

Soccer a Sideline Guide for Parents



by
Jamie MacLeod
Cameron Grant

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Introduction

If you are reading this guide because you are new to soccer, you are not alone. You have just joined not thousands, but millions of other parents across North America whose children have taken up soccer.

Why have this guide? Because many parents in North America have never had any contact with soccer. This guide explains many of the things that coaches and players take for granted. Unlike adults in other sports, soccer parents are learning the game from their kids. This of course is intolerable, since we are older and will *always know more than they do*. This book is your secret source of wisdom.

Soccer is the fastest growing sport in North America. The growth of soccer is primarily coming from young children. So with these kids come soccer parents like you, many of whom have no experience with the game. This book is not a manual or textbook for coaching or making star players. It's meant to help you and your child get the most out of the world's greatest game.

Who knows, you might start playing yourself!

Thank you,

James MacLeod
Cameron Grant

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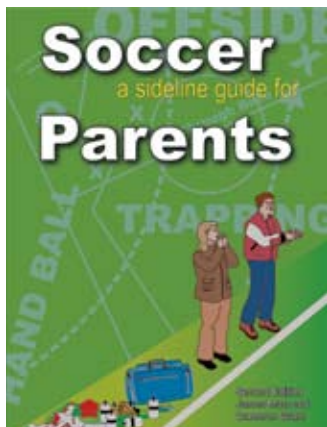
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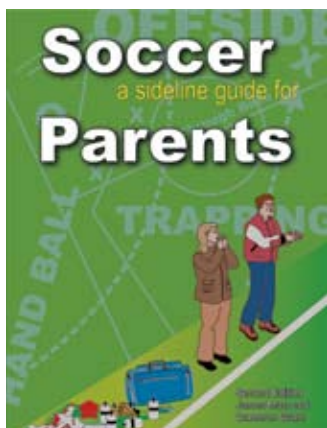
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Why learn all this soccer stuff?

Covered in this guide are many of the fundamental things that happen in a soccer game. Does all this soccer stuff really apply to your child? It sure does! Now that may be hard to believe if your child is really young and you're just trying to see an arm or a leg in a pack of kids chasing the ball. How could anything come from that chaotic mass of children shuffling around the field?

You are in luck, because now is the best time for you to learn about the game. The next few years can be very rewarding. Why? Because that ball chasing pack will expand. As the kids get older they will spread out and the game will start to take shape. With an understanding of the game you will be able to see the progression. It can be very rewarding for you to see the tremendous difference in your child's play from the beginning to the end of a season.

If your child is older, you will start to see the game in a different way. The game and what the players do will start to make more sense. Knowing what to see in the game will make it much more fun for you to watch.

Improve communication between you and your child!

It can be very rewarding for you to see the tremendous difference in your child's play from the beginning to the end of a season.

This guide will give you the basics of seeing both teamwork and individual skill.

Community and Friends!

Parents often come to value the sense of community they gain from the team. Watching your kid's games provides a great opportunity to make new friends. After all, you will be standing shoulder to shoulder sharing coffee all season. Knowing more about the game will make the experience even better!



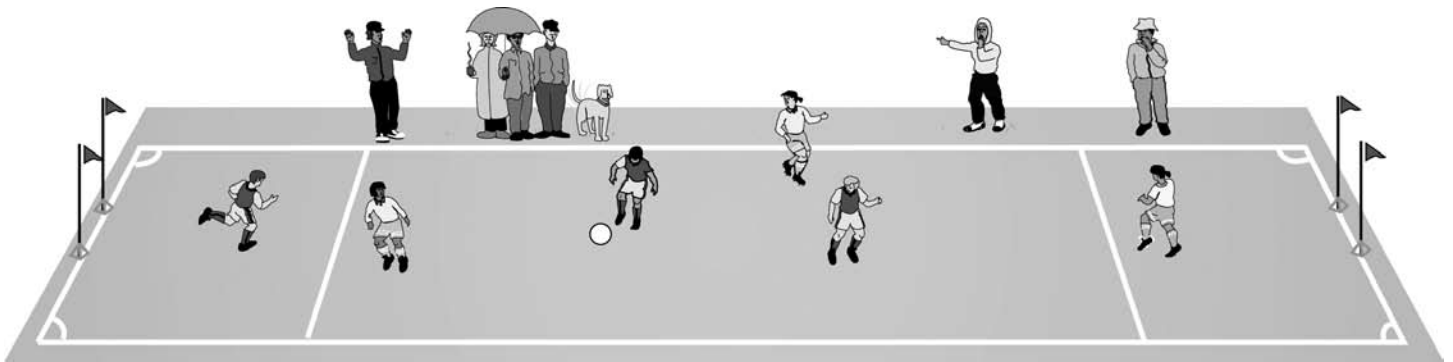
Kids & Soccer

Fun

There it is, the pack. A solid throbbing mass of children chasing a ball. What is this all about? Why do children play sports? Well, kids play sports because it's fun and exciting. However kids do vary in their personalities, so one child's definition of fun can be quite different from another. For example one child might really enjoy the social aspects while another derives great satisfaction developing their personal skills. Regardless of what makes the game fun for a child, it's important to know that if they are not having fun, they will likely quit.

Exercise

The secret is that while they are having fun, you know there is a lot more going on. As a parent you know that your child two or three days a week is getting exercise in a healthy social atmosphere. Sports offer children a fantastic environment that can improve both their emotional and physical health. Kids that exercise regularly and continue to do so throughout their lives are less likely to contract diabetes, cancer, and heart conditions. Regular exercise has also been shown to improve a child's abilities in the areas of reading and math.



Social Skills

The added benefit of soccer beyond simply getting exercise is that kids develop valuable social skills. Kids learn how to get along with others, be part of a team, and learn about tolerance, fairness and responsibility. Soccer can be a very good character building experience for a child. Character is meant as the total set of experiences the child gains by participating. In soccer your son or daughter will come in contact with rules, respect, teamwork, success and failure.

Soccer provides the environment in which kids can have those experiences. However, the adults define the environment. The adults play an important role in determining whether or not those experiences are positive or negative. If cheating, abusive behavior and violence are ok with the adults, bad habits will be passed on directly to the children.

Violence in soccer is completely intolerable no matter what the age or level of play. In soccer the same rules and expectations of conduct apply to adults and kids. This similarity provides a good role-model situation because the professionals are held to the same standards as the children. This consistency dramatically reduces the mixed messages on behavior kids receive in other professional sports.

