SOUTHWESTERN YOUTH ASSOCIATION (SYA) RECREATIONAL SOCCER

RULE MODIFICATIONS TO THE IFAB 2026/27 LAWS OF THE GAME
UNDER 10 (U10) AGE GROUP

Updated: September 1, 2026

SYA recreational soccer for the U10 age group is played in accordance with the International Football Association Board (IFAB) 2026/27 Laws of the Game except as modified in this document to incorporate U.S. Soccer guidance and standards for small-sided games.

LAW 1 – THE FIELD OF PLAY

1.1. Dimensions. The field shall be 55-65 yards long and 35-45 yards wide.

1.2. Markings. The field shall be marked as follows:

a. Distinctive lines no more than five (5) inches wide.

b. A halfway line and center mark as defined in the Laws of the Game.

c. A center circle with an eight (8) yard radius from the center mark.

d. A goal area marked by two lines perpendicular to the goal line, four (4) yards from the center of the goal (8 yards wide) and four (4) yards into the field of play, connected by a line parallel to the goal line.

e. A penalty area marked by two lines perpendicular to the goal line, twelve (12) yards from the center of the goal (24 yards wide) and twelve (12) yards into the field of play, connected by a line parallel to the goal line.

f. Four (4) corner arcs with a one (1) yard radius.

1.3. Goals no larger than 6-1/2 feet high and 18-1/2 feet wide.

a. Goals must be inspected before every game to ensure they are properly secured, anchored, and/or counterweighted.

b. No game shall be allowed to start or continue if the goal is or becomes unsafe.

c. No one shall be allowed to hang on goal frames.

1.4. Build Out Lines. Build out lines designate the areas in which opponents cannot enter during certain phases of the game (see Law 12, Law 13, and Law 16).

a. The U.S. Soccer recommended location for build out lines is equidistant from the halfway line and the top of each penalty area (see figure).

b. Build out lines are not typically part of the permanent markings on the field.

c. Any items used to designate build out lines (e.g., cones) must be safe and outside the field of play to not endanger any person or inhibit the duties of any match official (e.g., assistant referees).

1.5. Spectator Areas. During the game, spectators must remain at least three (3) yards from the field boundary lines. No spectators are permitted directly behind the goals. Wherever possible, players, coaches, and team officials should be on one side of the field and spectators on the opposite side (home team chooses side). The referee may adjust these restrictions in the best interest of the game, based on weather, heat, sun, shade, field conditions, safety, or other mitigating factors. The referee has the authority to ask head coaches to address any issues with spectators (see Law 5).

LAW 2 – THE BALL

The game is played with a Size 4 ball.

LAW 3 – THE PLAYERS

3.1. Number of Players. Each team shall have eight (8) players on the field, including the goalkeeper. Each team must have at least five (5) players on the field, including the goalkeeper, to start or continue the game. The game is temporarily paused when either team has fewer than five (5) players on the field, for example, when a player is off the field being treated for an injury, having equipment issues, or any other reason. The game may be terminated if either team can no longer field at least five (5) players.

a. Grace Period. Each team shall be ready to play with the minimum number of players within five (5) minutes after the scheduled kickoff time. The game is not played if either team is not ready to play at the end of the grace period.

3.2. Substitutions. Unlimited substitutions may be made at any stoppage in play. The referee shall give players permission to enter and leave the field.

3.3. Goal Differential (Extra Players on the Field). If any U10 recreational team scores four (4) goals more than its opponent, the trailing team's coach can add one (1) extra field player (with the referee's permission). The extra player can remain on the field if there is a four (4) or more goal differential. The trailing team's coach can only add a maximum of one (1) extra player even if the goal differential is more than four (4) goals. The leading team's coach has the option of removing one or more field players to keep the game enjoyable (up to the minimum number of players required to continue the game).

3.4. Participation. Every player must play at least 50% of the game provided the player complies with Item 15 of the "Additional SYA Soccer Club Rules, Policies, and Procedures." No player shall play the entire game unless each eligible player has played at least 75% of the total game time. Coaches, not the referee, are responsible for enforcing participation rules.

a. Goalkeepers shall play no more than 50% of the total game time as a goalkeeper. Violations of this rule should be reported by the coach in writing (email preferred) to the appropriate Age Group Coordinator no later than 24 hours after the game. If facts are validated, the game will result in a forfeit with zero (0) goals for the offending team and three (3) goals for the other team.

