

Rules of Play for U-8 (Summary):

- **Two 20-minute halves** (5-minute half-time)
- Match is played **4 v 4 or 5 v 5 format** to maximize touches on the ball for ALL Players. (*See When to Play 4 v 4 and When to Play 5 v 5 on Important U8 Coaching Resources Document*).
- **There ARE NO Goalies!** It is quite often that some players may decide to station/position himself/herself in front of the goal and acts as a “goalie” to stop the other team from scoring. Sometimes the player won’t leave the goal area even when the ball is in the other end of the field. As a result, that player’s team will have less offensive opportunity (in essence they are playing one short). Additionally, it can cause frustration for the opposing team. Therefore, positioning players in a solely defensive position (i.e. stationed in front of the goal) is not permitted in U8 small-sided games. Players should be reminded **MOVE TO THE BALL, NOT TO THE NET**. You can encourage players “Don’t Run Away from the Play!”
 - If you have a player who consistently retreats to the net, take the time to explain to him/her individually that you’d like him/her to move to the ball and try to take the ball away.
- **Throw-Ins:** A ball that goes out of bounds on the sideline results in a throw-in for the team who did not touch the ball last. Opposing team must back up at least 2 yards. Players should be taught and encouraged to use proper throw-in techniques – both feet on the ground, both hands to deliver the ball from behind and over their head. ([Proper Throw-in Technique](#)). Please be sure to practice this skill briefly on Session Two and Session Three as one of your practice drills/activities (*see samples in the practice packet*). Have players do a re-do during the game if they improperly throw the ball.
- **Center Starts/Re-Starts:** At the beginning of each quarter and after a goal is scored. Opposing team must back up at least 3 yards.
- **Corner Kick:** End line Out of Bounds by the **defending** team results in a corner kick for the opposing team.
- **Goal Kick:** End line Out of Bounds by the **offensive** team results in a goal kick. **Opposing team should retreat to the midfield line on goal kicks. Coaches should not allow players to kick the ball until the opposing team retreats!**
- Coaches should monitor and address the following infringements: Hand Balls, Pushing, Slide Tackling, and Hooking or Holding. Coaches should explain these violations to the players.
 - If a player repeatedly plays too aggressively and poses a threat to injuring other players, he/she should be removed from the game, a coach should discuss the infringement with the player.
- **If one team is dominating the game, both coaches should agree to add a player to the less dominant team to even out play (or remove a player from the dominant team).**
- If one player has trouble getting involved in the game find ways to engage him/her by allowing him/her to opportunities to get involved i.e., tap-off (center starts), throw-ins, etc.
- There is no winning or losing team since no score is kept. Please remind players that we are here to learn and have fun!
- Coaches should promote and set an example of good sportsmanship
- Each game should conclude with all players meeting at the center of the field to line up and shake hands (or fist bump) saying “good game.” Coaches should set expectations for ALL players to participate in this end of game ritual.
- All players should receive equal playing time. It is the coaches’ responsibilities to ensure all players have fair/equal playing time.
 - From time to time, you will have players who do not want to sit out and expect to play the entire game. Please be sure you remind the players that ALL players need to take turns playing and watching.

Explaining Rules to Players:

- No hands in soccer
- Try to take the ball away from the **other team** (defending) with your feet and kick it in the goal(attacking).
- Be a good sport
- Have fun!