However the weakest link in conveying the message of fair play is likely to be not the player or officials, but the parents and coaches. You have to understand that even as a parent you are part of the overall experience all the kids have in soccer.

The kids want to play soccer because it's fun. However, with pro contracts, scholarships and rep teams it sometimes seems it's the hardest thing for us to let them do.



How to be a Star Parent!

Parents play a crucial role in the operation of all aspects of a team. You are in many ways as important as the players are. That's why this book is about making star parents, not star players. Without the parents there would be no team. The soccer is still for the kids, but it doesn't mean you have to be bored. You can learn to make soccer quality time that both you and your child enjoy.

Many parents go to the games for years yet never really understand what's happening. It's ok, because none of the rules or tactics of the game are obvious and there are many things about soccer that coaches and players take for granted. Now it's your chance to learn and have fun at the same time.

The key to becoming a star parent lies in participation. You have a chance to be involved and share in an activity that your child finds exciting and fun. You can be part of that excitement. That alone is an incredible opportunity. Here are the top six things that make a star soccer parent.



Buy a ball and play!

It's simple, buy a ball. It's important for kids to have a ball at home to play and practice with. You can have hours of fun playing soccer with your child. Check out the section called Playing With Your Kids.

Provide soccer material

There are a tremendous variety of videos and books about soccer that are not meant for coaches. For example, highlight videos of star players, activity books, and documentaries on the World Cup. It can be very exciting for kids to see what they are doing reflected in the 'bigger' world around them. Watch soccer on TV and take your kids to professional games.

Learn the game

You don't have to be an expert at soccer to participate and have fun. However it can make a big difference if you make an effort to learn about the game. You can dramatically improve communication with your child and increase your confidence when dealing with coaches, league officials or referees.

- Subscribe to a soccer magazine.
- Watch soccer on TV.
- Search the Internet.
- Take a coaching certificate.
- Read this book.

Creating a positive environment

Parents play an important role in creating a positive environment for everyone. A positive environment is one where everyone is learning and having fun. A positive environment is not just for the players, it's for the coach, parents and referee as well. No one wants to get yelled at whether they are seven years old or seventy. As a parent you can help create a positive environment by:

- Understanding how to give positive feedback.
- Not being involved in the outcome of a game.
- Communicating in a constructive manner.
- Learning the game for you and your child.

Support the team

A very important part of being a soccer parent is helping support the team. Supporting the team can be as simple as bringing oranges or hot chocolate once a month to a game. Duties and ideas for parent participation should be discussed in a team meeting.

Prepare your child

It's important that your child be properly prepared for games and practices. Soccer is not a babysitting service. It doesn't mean you have to be there, but it does mean you have to respect the people who are volunteering their time.

- Be on time for games and practices.
- Have the proper equipment.
- Eat properly before games and practices.
- Avoid sleepovers the night before a game.

Do's

Have fun

The reason you and your child are there is to have fun. No trophy, medal or team is more important. This applies to all levels of soccer. Even professional players say they couldn't do it if they didn't enjoy it.

Get Involved

Parents should not hesitate to participate and get involved in practices and games. Let the coach or team manager know that you would like to help.

Professional Games

Go see some soccer games. There are college games, NPSL Indoor games, MLS soccer, A-League, W-League, and national team games. On the Internet, you can find out about local games if they are not listed in your paper. If you can't make it to a game then try to find one on TV.

Play with your kids

Soccer is a great opportunity for you to spend time with your kids. Children love it when you play with them. You can have fun and learn the skills with your child. It's a great way to get away from the TV and video games.

Sportsmanship

Set a good example. Sportsmanship is not only for the players and coaches; it's also for the parents. The referee and the parents on the other team are not your enemies.

Provide a Healthy Example

You can help provide a healthy example by not smoking or drinking alcohol at games. If you have to smoke, leave the park to do so.

Talk to the Coach

Communicate with the coach. If you have any ideas or problems talk with the coach. It's important to be constructive and know what you want to say.

Encourage your child to talk to the coach if he or she feel they are having difficulty with some aspect of the game. The coach is the best person to talk to if a player wants to improve.

Dont's

Focus on mistakes

Try not to focus on the player's mistakes. The coach and player's worst nightmare is the screamer. These are the parents who complain about everything, yell at their child and the referee.

Let the coach, coach!

Leave the coaching to the coach. Yelling out instructions from the sideline can be very confusing and frustrating for the players. It doesn't mean that the ideas you have are wrong. It just means that screaming them from the sideline doesn't help and it may conflict with the coach's plans.

Let the coach motivate players

Let the coach motivate the players. Don't offer incentives or rewards to your child for playing well. Kids can psyche themselves up for a game.

Don't criticize the referee

No matter how wise your enlightened comments may seem, try not to criticize the referee. Talk to the coach. Always communicate to the referee through the coach.

Avoid public conflicts

Avoid public conflicts over strategy or techniques with the coach. No matter how urgent they seem, these are things that need to be discussed and implemented at practices, not during the game.

Team game # 1

You should not tell your child that he is more or less important than anyone else on the team.

Team game # 2

You should not tell your child that the win or the loss of a game was the responsibility of any player, referee, coach, field or weather condition. Soccer is a team sport; you win and lose together.

Encourage everyone

When cheering try not to use your child's name over and over again. Everyone can hear you; it's very embarrassing. Encourage each team member when they try something or succeed at something.

Avoid conflicts with other parents

The other team's parents are there to have coffee and watch their kids play too. You are not part of the game and neither are the other team's parents. Don't get into a shouting match with the other team's parents over things that happen in the game.

Be active, do the wave!!!



Cheering Section

Encouragement

The game is on. The kids are on the field; you are excited but you don't know what to say. But even if you did, will they hear you? You bet they do. Most kids are very aware of what you do and say on the sidelines. Some kids even complain when their parents socialize too much and don't pay attention to the game.

Children rely heavily on the external feedback they receive from adults. A child's perception of herself comes from the reactions of parents and coaches. Even just a few comments from the sidelines can determine if a child's experience is positive or negative. This is why it's important for parents and coaches to learn how to provide encouragement and feedback.

It seems that no matter how a child plays parents and coaches are saying 'great game' or 'nice play'. The positive energy and attitude is a good thing. However, you must be careful how you direct it.

Kids are not stupid. A child's capacity to judge what he does improves with age and he knows when you are shouting false praise. Kids respect honest comments that are constructive and don't hurt anyone's feelings. Kids want to improve their skills and value good information. Constructive comments and good positive feedback also show your child that you know what's going on, and that you are paying attention.

