

# Coach's Guide for the LAWS of SOCCER

This guide is intended to assist MASA coaches in understanding the Laws of soccer and any specific procedures for the in-house MASA program for the U- 8 through U-16 age groups. USYSA, PA West and MASA are the source for these Laws and rules. **All coaches** are expected to be **thoroughly familiar** with these rules.

## **Law 1: The field of play**

All fields should be outlined before the game. The goals will be set up by the first two coaches (U-8s only). The last **two** coaches are responsible for putting all equipment away, and for cleaning the field area.

The playing field for U-8's is smaller than full-size. The field is outlined with a halfway line and two other lines across the width of the field for a penalty line (no penalty *box*). This line is merely to show the goalkeeper where they may handle the ball. There will also be a goal box to kick goal kicks from.

The playing fields for U-10's are also less than full-size, but larger than U-8 fields.

The U-13 and U16 games will be full size (approx. 100x60). The first coaches are responsible for placing the corner flags on the field.

On all fields, the coaches will be on one side of the field, (maximum of 3 coaches: 2 within a coaches box, 1 at halfway line for subs), and the parents on the other. No one is allowed behind the goals during the games. If there is a problem with parents not staying on their side, please make sure they do so; *it is the coach's responsibility to control the parents.*

## **Law 2: The Ball**

The U-8's size 3; U-10's size 4; U-13, and older: size 5. Make sure the ball is in good shape (i.e. round, no panels missing), and that it is inflated properly. You can test this by pressing one of the panels. (It should be difficult to flatten a panel.)

## **Law 3: Number of players**

U-8's will play with four field players and a goalkeeper (5 players on each team).

U-10's will play with six plus a keeper (7 players on the each team).

U-13 and older will play with ten plus a keeper (11 players on each team).

We allow unlimited substitutions, at any stoppage of play (throw-in, corner kick, goal kick, after a goal, injury, after the whistle is blown for a foul, etc.) You must have the **referee's permission** for any sub. All substitutions will take place at the **halfway line**.

If one team has less than the required number of players, the other team will play with the same number of players on the field.

## **Law 4: Players' Equipment**

Shin guards must be worn (and fully covered by socks or sweat pants) by all players. Earrings (including studs), watches, rings, belt buckles, nose rings, barrettes, and neck jewelry are not allowed. Eyeglasses must be secured to the head by a strap or band. Referees should check this during the pregame briefing. Goalkeepers must wear a jersey (or pinny) different in color than the rest of the players. If players are not conforming to these rules, have them go and correct it before the game.

## **Law 5: Referees**

U-8's will normally have one referee, working alone. U-10's will use 2 referees working a diagonal method. U-13 and older will have a referee and 2 assistants. The referee's job is first and foremost to protect the players. They do this by enforcing the laws of soccer. Sometimes, though, the referee may not blow the whistle and stop play for an infraction of the rules if he determines that the *offending* team may end up with an *advantage* if everyone stops and sets up for a free kick. The laws of the game are intended to provide that games be played with as little interference as possible. In this view, the referee should penalize only *deliberate* breaches of the laws. Constant whistling for trifling or doubtful breaches of the laws are against the spirit of the game.

The following are some points to remember:

1. No one is allowed to enter or exit the field without the referee's permission. Even if it is an obvious opportunity to sub (i.e. after a goal is scored), you must "*call*" to the referee for permission to do so.
2. Players may not play with a cast or splint unless the cast or splint is padded in such a manner to conceal it entirely. The referee has the final word as to whether it is safe to play with a cast.
3. You should remove any player with visible blood on the player or his/her uniform. The player may not return to game until all signs of blood are removed.
4. You **and the referees** make the decision regarding postponement or cancellation at game time do to bad weather. If lightning flashes *within sight*, get everyone off the field. Wait *twenty minutes* after the last observed lightning flash. Then you *may* restart the game only if *you and the referee agree* the field is safe to play on.
5. You must allow the referee to keep control of the game. Don't try to "help" them by yelling "handball!" or telling them which team (yours!) should do the throw-in. Do not shout or make comments to the referees during the game. There is no appeal of a decision the referee makes. This means, whatever he or she calls is final. They will not change a call, no matter how much you jump up and down. If you have a question or comment on a *point of law* (i.e. what does the law book say about that particular decision?) you must wait until half time or after the game to discuss it with the ref.
6. Please remember to set a good example for your team (and parents) of good sportsmanship and respect for the referees.

#### **Law 6: Assistant Referees**

Two assistant referees will be appointed for U-13 and older games. Assistant referees' duties shall include: signaling when the ball is out of play; which side is entitled to a corner kick goal kick, or throw-in; when a player may be penalized for being in an offside position; when misconduct or other incident has occurred out of the view of the referee; and when a substitution is desired. The assistant referee will hold the flag over his or her head during a substitution. The assistant referee, by the angling of the flag, will also tell you who was the guilty party after an offside was called.

#### **Law 7: Duration of the Game**

U- 8 games will be four 12- minute quarters.  
U-10 games will be two 25-minute halves.  
U-13 games will be two 30 minute halves.

