

Walker Recreation Soccer Rules (updated 1/15/2025)

Each season, team roster sizes determine how many players take the field for games in each age group.

NOTE: *These rules are subject to change. Attendance problems may cause these numbers to be modified on game day, so please be flexible with the officials and other coaches if a situation like that arises. Coaches usually prefer to be well-prepared with game day line-ups, but sometimes a little adaptability is necessary to get the kids out on the fields and get those games played.*

Ages	The Ball	Players	Substitution	Duration
4	Size (3)	Up to 3 per side	At All Times	(2) 10-min periods
5-6	Size (3)	Up to 6 per side	At All Times	(2) 13-min periods
7-8	Size (3)	Up to 9 per side	NCAA ^[1]	(2) 20-min periods
9-10	Size (4)	Up to 9 per side	NCAA ^[1]	(2) 20-min periods
11-13	Size (5)	Up to 9 per side	NCAA ^[1]	(2) 30-min periods

Timekeeping

A countdown timer is set to sound an alarm at the end of a play period, whereupon two long blasts of the whistle are sounded. Three long whistle blasts are sounded at the end of the final period.

Timekeeping for the Age 4's

Practices on game day **(10 minutes)**. Posted game times represent the start time of this practice interval. Officials will be available to answer questions and to assist coaches. After that practice period, there will be **one (1) 10-minute period per half with a 3-minute water break between periods on a 13-minute second half** running clock. Substitutions are allowed at any time.

Timekeeping for Ages 5-6

Practices on game day **(20 minutes)**. Posted game times represent the start time of this practice interval. Officials will be available to answer questions and to assist coaches. After that practice period, there will be **one (1) 13-minute period per half** with a 4-minute water break between periods on a 17-minute second half running clock. Substitutions are allowed at any time.

Timekeeping for Ages 7-8 and 9-10

There will be **one (1) 20-minute period per half** with a five (5) minute water break between periods on a 25-minute second half running clock. During the game, substitutions are allowed during certain stoppages per the NCAA substitution rules.

Timekeeping for Ages 11-13

There will be **one (1) 30-minute period per half** with a five (5) minute break between periods on a 35-minute second half running clock. During the game, substitutions are allowed during certain stoppages per the NCAA substitution rules.

Field Position of the Players

In soccer, there are two classes of players: field players; plus one (1) goalkeeper. In the recreation program, these numbers vary with the number of sign-ups received and available coaches. When you see, for example, that your age group will play with “9 per side,” that means 9 players total: 8 field players plus one (1) goalkeeper. For ages 4-6, there is no goalkeeper.

Field Position of the Officials

In the 4-6 age groups, the field is very small, and a single official controls the game (and sometimes, the coaches). In all other age groups (7-8, 9-10 and 11-13), two officials will work as a team to control the games.

With two referees on the field, the referees should position themselves on opposite sides of the field and on about a 45-degree angle from one another, such that one referee is always closer to a different goal line than the other. Both referees should always be close enough to the play action to spot fouls, especially handling the ball and pushing, and easily see which team kicked the ball out of bounds.

Equipment Inspections

Before the start of each match, the coaches and officials will line the players up for equipment inspections. All players must follow these equipment rules:

- They have **shin guards** and if they don't have built-in socks, that are **fully-covered with proper soccer socks on the outside**.
- **No hanging or loose jewelry or watches**. Medical alert bracelets are allowed, but **medical casts and splints are not allowed**. Exceptions can be made: A doctor's note is required to

be filed with the Recreation Department office prior to game day. No hard plaster cast can be worn unless covered in foam for safety of other players.

- **They are not wearing cleats with screw-in studs.**
- They **wear their team jersey on the outside** of all other clothing.

Start of Play (the Kick-Off)

The kick-off starts the game at the beginning and restarts the play after a goal is scored.

A team that is awarded a kick-off retains possession of the ball by kicking off to a teammate, which is the opposite of American gridiron football. It is not a penalty to kick off to the opposite team, but it is an immediate loss of possession. Younger and less-experienced players should be taught to kick off to teammates, even if they are behind you.

Beginning Side Selection and Taking Turns

According to the LOTG, the coin toss winner gets field side selection, while the other team takes the kick-off to start the match. Our rules are different. The two teams normally migrate to one side of the field or the other, so by the time you administer a coin toss, the players are already on the field and in position, ready to go. Therefore, the winner of the coin toss decides whether they will take the kick-off or give it to the other team.

As an alternative to the coin toss, it is permissible to let the two players engage in a round of 'Paper-Scissors-Rock' for side selection. This is a good back-up at this level of play for those situations in which a coin is not available.

A kick-off is used to restart play at the beginning of each period and after each goal is scored. The two teams take turns kicking off at for a new time period; that is to say, after each timekeeping period ends, the opposite team restarts play with a kick-off. Remember, if a goal is scored, the team that lost the goal restarts the game with a kick-off, but this does not change the back-and-forth pattern of timekeeping period kick-offs.