For example, put yourself in their shoes. What do they want to hear? Let's say you just sanded and re-stained your mother's antique chest. It's awful and you know it, but everyone is telling you how nice it looks. Either they're lying or they don't know what they are talking about. It may be polite, but deep inside it's really hard to appreciate either.

How

When you are on the sideline, you have to remember that it isn't just what you say, it's how much. It's easy to get excited and you have to balance your enthusiasm. You should be aware of how much you are cheering from the sidelines. Your child isn't the only one who hears you, and an overly enthusiastic parent can be very embarrassing.

In order to give encouragement you need to separate effort and outcome. Encouragement is not dependent on the success of any given play. If a child misses a pass you focus on the effort not the success or failure. It's not that players can do nothing wrong. They can and they will. Encouragement has nothing to do with the 'right play' or the 'wrong play'. That's coaching.

Right and wrong is also a hard thing to judge. You can't say what's in a player's mind. You can't see what the player sees. There are countless variables involved as a ball simply rolls across a field. The point is it's hard to say if something a player did was wrong. Correcting mistakes or styles of play takes time and evaluation.

A team will lose the ball and regain control of it constantly during a game. You could say that soccer is a game of constant success and constant failure. You can make a choice about which one you choose to see.

There may be times that the coach can explain a certain situation where she wants parents yelling something. For example, during a corner kick the coach might want all the parents telling the players to "Mark Tight!" or "Stay with your Checks!" Make sure you talk with the coach about it. You don't want to say things that conflict with the coach's plans.

Problems on the sideline

The Shrieker

The shrieker is the super positive one. Shriekers get so excited they will yell out every time their child even gets close to the ball. They cheer so much the kids get embarrassed. It's important for those who get overly excited to learn how to balance their enthusiasm.

The Screamer

Screamers see all the negative things on the field. Everything is going wrong and they yell constantly. They yell at the players, the referee, passing cars and birds. The screamer focuses on the negative and is often verbally abusive to the players. The screamer must learn how to see the positive things in the game and make an effort to ignore the mistakes.

Sideline Coach

The sideline coach is a parent who actually yells out complex instructions to the players. It's not a good idea, no matter how correct the comments are. A coach may have a plan or be working on specific tactics and it can be confusing for kids to hear two different things. The sideline coach needs to focus on encouragement and let the coach do his job.



Effort and Outcome

The idea is that there are two different types of things you should be saying.

1. The first focuses on the success of an action.
2. The second focuses on the effort, independent of the outcome.

Specific soccer details of what to say and when are given in the Talk Boxes in each section that covers parts of the game.

The examples below are simple ones, you can add in all sorts of variations. For example instead of saying "Nice play!" you could use "First class play Jaguars!" or "Excellent teamwork blue!"



Outcome

If a player does something well it's important to tell him. It's also important to acknowledge both the whole team and the individual players. You can direct the following comments to a specific player, or the whole team.

When to say it

- Nice accurate pass
- Series of passes by the team
- Defender checking an opponent
- Player making a move around an opponent.
- Shot on goal

What to say

Great ball
Nice play
Good effort
Nice work
Well done

Effort

If a player tries to do something and it doesn't work it's a good idea to encourage her to keep trying. It tells her that the effort was important and she shouldn't get discouraged.

When to say it

- Good pass, but intercepted
- Miskicked the ball
- Player was offside
- Couldn't trap the ball
- Shot missed the net

What to say

Good effort
Nice work
Good idea
Nice Try
Next time

Talk Box

Sometimes when the team is down because they are losing or getting tired you will see them looking at their feet. This is a good time to try and pick things up in a positive way.

"Heads up Blue! Let's stay in the game!"
"Looking sharp red, keep up the good work"
"100% Yellow, give it everything you got!!!"

Before

Do not tell your kids how to play. They don't need a lecture during the drive to the game. The time to educate players is at the practice. Relax and just say you are looking forward to watching the game.

If you want to talk soccer, ask about the coach's plans and what they hope to accomplish in the game.

During

Don't...

Yell instructions from the sideline
Make any comments to the referee
Repeatedly use your child's name
Yell at the parents of the other team

Do...Be positive.
Do...Balance your enthusiasm.
Do...Encourage all of the players

After

Tell them you enjoyed watching them play today. Ask them what the best part of the game was. If you can pick out one specific thing they did well, mention that. Whatever you do don't make it up.

If they lose, tell them you enjoyed being there and go for a pizza.

The Game

Goals vs. Play

Soccer is a game of tactics that relies on both teamwork and individual skills. A combination of tactical team maneuvers and sudden bursts of individual creativity win games. What makes a good team and a good game is a careful balance of both.

The more you learn about the game, the less scoring matters. In basketball, it is the frequency of the scoring that makes the game. In soccer it is the play of the game that leads to a goal or a chance at scoring.

***If there is too much individual play
there is no flow to the game.***

***If there is no individual play then it's
like watching a machine.***

What game is right for your child?

Kids play a variety of different games depending on their age and where you live. What? I thought soccer was all the same! Though the basics of the game are still the same, younger kids need to play smaller games than adults and teenagers. The younger they are, the smaller the game should be.

The games vary because clubs and leagues have different ideas about what games kids should play at a certain age. The three basic types of games are explained on the next page.

Different games are often described as 4 v 4 or 3 v 3. This is short for 3 players versus 3 players. It's just a shorter way of saying how many players are on each team.

Age categories often use terms like U16 or U8. The term U16 means Under-16 years of age.

Why are there different games?

The adult version of soccer, played also by teenagers, involves 11 players on each team. That is a total of 22 players and one ball. It's fine for adults, but for kids the field is too large and there are too many players in the game.

Having kids play small-sided games means they touch the ball more and are almost always involved in the play of the game. The more kids touch the ball, the better they get.

Unfortunately with the emergence of professional soccer in North America there is now a downward pressure that is forcing those interested in a high level of soccer to push kids into select teams and full field soccer at too young an age. Though rare, some organizations are now fielding 11 v 11 select teams at age 8. No matter how talented or mature the players seem, this is a mistake.

If club officials, coaches and parents want their players to improve, they should be doing just the opposite. Keep the kids in small-sided games longer in order to maximize the amount the players touch the ball.

The best situation is to move kids up a ladder of small-sided games until they are old enough and skilled enough to play the full-sized game. Ideally this would be somewhere between 12 or 14 depending on the player. A good example of a country that does this is Holland. Holland has produced some of the world's most skilled players and attributes that success to emphasizing small-sided games.



What does your club play?

