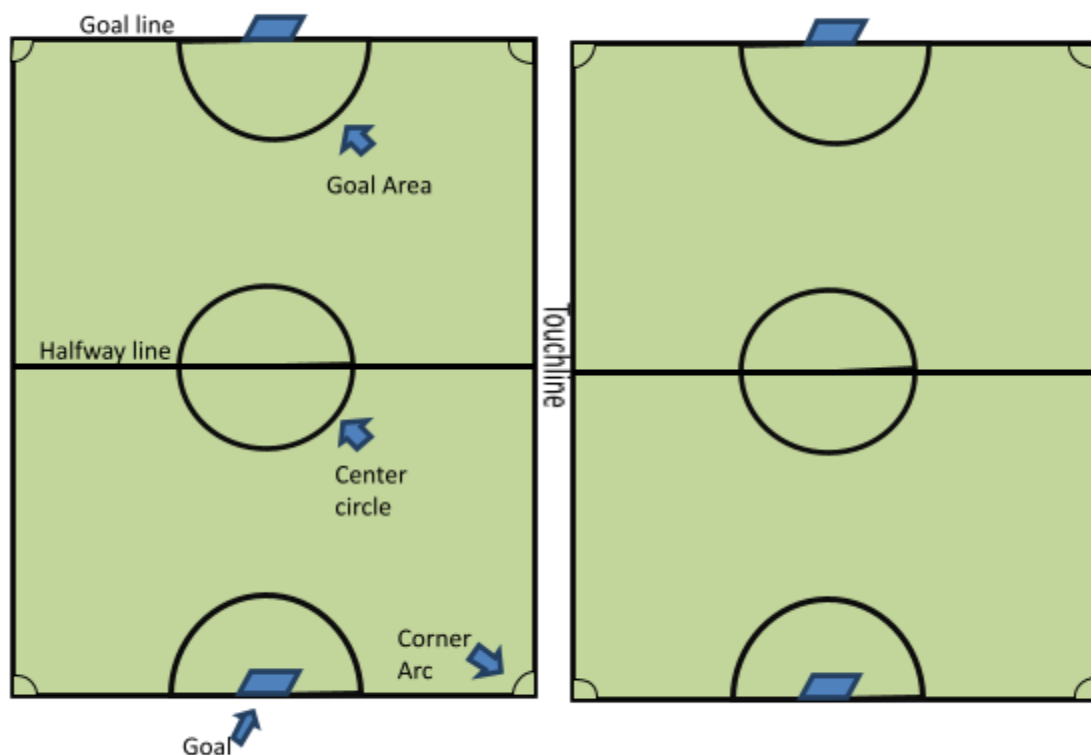




AYSO Region 13 Modifications for 6U, 7U & 8U Divisions [Revised Aug, 2026]

Region 13 has developed specific rule modifications and guidelines for our 6U, 7U & 8U divisions. As with all AYSO rules and modifications, they are designed to make the game safe, fair, and fun by providing an age appropriate experience to help players develop. For these younger players, the rules are particularly designed to keep all of the players involved in the game, having fun, and getting touches on the ball— thus, no substitutes sitting out, no defenders or attackers parking by the goal, no penalty kicks, no goalkeepers, and no keeping score at this age. FIFA's Laws of the Game still provide the basis for introducing our young boys and girls to the beautiful game, and the modifications below track the 17 Laws set out by FIFA and are intended to be used in conjunction with the Laws of the Game.



Law 1— The Field of Play

(See *diagrams above*.) The side-by-side small fields have no penalty area because there are no goal keepers and no penalty kicks. The goal areas are arc shaped. Small goals are provided.

Law 2 — The Ball

A size *three* (3) soccer ball is used. Ball should be firm (not hard as a rock and not spongy).

Law 3 — The Players

Each team will send half of its players to each field. There are no substitutions — every player plays the entire game (unless a player asks to sit out). If one team has more players than the other, the coaches

should work together to make sure there is enough balance for the players to have an enjoyable game. (Players often enjoy playing for the other team.) There are no goalkeepers.

At half time, the players from the home team switch fields, so that they are playing against the other half of the visiting team. At half time, the teams also switch ends of the fields to attack the opposite goal. (Except that for 6U games, the teams do not switch ends but go the same direction all game.)

Law 4 — The Player's Equipment [these are mostly safety rules]

The no-accessories (jewelry) mandate is to be **strictly enforced** for safety — no earrings, no bracelets (includes friendship bracelets, rubber bands, silly bands, etc.), no necklaces, etc. Beads woven into the hair are allowed, provided they are tightly secured to the head and not swinging in a dangerous manner. Med-alert bracelets or necklaces are the **only** exception, but should be taped down or otherwise secured for safety. Taping over earrings is **not** acceptable; the earrings must be removed. There are **no exceptions**. (This is from Law 4 of the IFAB Laws of the Game; it is not just an AYSO rule.) Coaches must help referees enforce these guidelines.

