



ALBERTA SOCCER ASSOCIATION  
*The Governing Body of Soccer in Alberta*

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# GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY SOCCER

2018 Game Formats

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# Introduction

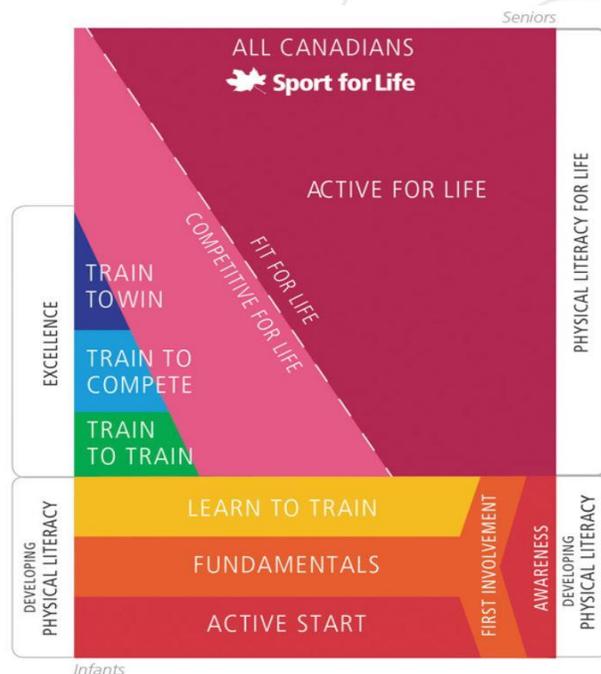
*So you have signed your child up for grassroots soccer, but what should you expect?*

This guide aims to be a positive source of information to those just coming into soccer. Alberta Soccer advocates that all grassroots soccer programs are aligned to the virtues of Canadian Soccer’s Long-Term Player Development Plan and Preferred Training Model of delivery. The focus of these programs rests on introducing, nurturing and developing soccer for all, from Community through to High Performance soccer.

To support and promote the virtues of the Long-Term Player Development model, it is important that soccer organizations and participants recognize the need to adapt the game format to comply with these virtues. It is not sufficient to let the standard game be the master, but to adapt the environment to meet the needs of the players and their development. Therefore, the enclosed information presents recommendations on behalf of the Alberta Soccer Association, for the continued development of the game within our province.

## What is Grassroots Soccer in Alberta?

Grassroots is where the game begins and flourishes, it is where players develop and compete for their enjoyment. Players who aspire to higher levels of participation and competition may gravitate through the player pathway to the Training to Train stage of the presented LTPD model (see below).



The Alberta Soccer Association has developed the following definitions of grassroots soccer for guidance, in terms of development and delivery of soccer programs within the Province.

- **GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY:** Soccer programs that promote active participation opportunities and programs that do not lead to provincial competitions.
  - *The LTPD focus within this stream, ranges through: Active Start (U4-U6), FUNdamentals (U7-U8), Learning to Train (U9-U12) and Soccer for Life (U13+).*
- **GRASSROOTS COMPETITIVE:** Clubs, associations and districts that introduce players to competitive opportunities that may lead to provincial representative competitions.
  - *This competitive stream focuses upon Learning to Train (U9-U12), and Soccer for Life (U13+) components of the LTPD Framework.*

The most important consideration within all programming is that players choose to participate for fun and through choice. Therefore, programs should seek to present a positive and supportive environment for players to experience success.

Soccer is the World Game because of the simplicity, low cost, fun and the challenge it generates within each of us. There are only 17 official rules in soccer where the objective is to score more goals than your opposition. If only the game was that simple.

In providing game format recommendations, it should be recognized that some exceptions may be required and evident, these may be for specific tournaments and competitions. However, to promote a coherent and unified developmental pathway within the province, the enclosed guidelines are strongly recommended.