Let us know at

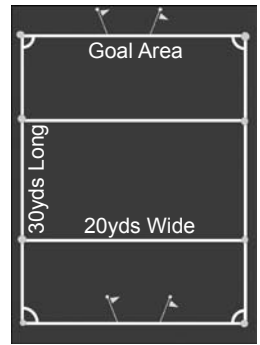
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3v3 and 4v4 Soccer

The greatest thing since sliced bread! When I started playing youth soccer, there were 22 six year olds on a giant field with one ball. Today more clubs are using small sided games with 3 or 4 players a side.

The idea is that young kids need a small field and simple instructions. Some clubs play with goalies, some play without. Some clubs play 3 a side while others play 4. The field size can vary depending on the age of the players and the rules of the game. Typically they are about 20yards by 30 yards.

In every version players touch the ball a lot and are constantly involved in the game. Which one is 'best'? Well the experts will argue over this for the next 100 years. However, if your club is playing any small sided game like this for young players, you have a good soccer club.



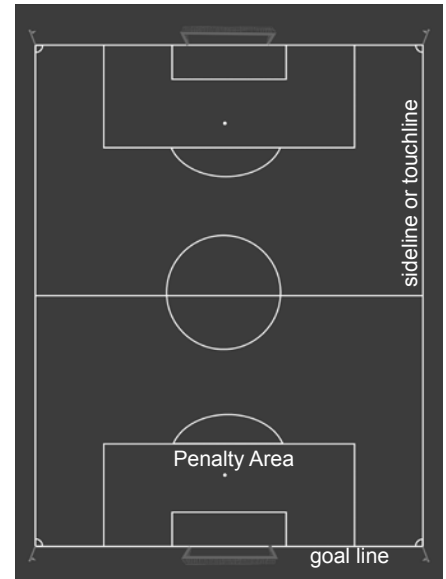
Mini Soccer & Transition Games

Mini soccer and transition games are usually for kids under the age of 11. These games offer a stepping stone for graduation into full field soccer. Variations of these games offer players an introduction to the concepts of positions, offside and team play.

Rules depend on the age of the players and level of play. The most common two versions of these games are played with or without offsides, and played with or without goalies. Transition games vary the number of players on the field by age (and in some cases available space). Common games are 6v6, 7v7 and 8v8. Field sizes range from 1/3 to 1/2 the size of a full soccer field.

The length of the game varies depending on age and where you play. U9 and U10 soccer typically play two 25-minute halves. U8, U7 and U6 typically play two 20 minute halves or four 10 minute quarters. Substitutions are almost always unlimited and playing time equal, although some strange variations only allow substitutions at 5 or 10-minute intervals.

Mini Soccer focuses on development, learning and participation. It is common that there are no direct free kicks (see Fouls) and foul throws (see Out of Bounds) are to be retaken so players can learn. Coaches are usually allowed to enter the field to talk to the kids and the referee should be helping the players with advice on how to play.



Full field Soccer

Kids start to play full field soccer around age 11.

The size of the field is not actually fixed. Instead there are minimum and maximum lengths. However, the penalty area and goal area remain fixed in size no matter how wide or long the field is.

In full field soccer players are divided up by their ability. Depending on the number of players, a given age group may have many different divisions.

The rules in full-field soccer are more competitive. Coaches are not allowed to enter the field of play to talk to players. If you make a mistake on a throw in, you lose the ball. Direct free kicks (see Fouls) are also introduced in full field soccer.

An additional rule for full field soccer is the offside rule. The offside rule is explained in the section called Offside.

Positions, which are explained in the following section, play a more important role in full field soccer.

The length of the game is determined by age. It ranges from 2X30minutes for U11 up to 2X45 minutes for U19. Unlike most mini soccer, there are no mandatory rules on substitution and playing time for the players, unless the club requires it.



The Players

The younger kids are, the more imagination it might take to see the players in any kind of positions. Kids tend to pack together and chase the ball. However, as kids get older the pack will spread out and the team will start to take shape.

There are three basic types of positions. The same types of positions can be seen in mini and full field soccer.

The forwards who play up front.
The midfielders who play in the middle
The defenders who play at the back.

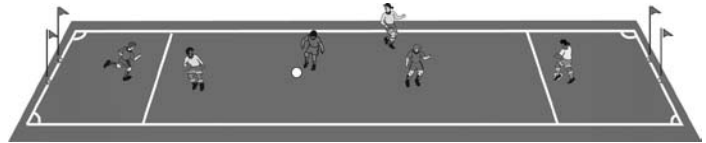
When the coach decides who plays in what position it's called the 'line-up'. The line up is named by the number of players in each position counted from the back. For example a 4-4-2 would be four defenders, four midfielders and two forwards. Coaches may have their own lineups that look a little different than the ones shown here.

How the coach determines the line up can depend on a number of different things: The players available, the strengths of the other team or unfortunately the relative skill of the team's players. Coaches in their desire to win often end up placing players in positions based on their skill level or size. This can hinder the development of players, as they rarely get to try out different positions.

Players should not be given permanent positions until they are at least 14 years old. In youth soccer all players should rotate through different positions so they experience playing everywhere on the field. Often too many players want to be the forward. Rotating them into new positions is valuable for their soccer and social skills.



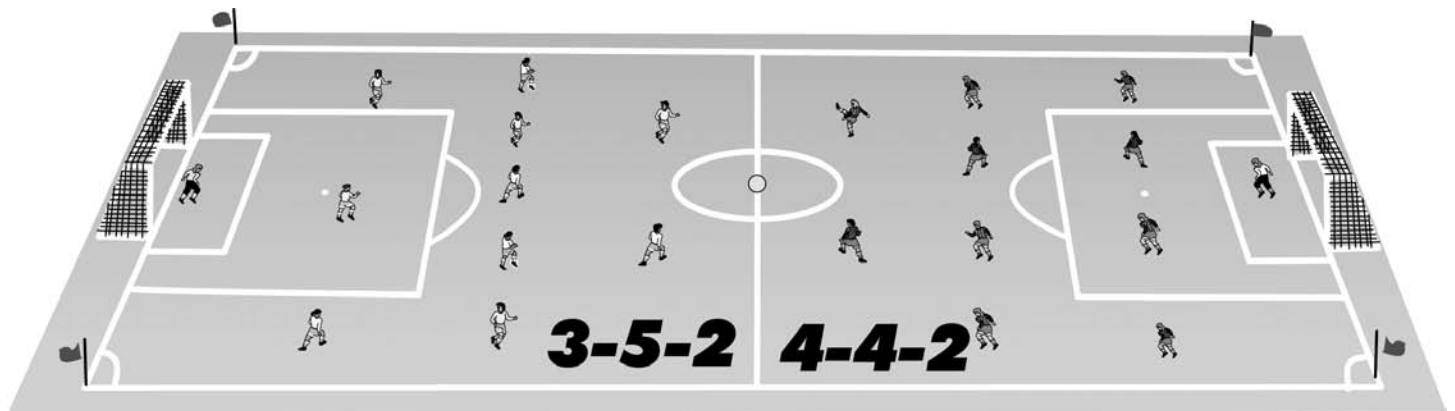
When kids first start playing soccer you get packing as all the kids chase the ball. Often too much emphasis is given on playing positions at far too young an age. Let 'em play! However, if packing is a real problem, reduce the number of players on the field.