3.5. Special-Needs Players. The referee shall not prevent any special-needs player from participating in a game unless there is a safety issue (for any player, not just the special-needs player). Special-needs players are subject to the Laws of the Game and SYA Soccer rules and policies, although the referee may provide special consideration if it is in the best interest of the game. There shall be no protest by any coach as to whether a special-needs player can play. Any concerns will be referred to SYA Soccer after the game has been completed.

3.6. Team Captains. Teams are not required to designate a captain. If they choose to designate a captain, the captain is not required to wear an identifying armband.

LAW 4 – THE PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT

4.1. Uniforms. Players are expected to wear the approved SYA Soccer uniform (shirts, shorts, and socks). In the event of a color conflict, home team will change shirts or wear "pinnies." Numbers are not required on uniform shirts. Uniform exceptions may be granted by the referee. Any player with blood on the uniform is permitted to change into an alternate shirt (as well as shorts and/or socks) that is distinct from the opposing team's shirt color.

4.2. Footwear. Players must wear shoes that are safe and provide sufficient protection for the player's feet. Examples include: soccer shoes with or without soft/molded plastic or rubber cleats, fitness/running/walking shoes, or similar types of athletic shoes. Shoes with metal cleats are prohibited. Toe cleats near the front of the shoe are prohibited. Open-toe or open-heel shoes are prohibited.

4.3. Shinguards. All players must wear shinguards as prescribed by the Laws of the Game. Shinguards must be worn inside the socks, and the socks should completely cover the shinguards.

4.4. Accessories. Players cannot wear anything that is dangerous. Using any material to cover or conceal a dangerous item is not allowed. Allowed accessories must be safe, secure and/or covered. Allowed

accessories include soft wrist and arm bands, medical alert bracelets taped flat to the skin, religious items without sharp or hard edges worn securely under the uniform, fitness tracking devices worn securely under the uniform (e.g., in a vest), and non-dangerous hair accessories (e.g., ribbons, hair bands, headbands, "pre-wrap," hair clips, etc.). The referee will determine what is safe/allowed and ensure players remove all dangerous items.

4.5. Other Equipment.

a. Casts. A cast may be worn if it is wrapped in soft, protective material or other comparable types of covering (e.g., cushioning foam, plastic bubble wrap, etc.). The referee shall determine whether any such covering is safe and provides sufficient protection against injury to any player. The referee must ensure no player wearing a cast uses it in a manner that endangers the safety of any player.

b. Orthopedic or protective devices such as leg/ankle/knee braces or stabilizers, finger splints, and intraoral devices (mouth/teeth guards), are permitted provided they are deemed to be safe by the referee.

c. Eyewear. Players may wear eyeglasses or goggles for vision correction. Eyewear should be secured by a strap around the head and have unbreakable lenses and frames. The referee shall not disqualify a player wearing eyewear solely due to the lack of a strap and/or unbreakable lenses or frames, provided the eyewear is otherwise deemed to be safe. Players are not permitted to wear sunglasses unless required for vision correction and prescribed by a medical professional.

d. Head and face coverings. Players may wear head and face coverings (e.g., hats, protective headgear, religious head coverings, molded face masks, etc.) that are permitted by the Laws of the Game and deemed to be safe by the referee. Exceptions may be made for inclement weather (e.g., soft hats during cold weather).

e. Body or facial make-up that taunts, demeans, incites, or degrades any person is prohibited.