#### **Law 8; Start of Play**

At the beginning of the game, the Referee tosses a coin. The winner of the toss selects which end of the field they want to attack. The other team kicks off. On any kick-off (start of half, or after a goal), the ball *must move forward*. It no longer matters how far it moves. If the player kicks it directly back to midfield, the referee will blow the whistle and have them kick again. A goal *may* be scored directly from the kick-off. For U-8's, there will be no coin toss. The teams merely take turns for kick-offs.

#### **Law 9: Ball in and out of Play**

The ball is out of play when it has COMPLETELY (the whole ball) crossed the touchline or the goal line. A player may run outside the touchline while playing the ball. The players should not consider the ball out of play until the referee (or assistant) has signaled as such.

#### **Law 10: Method of Scoring**

A goal is scored when the ball crosses COMPLETELY (the whole ball) across the goal line between the goal posts and under the cross bar.

#### **Law 11: Offside**

There is no offside for U-8's. Under-10's and above must adhere to this rule. A player is in an offside position if he is nearer to his opponents' goal line than the ball, unless:  
a) he is in his own half of the field, or  
b) he is *not* nearer to his opponents' goal line than two of his opponents.

It is *not an offense in itself* to be in an offside position. A player should only be called off-side if, at the moment the ball is played **by one of his teammates**, he is, *in the opinion of the referee*, involved in active play by interfering with play, or interfering with an opponent, or gaining an advantage for his team by being in that position. The assistant will raise the flag to indicate offside, then hold the flag in such a manner as to show the referee where on the field to place the ball for a free kick. Offside is penalized by an *indirect kick*.

A player shall not be declared offside merely because of his being in an offside position, or if he receives the ball directly from a goal kick, a corner-kick or from a throw-in.

### **Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct**

For U-8 games the referee should blow the whistle and stop the game for **intentional** fouls such as pushing, tripping, holding, etc... They should tell the player what he or she did wrong, and restart with an **indirect** free kick.

For **U-10 and older**, use the following as a reminder:

Offenses which result in a **DIRECT** free kick;

1. Kicking
2. Tripping
3. Jumping at an opponent
4. Charging an opponent
5. Striking (hitting), attempting to strike, or spitting at an opponent
6. Holding
7. Pushing
8. Handling the ball (handball)
9. Charging an opponent from behind
10. Spitting at an opponent

Offenses which result in an **INDIRECT** free kick:

1. Dangerous play (play in which the referee decides may hurt the player or opponent)
2. Impeding the progress of an opponent
3. Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
4. When the goalkeeper takes more than 4 steps with the ball, or wastes time (holds it more than 5 sec)
5. When the goalkeeper handles the ball from a **pass or throw-in** from his teammate
6. When the goalkeeper touches the ball with his hands after it has been released from his possession and has not touched any player.

#### **Cautionable Offenses (Yellow Card)**

1. Unsporting behavior
2. Showing dissent by word or action
3. Persistent infringes of the laws
4. Delays the restart of play
5. Fails to respect the distance on a restart
6. Enters or exits the field without the Ref's permission.

(Failing to respect the required distance for restarts (corner kicks and free kicks) is now a cautionable offense).

#### **Sending-off Offenses (Red Card)**

1. Serious foul play
2. Violent Conduct
3. Spitting at anyone
4. Denying a goal by handling the ball
5. Denying obvious goal-scoring opportunity by an offense punishable by a free kick or a PK
6. Using offensive, insulting or abusive language
7. Player receiving a second caution

### **Law 13: Free Kicks**

All free kicks for U-8's will be indirect. All others will be determined by the offense as outlined in Law 12. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moved (no distance requirement). On indirect kicks, the referee should raise one arm, and hold it until, after the free kick, another player (of either team) touches it.

### **Law 14: Penalty-Kick**

No penalty kicks for U-8's. All others: if a player, in his or her own penalty area, commits a "crime" worthy of a direct kick, a penalty kick will be awarded. All players (except kicker and goalkeeper)

should be out of the penalty area and behind the penalty mark. The goalkeeper *may move sideways* before the ball is kicked, but not forward.

**Law 15: Throw- In**

This procedure is for all groups. Both the feet must be on the ground when the ball is thrown, both hands must be used to throw the ball, and it must be thrown from behind and over the head. If an U-8 player does not throw in properly, the ref will allow them to do it over. All other age groups give up possession if not thrown properly.

**Law 16: Goal Kick**

If the ball goes over the goal line by the attacking team, a goal kick will be awarded. The goal kick must be kicked beyond the penalty box in order to be in play. If it isn't, they must do the kick over. If the player taking the goal kick plays the ball a second time after it passes the penalty area, before it touches another player, an indirect kick will be awarded to the opposing team at that spot. A goal *may* be scored directly from a goal kick (this can happen at the U10 fields!).

**Law 17: Corner Kick**

If the ball goes over the goal line by the defending team, a corner kick will be awarded. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick. The defending team must be 10 yards from the corner. Assistant referees should stand behind the kicker or on the goal line to make sure the ball stays in play. If it curves outside the goal line, then back in, he or she should indicate a goal kick. Again, the kicker may not play the ball a second time until another player has touched it.

You may want to put a copy of this guideline in your coach's bag for a reference if you or anyone else at a game has a question about the Laws or MASA procedures. Thanks again for coaching, and remember: *HAVE FUN!!!*

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