3v3 soccer keeps kids in the action. With or without goalies every player gets to be involved in all aspects of the game. Scoring, passing, defending, or if there are goalies, playing in goal.



As the kids get older they start to play positions. Two possible formations are shown here. On the left is a 2-3 formation and on the right is a 2-1-2 formation. Kids should always rotate through all the positions.

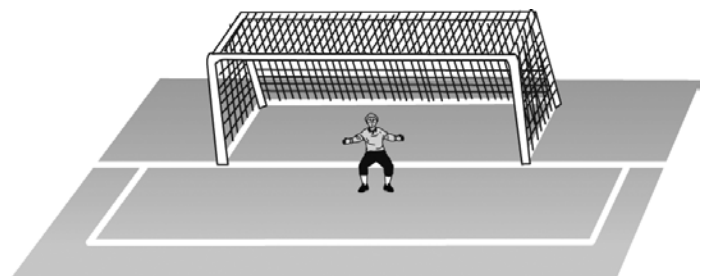


Full field soccer has a wide variety of formations. The two most popular are 3-5-2 on the left and 4-4-2 on the right.

Goalie

The goalie's special skill is stopping shots often by leaping through the air to get to the ball. It is the most important and often the most exciting position in soccer. The goalie is a team's last line of defense to keep the opposition from scoring.

The goalie is the only player on the field allowed to use his hands. The goalie is only allowed to handle the ball inside the penalty area. The rules for the goalie apply in both mini and full field soccer.



Defenders

The defenders' job is to stop the other team from scoring. They do this by staying close to the other team's players, making it difficult for them to get a chance to score. Defenders also play an important role in the team's offense, as they are often the first players the goalie gives the ball to.



- Doesn't over commit
- Good ball control
- Good communication skills
- Good at marking players
- Good at checking and tackling

The defenders need to act like a wall to stop the other team.

Midfielders

Midfielders must be versatile and physically fit because midfield is the most demanding position in soccer. It's demanding because midfield players must help the defenders defend, and the forwards attack. Midfielders are often called the 'generals', because they control the flow of the game. Midfielders act as a link between the defense and the forwards. The defenders give the ball to the midfielders who give the ball to the forwards who try to score.

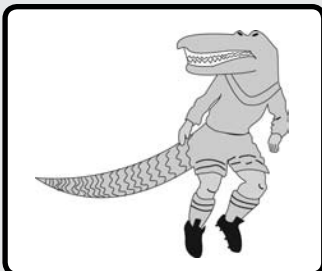


- Endurance
- Good Communication skills
- Accurate passing
- Able to think ahead
- Excellent ball control
- Good anticipation

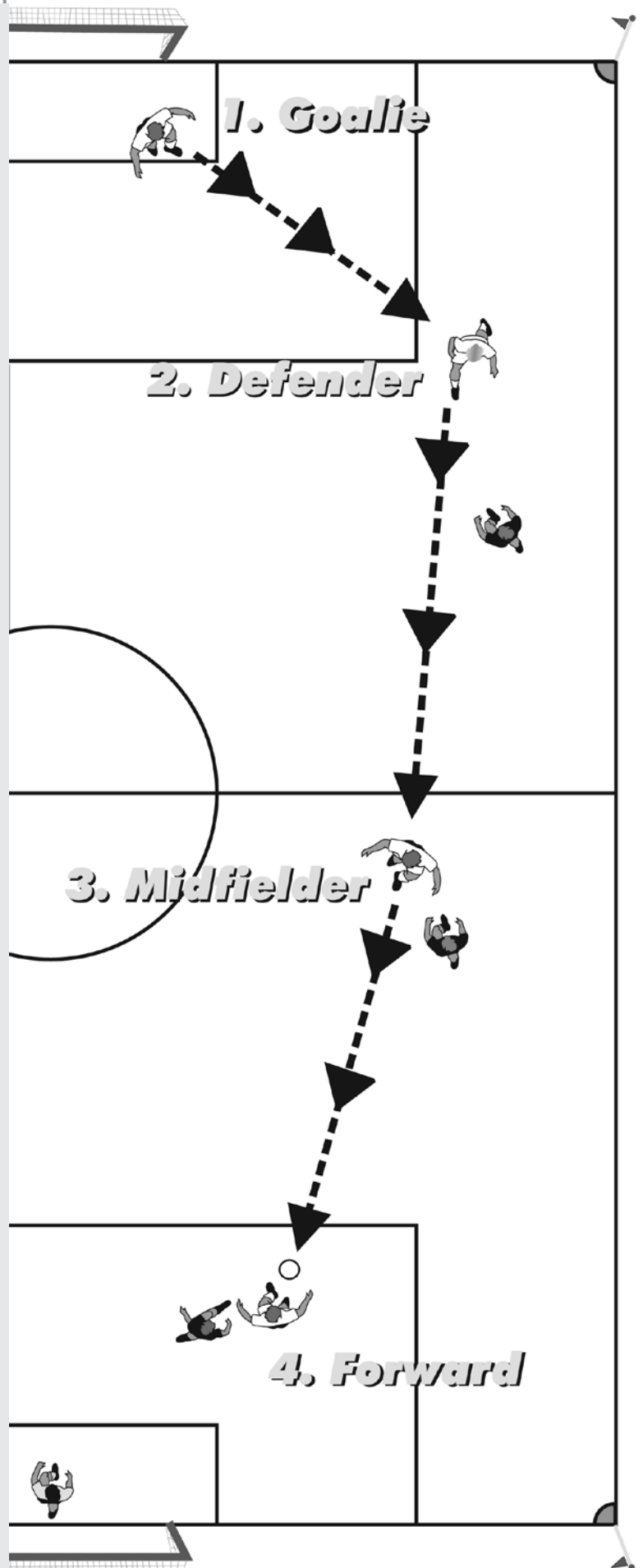
Midfielders are the link between the defense and the forwards.