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# The Modified Game and Long-Term Player Development

Like many sports, grassroots development has evolved away from the BIG game to accommodate age appropriate formats for children coming into the sport. Although some sports specialize with early (age) entry (typically gymnastics and swimming) participation, soccer has universal attraction for players of all ages and abilities. So although examples may be given in terms of what skills are representative of each stage of development, further considerations should be made:

- Age and development of physical literacy (ABC's of movement development)
- Experience in all sports (some motor skills and learning will be transferable and complimentary amongst different sports running, jumping and leaping)
- Time spent practicing and developing techniques and skills
- Knowledge of the game and technical expectations

## Small-Sided Games

Small-Sided (modified) Games embrace the concept of fun and enjoyment, which is vital if children are to develop a lifelong passion for soccer. The principles and rules of Small-Sided Games are similar to those in 11 aside Soccer, except that the field sizes are smaller and there are fewer rules and players on each team.

### BENEFITS OF SMALL SIDED SOCCER

- The opportunity for more touches on the ball
- The game is easier to understand
- Due to more active participation, general health and fitness increases
- Players experience personal growth within and outside of the game due to enjoyment, because of smaller fields and simplified rules
- Increased opportunity to actively participate, we know players develop quicker when they enjoy themselves
- Player retention is increased due to more playing time which is a key priority of all youth coaches
- Tactical awareness from a positioning point of view is easily communicated on smaller fields
- By playing and exploring the game, children will gravitate to positions they prefer and feel

comfortable with

- The focus is on the PLAYER and PLAYER DEVELOPMENT, not team success.
- The so called “dominant” player is inhibited from holding onto the ball due to the smaller area of play
- Contrary to belief, Small Sided Games increase participation numbers, by forming more teams and competition
- The shift to small sided games is based on educational research with regards to the way children learn best

## NUMBER OF PLAYERS IN GAMES

From the age of U6 up the game should commence with two teams with an equal number of players, one of which *must* be a goal-keeper. It is recommended that all players are encouraged and provided with an opportunity to play as a goal-keeper in the younger stages of their development.

## RECOMMENDED TEAM SIZES BY AGE

Age	# Players per Team	Roster Size	Level of performance
<b>U4</b>	1 with 1 (1 child, 1 Adult buddy)	N/A	Community
<b>U5</b>	3 V 3 no GK	6 Maximum	
<b>U6</b>	5 v 5 (includes goalkeeper)	10 Maximum	Community
<b>U7</b>	5 v 5 (includes goalkeeper)	10 Maximum	Community
<b>U8</b>	7 V 7 (includes goalkeeper)	12 Maximum	Community
<b>U9</b>	7 V 7 (includes goalkeeper)	12 Maximum	Community
<b>U10</b>	8 V 8 (includes goalkeeper)	14 Maximum	Community or League Play
<b>U11</b>	8 V 8 (includes goalkeeper)	14 Maximum	Community or League Play
<b>U12</b>	11 V 11 (includes goalkeeper)	16 Maximum	Community or League Play
<b>U13+</b>	11 V 11 (includes goalkeeper)	16 Maximum	Community or League Play

## Recommended Field Dimensions

### OUTDOORS DIMENSIONS

Field sizes should conform to the table as set out below:

Wherever possible the outdoor game should be played on a grass or artificial field grass in accordance to the following measurements

Age Group	Min Length	Min Width	Max Length	Max Width
<b>U4*</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>U5</b>	30 metres	18 metres	36 metres	22 metres
<b>U6</b>	30 metres	25 metres	36 metres	30 metres
<b>U7</b>	30 metres	25 metres	36 metres	30 metres
<b>U8</b>	40 metres	30 metres	55 metres	36 metres
<b>U9</b>	40 metres	30 metres	55 metres	36 metres
<b>U10</b>	60 metres	42 metres	75 metres	55 metres
<b>U11</b>	60 metres	42 metres	75 metres	55 metres
<b>U12</b>	100 yds (91.44m)	50 yds (45.7m)	130 yds (118.8m)	100 yds (91.44m)
<b>U13+</b>	100 yds (91.44m)	50 yds (45.7m)	130 yds (118.8m)	100 yds (91.44m)

\*Field sizes are not recommended as the game is 1 on 1 format.