For example: If Team 'A' kicks off to start the play in the first time period then scores a goal, Team 'B' takes a kick-off from the middle of the field to restart play because they conceded a goal. When the second timekeeping period starts, Team 'B' gets another kickoff; this time, because Team 'A' had the kick-off to begin the previous time period.

Substitutions

When Substitutions are Allowed

Substitutes may enter the game under the following conditions:

4-6 age groups:

The 4-6 age groups may substitute players at any time, with or without game stoppage. Players are permitted to enter or leave the field at the coaches or parents' discretion; however, players may not enter the field if doing so would cause there to be a greater number of players than allowed.

7-8, 9-10 and 11-13 age groups:

- On any goal kick
- On a team's own throw-in
- On a team's own corner kick
- On an opponent's throw-in or corner kick, if the opponent also substitutes
- After a goal has been scored
- At half time (or during break, 7-8 Age Group)
- When a player has been cautioned or sent off (yellow or red card)
- When a player has been instructed to leave the field for equipment change

Substitution Reporting

During live play, substitutes shall not enter the field of play until they report to the referee by calling for a substitution. The substitute players must wait at the center line until they are beckoned by the referee. Any number of players can come into the game on any dead ball for either team, so long as the conditions of Rule 4-1., above, have been satisfied. A player may only enter the field of play when beckoned by the referee to enter.

Substitution Violation

Any player who enters or leaves the field during the progress of the game, except through normal movement of play, without the referee's permission shall be guilty of misconduct.

Substitution PENALTY

The player shall be cautioned (show the yellow card) and the opponent team shall be awarded an indirect free kick from the location of the ball at the time of the infraction.

Substitutions may not be permitted during live play or at any time without the acknowledgment of a referee. To acknowledge a substitution, blow the whistle to signal the other referee and have the player hold the ball. Raise a hand in the air straight up and hold it there until the substitution is complete. You should count the number of players on the field for both teams any time a substitution occurs. Players must come onto the field from the touchline at the halfway line. Kindly remind the coaches of this as necessary. If a 12th player takes the field without being acknowledged or otherwise in violation of these rules, issue a yellow card to the 12th player and direct that player to return to the coach.

Fouls and Misconduct

Players

Law 12 of FIFA's Laws of the Game (LOTG) cover the enforcement of the game's rules by the referee. These rules are designed to keep the game fair and safe. This gives the referee a lot of power to regulate the flow of the game while keeping the players safe, so this is actually a very important responsibility.

For coaches, players, and parents, knowing the Laws of the Game will make you a better teacher, contestant, and spectator.

Enforcement Categories

Law 12 also covers fouls and misconduct for players, coaches, and team officials. These rules are broken down into four enforcement categories:

- [Indirect Free Kick](#)

Indirect free kicks are awarded to the opposing team when a player commits an *technical* offense.

An indirect free kick may not directly score a goal unless the ball first touches another player. If an indirect free kick passes into the goal, a goal is not counted, and the defending team is awarded a goal kick as if the ball had simply gone out-of-bounds.

Note that there are no indirect free kicks in the 4-6 age groups: **All free kicks are direct free kicks in the 4-6 age groups.**

An indirect free kick is awarded for the following offenses:

- kick-off taker touches ball a 2nd time in a row
- offside: Indirect, taken from the place where the player who was offside was standing
- plays in a [dangerous manner](#)
- impedes the progress of an opponent
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
- commits any other offense, not previously mentioned here or under 'Direct Free Kick', below, for which play is stopped to caution or send off a player
- [Direct Free Kick](#) (or Penalty Kick, if the offense occurs in the offender's own penalty area)

Direct free kicks are awarded to the opposing team when a player commits an offense of a *violent nature or of physical contact*, or the technical offense of handling the ball.

A goal may be scored directly from a direct free kick. A direct free kick is awarded when a player:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- jumps at an opponent
- [charges](#) an opponent

- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- pushes an opponent
- tackles an opponent
- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his own penalty area)
- **Yellow Card** (may require an indirect or direct free kick)

A referee should administer a caution by showing the yellow card if a player:

- delays the restart of play
- shows dissent by word or action
- goes up for a header against another player (both players cautioned)
- enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission
- deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission
- fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick or free kick
- persistently infringes the Laws of the Game
- **Red Card** (usually requires a direct free kick or a penalty kick)
- At the referee's discretion, some of these offenses may be cautioned with a yellow card. Normally, a player will be shown the red card and sent-off immediately if that player:
- denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal-scoring opportunity by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his own penalty area)
- denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offense punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
- serious foul play
- spits at an opponent or any other person
- violent conduct
- uses offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- receives a second caution in the same match
- If a player is shown the red card and sent off, their team may then only play with one less player (total 10 players instead of 11, for example). Please note that no discretion should be shown for severe foul language, obscenity, or dangerous violence. Safety is our Number One priority, and the removal of dangerous players should be used to effect safe game play.