LAW 5 – THE REFEREE

5.1. Behavior of Coaches and Team Officials. The head coach is responsible for the sideline behavior of all players, team officials, and spectators before, during, and immediately after the game.

a. The referee shall show yellow and red cards to coaches and team officials for inappropriate behavior.

b. If the referee determines the behavior of any coach or team official is inappropriate either by action or word, or is detrimental to the orderly conduct of the game, the referee has the authority to dismiss the offending individual from the game. A prior warning is not necessary.

c. If a coach or team official is dismissed, the game shall not be restarted until the offending individual has left the vicinity of the field. In practice, this means the individual must be far enough from the field to be "out of sight and sound" and unable to influence or further disrupt the game.

d. Coaches or team officials who are dismissed shall have no further contact with the team (players or other team officials), either directly or indirectly (including using cell phones or other electronic devices).

e. Exception: If there is no other responsible adult available to remain with the team, a dismissed coach will be allowed to stay in the vicinity of the team. In such cases, the dismissed coach is not allowed to communicate with players, team officials, spectators, or any other persons, just as if the coach had been "out of sight and sound." Failure to comply with these restrictions may result in the referee terminating the game.

f. The referee has the authority to terminate any game where a dismissed coach or team official returns to the field before the game is finished.

5.2. Behavior of Spectators.

a. The referee shall not show yellow or red cards to spectators but can warn, card or dismiss head coaches who fail to control inappropriate or irresponsible behavior by spectators.

b. The referee has the authority to dismiss any spectator from the vicinity of the field if their behavior is considered inappropriate either by action or word, or is detrimental to the orderly conduct of the game.

c. The head coach, not the referee, is responsible for ensuring any dismissed spectator leaves the vicinity of the field in a timely manner. Spectators who are dismissed do not have to be "out of sight or sound" but must be sufficiently removed from the vicinity of the field and unable to cause further disruptions.

d. The referee has the authority to suspend a game if order needs to be restored, or terminate a game if order cannot be restored, to eliminate any safety concerns for the players, team officials, or match officials.

e. The referee has the authority to terminate any game where a dismissed spectator returns to the field before the game is finished.

5.3. Referees must file a complete report with the SYA Soccer Referee Commissioner, to include full details of any cards shown to coaches and team officials, within 24 hours after the game has been played. Details of any suspended or terminated games due to disorderly conduct must also be reported, regardless of whether any cards were shown.

LAW 6 – THE OTHER MATCH OFFICIALS

6.1. Club Linesman. If requested by the referee, the home and away team coaches may provide "club linesman" to assist the referee with the ball "in and out of play" decisions. If requested by the referee, club linesman may also indicate which team has possession and the direction of the restart. Club linesman shall not indicate whether a goal is scored, offside, fouls or misconduct, or any other decision not specifically authorized by the referee.

LAW 7 – THE DURATION OF THE MATCH

7.1. U10 games shall be played with two equal halves of twenty-five (25) minutes, for a total game time of fifty (50) minutes. The clock shall remain running during the game, with no time added to either half.

7.2. Halftime is five (5) minutes.

7.3. If the game begins after its scheduled kickoff time, the referee will reduce the length of each half accordingly so that there will be two equal length halves and the game ends on time. This includes games delayed due to weather, field preparation issues, unsafe playing conditions, players not arriving on time, or any other reason.

7.4. The referee, in consultation with both coaches, may shorten the length of each half due to weather, adverse playing conditions, poor lightning/darkness, or similar reason.

7.5. The referee may add a water/hydration or cooling break no longer than three (3) minutes to either half. The clock shall remain running during any such break and the time will not be added to either half. Throwing water/fluid containers to players on the field is prohibited.

7.6. Thunder and Lightning (30-Minute Rule).

a. Any time thunder is heard or lightning is observed, the referee shall immediately suspend the game and direct all people to leave the field and proceed with haste to the nearest shelter. There are no exceptions to this policy.

b. All people should remain in a sheltered location (e.g., cars, buildings, etc.) for thirty (30) minutes before resuming soccer activities.

c. The 30-minute waiting period begins each time thunder is heard or lightning is seen.

d. If field conditions become safe (e.g., thunder and lightning are no longer present), the referee should let coaches know if and when a game may be resumed.

e. Play should not be resumed after a weather-related suspension if doing so would cause the game to be finished after its scheduled time slot, unless resumption does not interfere with any subsequently scheduled game.

LAW 8 – THE START AND RESTART OF PLAY

Opponents must be in their own half of the field and at least eight (8) yards from the ball for a kickoff.

LAW 9 – THE BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game.