### INDOOR DIMENSIONS

Wherever possible, all competitive indoor fields should comply with the following competition dimensions. These dimensions are used for competitions from U10+ age groups. It is recommended that smaller dimensions (as those used outdoors) be adapted with younger age groups.

	Min Length	Min Width	Max Length	Max Width
<b>Indoor field</b>	45.7 meters	22.8 meters	64 meters	30.4 meters

## GOAL SIZE

Goal sizes should conform to the table as set out below:

Please note goal safety is an important consideration; ensure all goal posts are pegged into place securely and made to withstand soccer 'play', children hanging from goal posts.

Age Group	Goal Height	Goal Length	Option
<b>U4*</b>	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>U5</b>	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller
<b>U6</b>	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller
<b>U7</b>	5 ft / 1.524m	8 ft / 2.438m	Anything smaller
<b>U8</b>	6 ft / 1.83m	12 ft / 3.657m	None
<b>U9</b>	6 ft / 1.83m	12 ft / 3.657m	None
<b>U10</b>	6 ft / 1.83m	18 ft / 5.486m	None
<b>U11</b>	6 ft / 1.83m	18 ft / 5.486m	None
<b>U12</b>	8 ft / 2.44 m	8 yds / 7.23 m	None
<b>U13+</b>	8 ft / 2.44 m	8 yds / 7.23 m	none

\*Goals are not recommended as the game is 1 on 1 format.

## BALL SIZE

In the interest of the players' development, ball sizes for competition should conform to the table below:

This is an important consideration, especially for younger children who are still physically developing. Seek a reputable supplier who understands the needs of developing players when purchasing soccer equipment. The ball should be manufactured from approved synthetic materials in accordance to the competition rules.

Age Group	U4	U5	U6	U7	U8	U9	U10	U11	U12	U13+
<b>Ball Size</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3/4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>

## Player Equipment

Players should participate with appropriate soccer uniform (shirt, shorts and socks); these should match the colors of the registered club's uniform within competitive games.

Players should also participate with suitable soccer footwear that offers support and comfort for participation.

ALL Players MUST wear shin guards; this is a requirement of the game and protects the lower limbs from impact injuries.

In the summer, soccer is an outdoor game, so ensure the players are prepared for all weather conditions and dressed appropriately to meet these fluctuating conditions, with appropriate layers of clothing and refreshments.

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous. All items of jewelry (necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, leather bands, rubber bands, etc.) are forbidden and must be removed. Using tape to cover jewelry is not permitted.

## Game Rules

As indicated, there are 17 official FIFA Laws (rules) to the 11 V 11 game, some of which may be adapted to meet the needs of particular competitions (please check and ensure you are conversant with local competition rules). Below is a synopsis of the main rules that govern soccer:

**TEAMS:** A game is played by two teams, with the maximum and minimum number of players determined by the game format (11v11, 8v8, 7v7 etc.)

**START GAME:** A coin is tossed and the team that wins the toss chooses which end it will attack in the first half. The other team takes the first half kick off. The team that wins the coin toss kicks off in the second half.

**BALL OUT OF PLAY:** The ball is out of play when it has completely crossed the goal line or touchline on the ground or in the air. If it crosses the touchline, a throw in is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball. If it crosses the goal line, a goal kick is awarded if it is last touched by a player on the attacking team, and a corner kick if it was last touched by a player on the defending team.

**GOAL SCORED:** A goal is awarded when the whole of the ball crosses the goal-line, between the goal-posts and under the cross-bar, provided that no offence has been committed by the team scoring the goal.

**USE OF HANDS:** Only goal-keepers are permitted to use their hands within their designated goal-area or penalty area (subject to the game format). While the ball is in play if a player other than a goalkeeper deliberately handles the ball a free kick or penalty kick is awarded to the opposing team. The only exception is when a player takes a throw-in to re-start the game from the touchline.

**FOULS:** Direct and indirect free kicks and penalty kicks can only be awarded for offences committed when the ball is in play.

