short-Sided Games Program are the same as for U-8 games and no other elements of the Laws of the Game apply, with the following modifications or additions:

## The Field:

The recommended field size for U-10 games is 80 x 40 yards with the following field markings: Halfway line, 8 yard radius center circle, 1 yard radius corner arcs, 6 x 15 yard goal areas, 14 x 30 yard penalty areas, a penalty mark 10 yards from each goal and penalty arcs extending 8 yards from the penalty mark. See diagram.



### **The Goals:**

The goals in U-10 games should be a maximum of 7 feet high and 7 yards wide.

### **The Ball:**

A size 4 ball is used for U-10 games.

### **The Teams:**

Each U-10 team should have a maximum of 10 on the roster. Games are played with 7 players per team on the field (7v7) one of which is a goalkeeper.

### **Referee:**

AYSO certified Regional Referees or higher are required for U-10 and older games. Be a thinking referee who only interferes with play when necessary for the safety of the players and the good of the game. The game belongs to the players.

### **Assistant Referees/Club Linesmen:**

If available, qualified assistant referees who have completed Assistant Referee Certification or higher may be used to assist the referee. This is an opportunity for new assistant referees to begin getting experience. If qualified assistant referees are not available, Club Linesmen (untrained volunteers who may be affiliated with one of the teams/clubs) may be recruited from the spectators to assist the referee with calling the ball in and out of play only. This is an opportunity for parents to get involved.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-10 games are fifty minutes and are played in two 25-minute halves with substitutions allowed approximately 12 ½ minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes.

### **Kick-off:**

Opponents must be at least 8 yards from the ball during the kick-off in U-10 games.

### **Offside:**

The Offside Law applies in U-10 and older games. Offside is a simple Law easily misunderstood by those new to the game. Refer

to the Laws of the Game for more information regarding the Offside Law.

### **Fouls:**

For U-10 and older games, all fouls identified in Law 12 apply. Refer to the Laws of the Game for more information. Although there is now the potential for more fouls, referees must still remember that only deliberate breaches of the Law merit stopping the game and that constant whistling for trifling or doubtful breaches produces bad feeling and loss of temper on the part of the players and spoils the pleasure of the spectators. Maximize playing time - minimize stoppages.

### **Misconduct:**

Misconduct should still be relatively rare in U-10 games. Coaches at all levels of play have the option of calling players to the touchline to receive a few words of “positive instruction” concerning the player’s behavior. A coach also has the option of telling a player to ask the referee for permission to leave the field and then, after getting the player under control, having the player request permission from the referee to reenter the game. The referee should permit these requests. However, substitution is not allowed for the player leaving the field in this situation.

### **Free Kicks:**

Opponents must be at least 8 yards from the ball or on the goal line between the goal posts during free kicks in U-10 games. Free kicks, in U-10 and older games, may be either direct (may score directly) or indirect (must be touched or played by another player before a goal can be scored). Refer to the Laws of the Game for further details.

### **Penalty Kicks:**

Penalty kicks may be awarded in U-10 and older games. A penalty kick results from a player committing one of the ten direct free kick fouls inside his or her own (defending) penalty area. The penalty kick is taken from the penalty mark with all other players outside the penalty area and behind the penalty mark (except for the opposing goalkeeper). Refer to the Laws of the Game for further details.

### **Throw-in:**

Second chances are not given for improper throw-ins for U10 and older 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.

### **Goal Kick:**

The ball is not in play and cannot be touched or played by either team until it has been kicked beyond the penalty area into the field of play in U-10 and older games. The goal kick is retaken if the ball is touched or played by either team before leaving the penalty area.

### **Corner Kick:**

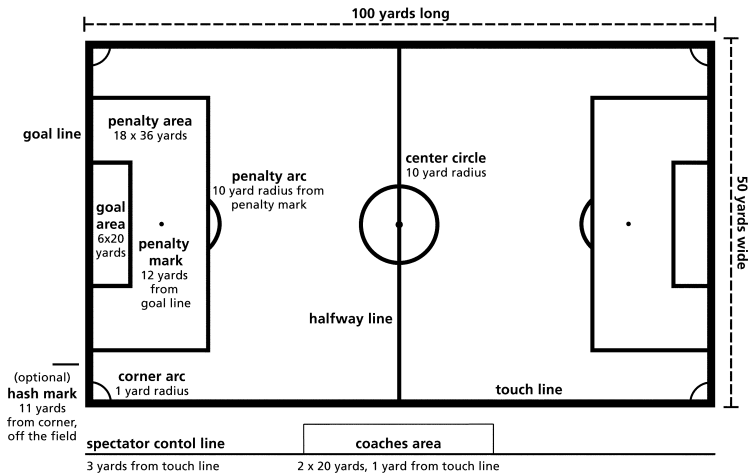
The opposing team must be at least 8 yards from the corner arc (9 yards from the corner) when the corner kick is taken in U-10 games.

# Under-12 Guidelines

The guidelines for the AYSO Short-Sided Games Program for U-12 games are as specified in the AYSO edition of the FIFA Laws of the Game and the AYSO National Rules and Regulations with the following modifications or additions:

## The Field:

The recommended field size is 100 x 50 yards for U-12 games with field markings as specified in the Laws of the Game. See diagram.



## The Goals:

Official size goals (8 feet high and 8 yards wide) are used in U-12 games.

### **The Ball:**

A size 4 ball is used for U-12 games.

### **The Teams:**

Each U-12 team should have a maximum of 12 on the roster. Games are played with 9 players per team on the field (9v9) one of which is the goalkeeper.

### **Duration of Game:**

U-12 games are 60-minutes in length and are played in two 30-thirty minute halves with substitutions allowed approximately 15 minutes into each half. The half-time break is 5-10 minutes. With the exceptions noted above, all other elements of the Laws of the Game apply to U-12 games.