LAW 10 – DETERMINING THE OUTCOME OF A MATCH

10.1. Game Results. U.S. Soccer does not recommend keeping game results and team standings for small-sided games. SYA Soccer monitors game results in the U10 recreational league to balance the level of play in the end-of-season tournament.

10.2. Penalty Shoot-Out. Any eligible player can participate in a penalty shoot-out. Kickers are not limited to players on the field (or temporarily off the field due to injury or equipment issues) at the end of regulation time or overtime. Players who have been sent off during a game (shown a red card) are not eligible. This rule modification allows every eligible player the opportunity to help determine the outcome of a match. The referee may permit coaches to be with their players on the field during a penalty shoot-out. Disciplinary actions under Law 12, as well as code of conduct and behavior rules for team officials under Law 5, shall remain in effect for any team official on or off the field during a penalty shoot-out.

LAW 11 – OFFSIDE

11.1. The build out line will be used to denote where offside offenses can be called (see Figure 1).

a. Players cannot be penalized for an offside offense between the halfway line and build out line.

b. Players can be penalized for an offside offense between the build out line and goal line.

LAW 12 – FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

12.1. No Heading the Ball. Players are not permitted to play the ball with their head.

a. The referee must stop play immediately whenever the ball hits a player in the head. The restart depends on whether the player intentionally played the ball with their head. If so, the restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team in accordance with Law 13. If accidental or unintentional, the restart is a dropped ball (drop to goalkeeper if accidental heading occurs inside the penalty area).

b. Any player with a suspected head injury must be removed from the game (but only if it is safe to move the player) and shall not return to the game unless cleared to do so.

c. In the absence of a medical professional or certified athletic trainer, the referee has the authority to deny the player's reentry into the game if there are any safety concerns.

d. If a coach, parent, or other individual insists on returning the player to the game despite these safety concerns, the referee has the authority to terminate the game.

12.2. No Sliding. Players are not permitted to slide on the ground. Sliding occurs when a player intentionally leaves their feet to play the ball on the ground. This includes tackling the ball, preventing the ball from leaving the field, or simply attempting to gain possession or control of the ball. Stumbling or falling on the ground is not sliding. Players should be reminded to stay on their feet. The referee may penalize repeated infractions under Law 12 and Law 13, for example, sliding is playing in a dangerous manner.

a. Exception: Goalkeepers in their own penalty area shall be allowed to slide on the ground if the referee does not consider the action to be a danger to any player (including the goalkeeper). Goalkeepers are permitted to make sliding saves to prevent a goal or a ball from leaving the field.

12.3. Any player may use their hands or arms for protection if the referee decides they are shielding their face, head, neck, or chest from impact with the ball. Referees should consider the speed, distance, and trajectory with which the ball approaches the player, as well as whether the player could have, but chose not to, avoid the ball. The referee has the final decision as to whether any such action is legally executed.

12.4. Goalkeepers.

a. Goalkeepers are not allowed to punt or drop kick the ball. They can pass (kick), throw, or roll the ball into play. If a goalkeeper punts or drop kicks the ball, the referee will stop the game and drop the ball to the offending team's goalkeeper in their penalty area. The ball is in play when it touches the ground. Goalkeepers in their own penalty area can handle a dropped ball (for example, catch it, stop it with their hands, pick it up, bounce it, etc.).

b. Opposing team players must move behind the build out line whenever a goalkeeper has possession of the ball. Goalkeepers can put the ball into play once opponents have moved behind the build out line. The eight (8) second requirement to release the ball does not begin until opponents have moved behind the build out line. Opponents can cross the build out line once the ball is back in play.

LAW 13 – FREE KICKS

Opposing team players must be at least eight (8) yards from the position of the free kick (unless they are on their own goal line and between the goal posts).

LAW 14 – THE PENALTY KICK

No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game.

LAW 15 – THE THROW-IN

No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game.

LAW 16 – THE GOAL KICK

16.1. Opposing team players must move behind the build out line and may not cross the build out line until the ball is kicked by the kicking team.

a. A goal kick shall be retaken if any opposing player commits a goal kick offense unless advantage is given by the referee.

b. Exception: The kicking team may take a “quick kick” before opposing players move behind the build out line. In this case, the goal kick shall not be retaken even if the opposing team gains possession of the ball, since the kicking team chose to kick/play the ball quickly.