Casts and splints are never permitted. (Nor may the player remove them to play — safe, fair & fun.)

Cleats are recommended, not required. Tennis shoes or other closed-toe shoes are permitted.

Shin guards are mandatory and must be worn under the socks — not over the socks with the socks pulled down over them.

Referees should permit reasonable clothing for warmth— the uniform shirt must always be on top and any hoods tucked inside the uniform shirt.

Law 5 — The Referee

In Region 13 6U, 7U & 8U games, typically there will be two referees (sometimes only one), each of whom has been certified by AYSO for 8U play. (Each team should bring two referees to each game.) One referee stays near each touchline; each has primary responsibility for determining whether the ball leaves the field at one goal line. Either referee may call a foul. No referee may overrule another referee.

One pre-game coin flip should take place for both fields. The team winning the coin flip can choose to kick off or can choose the goal to attack, which should be the same on each field. The other team makes the remaining choice: either chooses the goal to attack or kicks off in the first half.

- For 6U games, each team may have one coach on the field on each field being used.
- For 7U games, each team may have one coach on the field only in September.
- 8U coaches are not permitted on the field.

The referee should stop play immediately for injuries. Coaches should be called onto the field to check on the player as needed – *coaches must wait for the referee to call them onto the field*. In the 6U, 7U & 8U divisions, the player need not leave the game when play is stopped for an injury. If the ball is in play when play is stopped for an injury, play should be restarted by a dropped ball to a player on the team which last touched the ball before play was stopped.

Parents and other spectators are not allowed behind the goal and should be at least one yard behind the touch line to avoid interfering with play.

Coaches and parents are reminded that, consistent with the AYSO philosophy of Good Sportsmanship, they are responsible for supporting the referees and setting a good example for the players. Parents and coaches should remember that many of the referees are new to being referees.¹

Law 6 — The Assistant Referee

¹ While it should never occur at this level, referees must warn, and if necessary, dismiss coaches for inappropriate behavior. *If a referee dismisses a coach, the game should be terminated*. Parents are the responsibility of the coach. If parent behavior is inappropriate, the referee should ask the coach to speak to the parent. If inappropriate behavior continues, the referee should ask the coach to tell the parent he or she must leave, and the game should not start until the parent has left. *Coaches **must** support the Referee in these cases*. If a coach or parent is dismissed (or there are problems but not an actual dismissal), the referee should notify the Division Referee Coordinator or Regional Referee Administrator.

No assistant referees are used in Region 13 6U, 7U & 8U games. (If only one referee is on the field, the referee has the option to ask a parent on each touch line to help with ball over the line calls.)

Law 7 — The Duration of the Match

6U plays 16 minute halves; 7U and 8U play 20 minute halves. Approximately half way through each half, when the ball is out of play, the referee will allow a quick water break. *The clock runs during the water break, so teams are urged to keep them short so that the players get more actual playing time. **Games must end on time.***

Law 8 — The Start and Restart of Play

The ball must be kicked and clearly move in any direction on the kick off. Players from both teams must be on their own half of the field (except for the player taking the kick). The team opposing the kickoff must be entirely outside of the center circle until the ball is kicked. The player taking the kickoff (or free kick, goal kick, corner kick, or throw-in) is not permitted to touch the ball again until it is touched by another player from either team. In 6U, 7U & 8U games, the kickoff (or other restart) should be retaken with the rule explained to the player. *(Note that in soccer, unlike American football, the kicker may - and usually does - pass the ball to a teammate on a kickoff.)*

Law 9 – The Ball in and out of Play

The whole ball must cross the whole line (in the air or on the ground) for the ball to be out of play at the goal line or the touch line.

Law 10 — The Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball goes over the whole goal line (in the air or on the ground) inside the goal. *(Tip: A team may not score directly against itself on any restart.)* After a goal, the team that was scored against takes a kick off.

Referees and coaches are reminded we do not keep score at these levels. Players and parents should be politely encouraged to stop if they are talking about the score or how many goals they scored.

Law 11 — Offside [Replaced with a Ban on Parking and Cherry-Picking]

The offside rule is not used in 6U, 7U & 8U games.

Players are not, however, permitted to hang out by the goal *on either offense or defense*. To enhance Player Development, all players are encouraged to be in the area of active play even when they don't have the ball — either actively making themselves targets for passes or actively defending opposing players (as opposed to hanging back guarding the goal). *Coaches must support referees* in directing players away if they are hanging out by the goal.