- Additionally, an official or a field supervisor may eject a coach or spectator if he commits any of these offenses or for another serious violation of the park or soccer program rules.

Advantage Rule

In soccer, the advantage rule gives the referee discretionary power to ignore an infraction of the LOTG if the enforcement of that rule (ie, stopping the flow of the play in action) would unfairly disadvantage a team in possession of the ball.

For example, a player on 'Team A' is making a run with the ball towards goal, and he is pushed violently by an opponent from 'Team B' - but maintains possession of the ball and a goal scoring opportunity. 'Team A' is said to have the **advantage** after the offense, so stopping the play now would unfairly disadvantage the attacker. Thus, play should be allowed to continue until the next stoppage, at which point the offending player may be verbally warned for his poor conduct, cautioned (with the yellow card) or sent off (with the red card) as appropriate.

Ball in and Out of Play

According to the LOTG, the ball is out of play when:

- it has wholly passed over the goal line or touchline on the ground or in the air
- it hits an official, and then: (1) starts a promising attack; (2) scores a goal; or (3) changes possession to the opposite team
- play has been stopped by the referee

"Wholly passed over" the line means that the back edge of the ball has crossed completely past the outside edge of the painted line (see the illustration).

The Off the Side (Offside) Rule

(Or more commonly, "offside" — Enforced only for Ages 9-13)

What is an "offside position"?

A player is in an **offside position** when:

1. on the opponent's half of the field; and
2. nearer to the opponent's goal line than both the ball and the second-last opponent

When is an "offside" player penalized?

A player in an offside position at the moment the ball is played or touched by a team-mate is only penalized when they become actively involved in the play by:

- interfering with the play by **making contact with the ball**; or
- **interfering with an opponent**

“Interfering with an opponent” means doing one of these things (or something similar):

- clearly **obstructing** the opponent’s line of vision
- **challenging an opponent** for the ball
- **clearly attempting to play a ball** which is close to him **when this action impacts on an opponent**
- making an **obvious action** which **clearly impacts on the ability of an opponent to play the ball**

Coaches and Team Officials

Special rules apply to the coaches and team officials.

Extra Persons on the Field of Play

Off-field players, “team officials” (which includes coaches and assistant coaches) or “outside agents” may not enter the field of play or interfere with the play. If they do, it has the same effect as having too many players on the field of play and is penalized according to Law 3, Rule 7 (“Extra persons on the field of play”). This basically means if an off-field player or a coach interferes with the play in any way or commits an otherwise cautionable or sending-off offense, the referee may stop play and award the opposing team a direct free kick or penalty kick. If a goal is scored during the same attack as such interference or a cautionable or sending-off offense, such a goal shall be disallowed unless the team conceding the goal is responsible.

If any interference with the play or any offense is committed by an outside agent (e.g. a parent or a unrestrained child, a pet or other wildlife, a loose extra ball, etc.), play must be stopped. Play resumes in this case by a dropped ball.

Each team may have one single coach on the field during the game in the Age 4, 5-6 and 7-8 age groups.

The Technical Area (*Ages 9-13 only*)

The entire space between fields 1A (9-10 field) and 1B (11-13 field) is the “Technical Area.” A cone barrier and a sign are posted here to mark the space. **Only coaches, players, and officials are allowed to enter this space during games.** Any extra persons (“outside agents”) occupying this space are deemed “extra persons on the field of play” and play may be stopped until their removal per Law 3, Rule 7 (see below).

During play, interaction with the coaches or youth soccer players by unauthorized persons is strictly prohibited within the “Technical Area.”

Disciplinary Actions

Team officials (coaches, assistant coaches) may be **warned** if:

- entering the field of play
- failing to cooperate with a match official

Team officials (coaches, assistant coaches) may be **cautioned** (yellow card) if:

- clearly/persistently not respecting the confines of their team's technical area
- delaying the restart of play by their team
- dissent by word or action
- excessively/persistently gesturing for a red or yellow card
- gesturing or acting in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- persistent unacceptable behavior
- showing a lack of respect for the game

Team officials (coaches, assistant coaches) may be **sent off** (red card) if:

- delaying the restart of play
- deliberately leaving the technical area to show dissent towards, or remonstrate with, a match official
- act in a provocative or inflammatory manner
- enter the opposing team's technical area in an aggressive or confrontational manner
- deliberately throwing/kicking an object onto the field of play
- entering the field of play to confront a match official (including at half-time and full-time)
- entering the field of play to interfere with play, an opposing player or a match official
- violent, physical or aggressive behavior
- a second caution in the same match
- using offensive, insulting or abusive language and/or gestures

If no coaches are available as a result of a sending off, the match is abandoned but may be rescheduled by the office in the following weeks. Alternately, if a field supervisor is available, the supervisor may take over coaching for the team for the remainder of the game per discretion.