**Note** – for U5 to U9, all free kicks are indirect, regardless of the offence committed, and no penalty kicks are awarded.

For U10 and older, free kicks or penalty kicks are awarded, based on the nature and location of the offence.

## Direct Free Kick

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences against an opponent in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- charges
- jumps at
- kicks or attempts to kick
- pushes
- strikes or attempts to strike (including head-butt)
- tackles or challenges
- trips or attempts to trip

A direct free kick is awarded if a player commits any of the following offences:

- handles the ball deliberately (except for a goalkeeper within their own penalty area)
- holds an opponent
- impedes an opponent with contact
- spits at an opponent

## Indirect Free Kick

An indirect free kick is awarded if a player:

- plays in a dangerous manner
- impedes the progress of an opponent, without contact being made
- is guilty of dissent, using offensive insulting or abusive language and/or gestures or other verbal offences
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from the hands or kicks or attempts to kick the ball while the goal keeper is in the process of releasing it

An indirect free kick is awarded if a goalkeeper, inside their penalty area, commits any of the following offences:

- controls the ball for more than six seconds before releasing it
- touches the ball with their hands after
  - releasing it and before it has touched another player
  - it has been deliberately kicked to the goalkeeper by a team mate
  - receiving it directly from a throw in taken by a team mate

## FREE-KICKS:

All free kicks for U6, U8, U10 are indirect, regardless of the offence committed

Direct free-kicks are awarded from U11 upwards for direct free kick offences, and indirect free kicks are awarded for indirect free kick offences.

The defending team should retreat from the ball during the taking of a free kick for the following distances:

- U6                    5 metres
- U7-U11            6 metres
- U12 and older    9 metres

## KICK-IN OR THROW-IN:

The ball should be kicked in from the side of the field for all players up to U6 age groups. Players aged U7 and above should throw the ball in. Throw-ins should be taken from a position on the side of the field, close to where it left the field of play. When taking a throw-in, both feet must be on or outside the touchline and the ball is thrown with both hands from behind and over the head. For players aged U7-U10, two attempts may be made to throw the ball in the correct manner. If the second attempt is incorrect then the throw-in is awarded to the opposition.

## The FINAL RULE:

Apply safety and common sense in all rulings regarding youth soccer. The rules are in place to ensure fair and safe play and that is how they should be **applied**.

## Futsal

Many districts are now implementing futsal as an alternative indoor game of choice. Futsal is a game without boards developed in South America.

In Futsal, the following rules are pertinent:

1) Each team comprises 5 players, one of whom must be a goalkeeper. The minimum number of players to start or continue a game is 3. Up to a maximum of 9 substitutes may be used, subject to competition rules.

2) "Flying" substitutions are used, as per the procedure in the Laws of Futsal. This means that the referee does not need to stop play before a substitution can be made. In some cases, four or even five players are substituted at once.

3) Two referees (one main referee and one assistant referee) are used. These referees supervise play and enforce the rules by running along the touchline. If there is any doubt between the two referees about a decision, the main referee's decision is final. In most international matches, an official timekeeper is also used.

4) When the ball completely crosses the touch line, it is kicked in by the opposing team, rather than thrown in. When the ball completely crosses the goal line after being touched last by the attacking team, the goalkeeper restarts play with a goal clearance (thrown ball) rather than a goal kick. When the ball completely crosses the goal line after being touched last by the defending team, a corner kick is taken by the opposing team in the same manner as the other game formats.

5) A match consists of 2 x 20 minute halves. A system of accumulated fouls is applied. Once a team has committed 6 or more fouls in one half of play, the opposing team is awarded a direct free kick. The offending team may not use a defensive wall at such free kicks. The free kick will be taken from the location where the offence occurred, the location of the ball, or the second penalty mark, depending on the type of offence and its location.

## Other Game Formats

As indicated there are many formats of soccer and these are evolving to support a player first approach. There are other recognized formats such as beach soccer and disability specific game formats. Whichever format or game rules are applied, a true principle is that they are used to uphold the safety of play and spirit of the game.

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