LAW 17 – THE CORNER KICK

Opposing team players must be at least eight (8) yards from the corner arc.

U10 RECREATIONAL SOCCER RULE MODIFICATIONS TO THE IFAB 2026/27 LAWS OF THE GAME SEPTEMBER 1, 2026		
Law 1	The Field of Play	– Field Dimensions: 55-65 yards long by 35-45 yards wide – Center Circle: 8-yard radius – Goal Area: 4 x 8 yards – Penalty Area: 12 x 24 yards – Penalty Mark: 10 yards from goal line – Penalty Arc: 8-yard radius from penalty mark – Corner Arc: 1-yard radius – Corner flags are not mandatory; substitute items must be safe if used – Goals: 6½ x 18½ feet (maximum) – Build Out Line: equidistant from halfway line and goal lines; not permanently marked on field. Items used to indicate build out lines must be safe, outside field of play, and not inhibit duties of match officials
Law 2	The Ball	Size 4
Law 3	The Players	– 8 v 8 – 7 field players plus goalkeeper – Minimum of 5 players to start/continue game – No team captains are required on the field of play nor any player wear a qualifying armband
	Grace Period	5 minutes after scheduled kickoff time to field a minimum of 5 players
	Substitutions	Unlimited at any stoppage in play (with referee's permission)
	Goal Differential	4 goals – trailing team add maximum of 1 player; leading team has <u>option</u> of removing 1 player
	Participation Rule	– Every player must play at least 50% of game – Goalkeepers can play no more than 50% of game (as a goalkeeper)
Law 4	The Players' Equipment	Uniform numbers are not required
Law 5	The Referee	– Head coach is responsible for behavior of all players, team officials, and spectators – Referees can show yellow/red cards to coaches/team officials but not to spectators
Law 6	The Other Match Officials	– No Assistant Referees (or other match officials). If used, other match officials have all responsibilities and authorities under the Laws of the Game – If requested by the referee, home and away team coaches will provide "club linesman" to assist referee with ball in/out of play decisions – Club linesman may indicate possession/direction of restart at the referee's discretion
Law 7	The Duration of the Match	– 2 x 25-minute halves (no added time) (total game time = 50 minutes) – 5-minute halftime – Referees can incorporate up to 3-minute water/hydration/cooling break in any half
Law 8	The Start and Restart of Play	Opponents must be at least 8 yards from ball on kickoff
Law 9	The Ball In and Out of Play	No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game
Law 10	Determining the Outcome of a Match	– All eligible players may participate in a penalty shoot-out (players sent off (red card) are not eligible) – Coaches and non-kicking players may remain with their teams on the field during a penalty shoot-out (at the referee's discretion)
Law 11	Offside	Offside judged from build out lines to goal lines. No offside between halfway line and build out lines
Law 12	Fouls and Misconduct	– All female players may use their hands or arms for chest protection – Any player may use their hands or arms to protect their head, face, or neck from impact with the ball (at the referee's discretion)
	No Heading Rule	Players cannot play the ball with their head – If play is intentional, restart is an indirect free kick to opponent – If play is unintentional or accidental, restart is a dropped ball to team that played ball before head contact (drop to goalkeeper if heading occurs inside penalty area)
	No Sliding Rule	– Field players cannot slide on the ground (intentionally leave their feet) for any reason – <u>Exception</u>: Goalkeepers can make sliding saves in their own penalty area if there is no danger to any player (including the goalkeeper)
	Build Out Rule	– Goalkeepers cannot punt or drop kick ball; ball must be kicked, thrown, or rolled into play – Opponents must move behind build out line when other team's goalkeeper has possession of the ball
Law 13	The Free Kick	Opponents must be at least 8 yards away (unless standing on own goal line between goal posts)
Law 14	The Penalty Kick	No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game
Law 15	The Throw-In	No SYA modifications to the Laws of the Game
Law 16	The Goal Kick	Opponents must be behind build out line for kicking team's goal kick
Law 17	The Corner Kick	Opponents must be at least 8 yards from the corner arc