- If a defending team gains an advantage from parking a defender near the goal, the referee may award a free kick and explain to the players why.
- If an attacker gains an advantage by cherry-picking near the goal, the referee should award a free kick to the defending team and explain why. (If the attacker scores, the goal should not be allowed and play should be restarted with a goal kick.)

(Repeat issues with parking and cherry-picking by a team should be reported by the referee or the other coach to the Division Coach so that the Division Coach can work with the team coach on how to handle these issues during games.)

Law 12 — Fouls and Misconduct

The fouls listed in Law 12 (except those pertaining to goal keepers) apply. The most common fouls that occur in these games are:

- Deliberate handling of the ball with the hands or arms — *unintended touches of the ball, or moving the hands for protection are not deliberate and should not be punished. It can be helpful to call out “not deliberate, keep playing” if the ball touches a player’s hands or arms but is not an offense.*
- Kicking an opponent — a careless kick of an opponent is an offense and should be called.
- Tripping — often occurs when a player misses the ball and instead trips an opponent.
- Pushing — players may not be aware that they are pushing an opponent, but it is still a foul.

- Holding — may take place when a player grabs an opponent's shirt in trying to get the ball or uses an arm to keep an opponent from getting to the ball.

When a foul is called at this level, the referee should, in a kind way, explain why the foul was called.

Cautions and send offs: *Yellow and red cards are not used at this level.* Referees will work with coaches to address conduct issues.

Heading Ban: *As a safety precaution, AYSO prohibits intentionally heading the ball at this level. If a player intentionally hits the ball with his head, a free kick is given to the other team.*

Law 13 —Free Kicks [how play is restarted after fouls]

All free kicks in 6U, 7U & 8U games are indirect. (This means that a goal cannot be scored directly from any free kick — it must touch another player, from either team, before it can score; if the ball enters the opponents' goal without being touched, it is a goal kick for the opponent. This encourages players to pass the ball on free kicks. In 6U games, referees should be particularly aware that games are for fun, and 6U players are very inexperienced and learning. While teaching players to pass is part of the objective of this rule, referees should use discretion to overlook an infraction of this rule in 6U games and simply celebrate a goal if it is scored.) The player who takes the free kick may not kick it a second time until another player from either team touches or is touched by the ball. (If the player does, explain the rule and retake the kick.)

All opponents must be 6 yards from the spot of the kick. (A teammate may be closer, and the ball may be passed to that teammate.)

All free kicks take place at the spot of the foul, except:

- If a defender is fouled inside the defensive goal area, the ball may be placed anywhere in the goal area for the free kick (just like a goal kick).
- If an attacker is fouled inside the attacking goal area, the ball is moved outside the goal area.

Law 14 —The Penalty Kick

There are no penalty kicks in 6U, 7U & 8U games.

Law 15 — The Kick-in or Throw-in [how play restarts after ball goes over the touch line]

Throw-ins are not used in 6U and younger. When the whole ball goes over the whole touch line, the opponents of the team that last touched or were touched by the ball take a kick-in from the place the ball crossed the touch line. The ball is placed on the touch line and kicked into play. Opponents must be at least two yards away. The player taking the kick-in may dribble the ball (with the feet!) if they choose to.

Throw-ins are used at 7U and 8U. The thrower should have both feet on the ground, on or behind the touch line, and throw the ball from over the head with both hands. If the throw is not done properly, the referee should explain what was not done correctly, and permit the player another throw. If the second throw-in is still not done correctly, the referee should simply let play continue.

Law 16 — The Goal Kick [when an attacker last touches a ball that goes over the goal line]

Goal kicks are taken from anywhere within the goal area. All opponents must be at least 6 yards away from the ball when the kick is taken. The ball is not in play on a goal kick until it leaves the goal area. (The player who kicked the goal kick may not kick the ball again until it is touched by a player on either team; if the player kicks the ball a second time, explain the rule and retake the goal kick.)

Law 17 — The Corner Kick [when a defender last touches a ball that goes over the goal line]

Corner kicks are taken from the arc marked at the corner of the field. Spectators should be asked to move to give the player room to take the kick. If no arc is marked on the field, the ball should be placed within a yard or so of the corner. All opponents must be at least 6 yards away from the ball when the kick is taken. (The player who kicked the corner kick may not kick the ball again until it is touched by a player on either team; if the player kicks the ball a second time, explain the rule and retake the corner kick.)

The Laws of the Game only have 17 Laws. But referees sometimes refer to "Law 18" which they talk about as the Law of common sense. Always use common sense and keep in mind the AYSO credo of safe, fair, and fun in making decisions.



You can ask questions about the Laws of the Game or other referee issues on the "Ask the Ref" page of the Region 13 website: <https://ayso13.org/ask-the-referee/>

Revised 9.01.24