Forwards

Forwards, or strikers as they are sometimes called, are the players responsible for offense. They try to score on the opponent's goal. Forwards need to be fast to outrun the other team's defense, and be good at moving with the ball so they can get past the defenders to take a shot.



The forward is like a T-Rex, fast, hungry and waiting to strike.



Communication

Communication is an important part of soccer. During the game players should be constantly giving each other specific instructions about what to do and where to go. A lack of communication on the field can easily cost a team a game. It's very important for all the players to be loud and positive.

Listening to what players are saying offers some very good insight into the emotional and mental state of the team. The personality of an individual, the overall attitude of the coach and parents can be apparent in the on-field communication of the players.

A team with good team spirit stays positive even when they are losing the game.

Players should be encouraging each other. "That's the way to get a shot off, good try!" Even if the shot missed by a mile.

Players should not make offensive comments to the other team's players or their teammates.

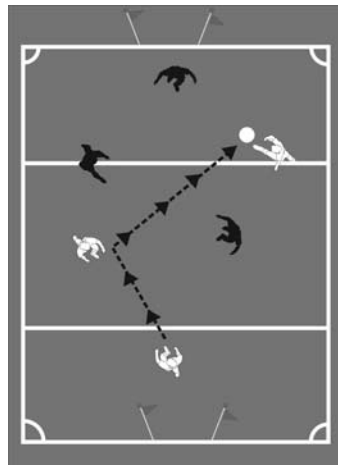
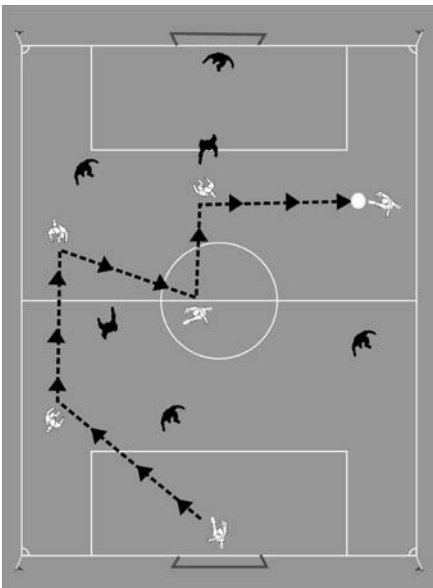


Possession

When you have the ball, the other team can't score. This is a sentiment often echoed in many sports with the phrase "the best defense is a good offense". Watching the game, you will see your child's team gain and lose control of the ball constantly. When a team has the ball its called possession. Teams try to keep possession of the ball by making passes on the ground.

In the past teams played what is called 'Kick and Run' or long ball soccer. In a kick and run style game, instead of keeping possession the defense kick a long ball in the air up to the forwards. In fact, in many professional soccer games the spectators will boo the team if they start to play kick and run soccer. A sign of a good coach and a good team is one that is dynamic. Teams should use a variety of methods to move the ball up the field.

Sometimes you will hear a coach yelling out "keep it on the ground!" They are trying to tell the players to play a more possession type game. If you see a lot of passes on the ground you can say, "Wow, your team looked just like Brazil!"



In 3v3 and 4v4 games kids play nothing but possession. Kids develop their soccer skills faster because they are always in contact with the ball.

Mini soccer games improve players' possession skills because the smaller field and fewer players make it easier to pass and work as a team.

Ball Control

Ball control is perhaps the most important and fundamental thing in soccer. Ball control is simply making the ball do what you want. It refers to all the skills needed by a player to move with, or keep possession of the ball. If a player can't control the ball, it's pretty hard to do anything else. Great soccer players, no matter what position they play, always have good ball control. Some examples include Diego Maradona from Argentina, Ronaldo and Pele from Brazil, and Michelle Akers from the US Women's team.

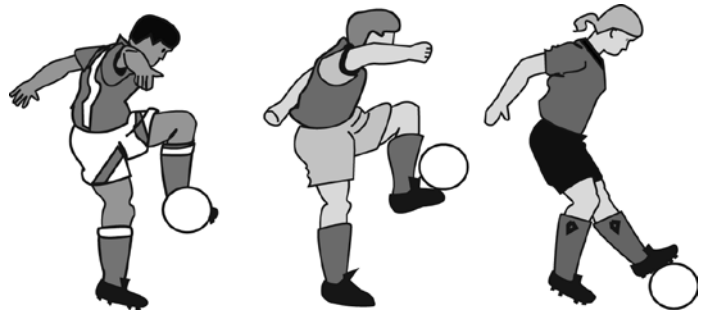
Trapping

Trapping the ball means that when a player receives a pass she stops the ball at her feet. Every second counts, so the faster players can trap the ball the more time they have. When a player is good at trapping, the ball appears to stick to the feet. This is called 'sticky feet'.

Talk Box

Watch for a player that traps and controls a hard pass or high ball kicked in the air. A fast moving or high ball is hard to trap and is the sign of a player with good ball control.

"Nice Trap!"
"Great control!"
"Fantastic touch Sherry!"



Players use all different parts of their feet to trap the ball. Three examples here show a player using the bottom, top and side of the foot to trap the ball.

Dribbling

Dribbling is the art of moving with the ball by making soft touches with the feet. The faster you go the better, but there is more to dribbling than just speed. If a player wants to get past an opponent, he has to make a move.

Making a move means the player with the ball dribbles past an opponent. Players that can make a move are some of the most exciting players to watch.

Making a move depends on three things: timing, change of speed and change of direction. The player can't be predictable. If they keep moving in the same direction at the same speed, it's easy to take the ball away.

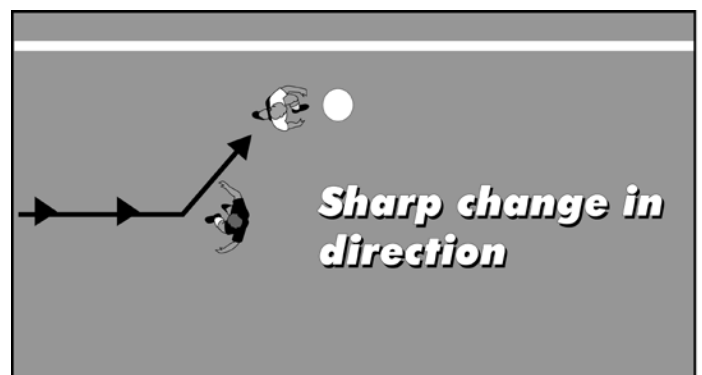
Talk Box

Anytime a player makes a move around an opponent it's a good time to cheer.

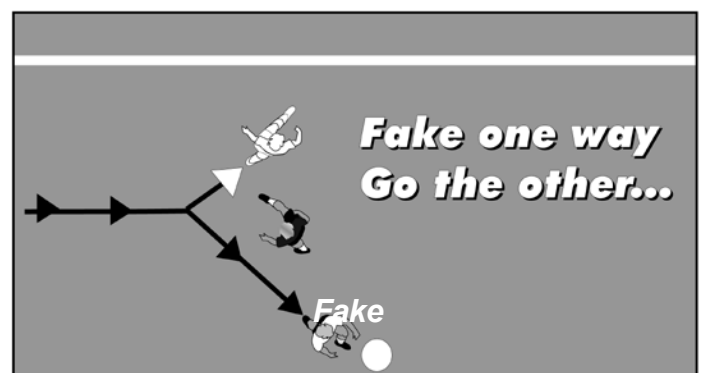
"Great move!"
"Well done!"
"Smooth Move!"
"Excellent touch!"

If a player beats an opponent by pushing the ball between the opponent's legs everyone is supposed to yell "OLE!"

The 'cut' move



The 'fake' move



Passing

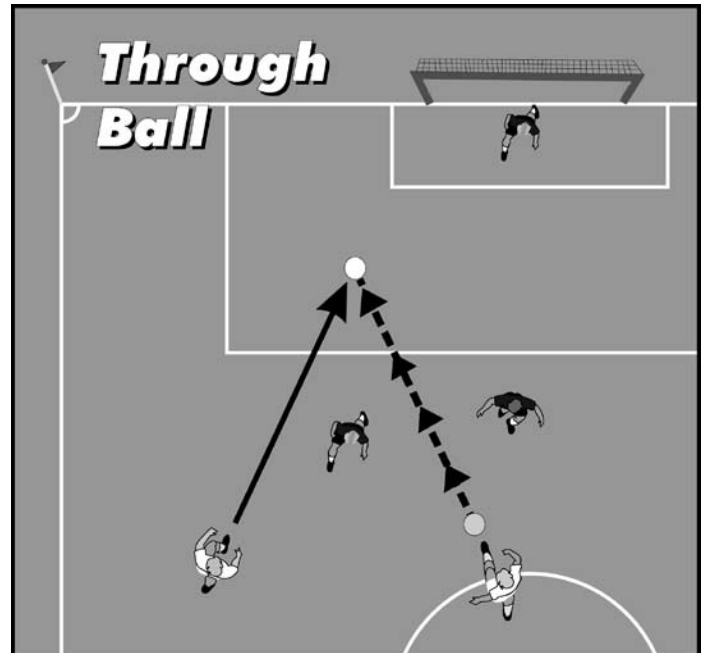
Passing happens constantly during a game (we hope so anyway!!!). Good passing is determined by several different things. A good pass can be a ball that goes directly to another player's foot, or a ball that's passed into space for another player to run onto. Good passing is about accuracy, reading the speed of a teammate, and the proper weight on the ball.

Weight

A pass must be weighted properly so that the receiving player can catch up with the ball or trap it easily. If the pass is too fast, it's hard to trap. If the pass is too slow, the other team can intercept the ball.

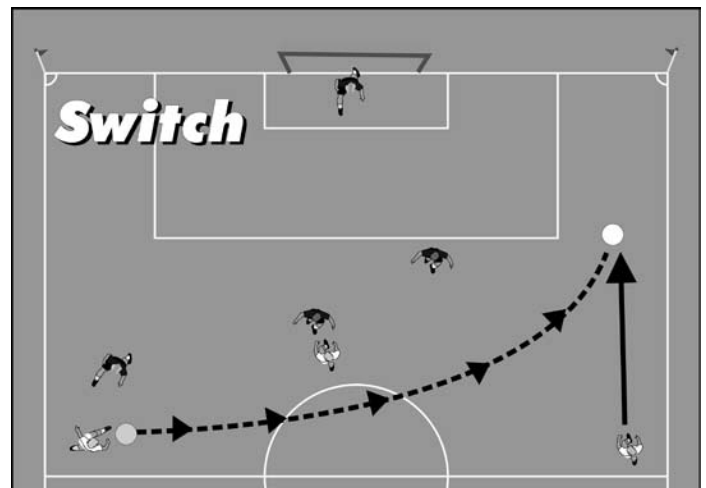
Through Ball

The through ball or penetrating pass is one that cuts through the other team's defense. A penetrating pass is timed with a fast moving teammate so that it will be difficult or impossible to catch the player receiving the pass. When a through ball is done right, it can create a fantastic scoring opportunity.



Switching

You will often hear players or the coach yelling out "switch!" A switch is a long pass all the way across the field to the other side. When this is done quickly, it can confuse the other team's defense and create an opportunity to score.



Talk Box

"Good passing blue!"
"Beautifully weighted ball!"
"Excellent through ball!"
"Fantastic penetrating pass!"
"Nice switch! Great idea!"
"Great anticipation Billy!" (If he intercepts a pass)

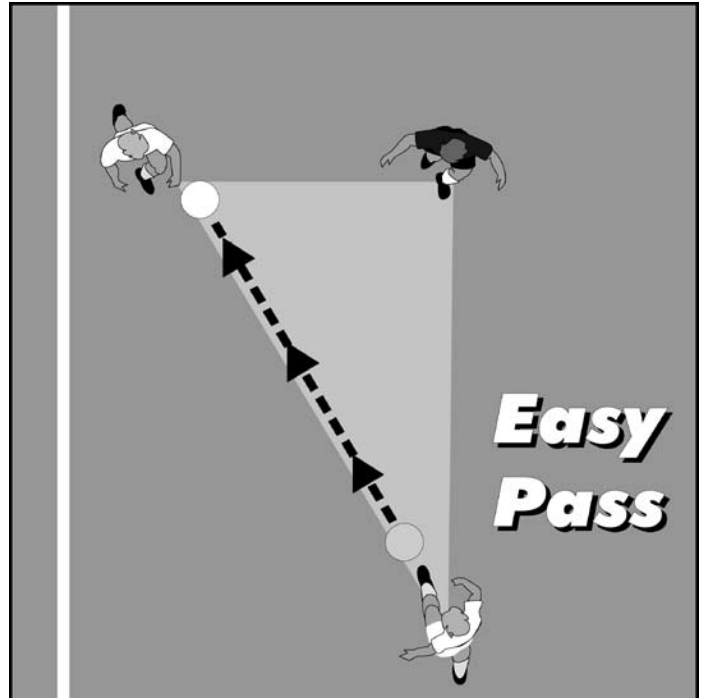
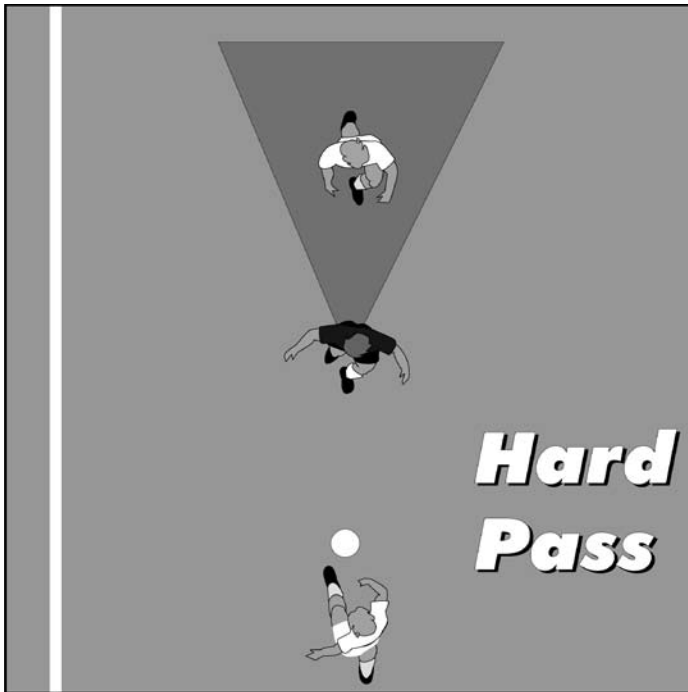
Triangles

The modern game or the game of possession is played with all the players on the move. In order to complete passes and not play kick and run soccer, players must form triangles on the field. If the players are standing in a straight line with their opponents it's very difficult to pass the ball. The triangle allows a team to move the ball while maintaining possession.

Watch for triangles from the sideline. Triangles appear and disappear constantly during a game. They can be big, small, and different shapes. When you see a team using triangles on the field it's a sign of good teamwork.

In the Shadows

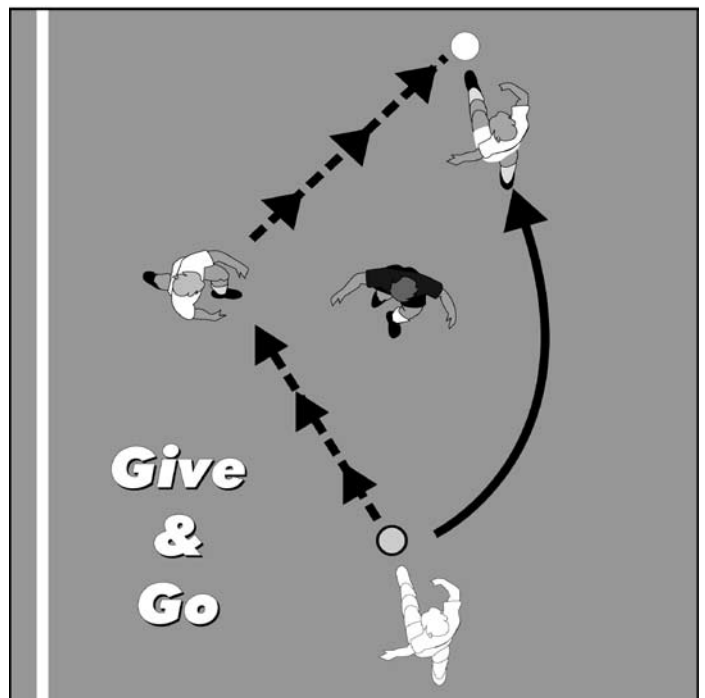
If the players make a straight line with an opponent it makes it difficult to pass the ball. If the ball were a bright light, then players should not be standing in the shadows cast by their opponents.



Give and Go

One of the most important plays in soccer is the give and go. This is also called a 'wall pass' or a 'one-two' pass.

1. As the player dribbling the ball approaches a defender a teammate is positioned beside the defender making a triangle.
2. The player with the ball passes to the teammate.
3. The player who passed the ball runs behind the defender to again receive the ball and move up the field.



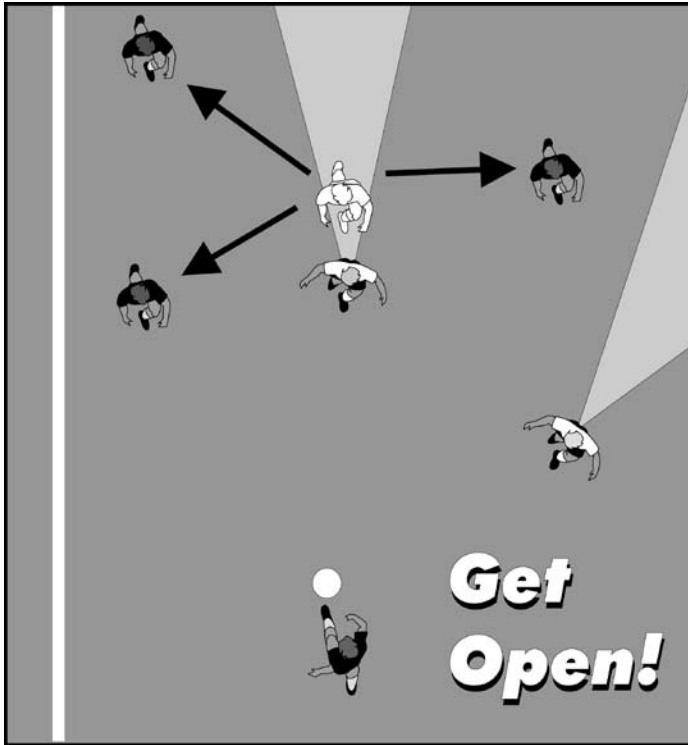
Talk Box

- "Great wall pass red!"
- "Good teamwork!"
- "Excellent give and go yellow!"
- "Nice passing you guys!"
- "Great triangles blue, keep up the good work!"

Space and Movement

Sometimes from the sideline you suddenly see where a ball or player should have gone. Chances are when you get that feeling you saw a player that was open. Now you can see why the coach is always yelling things like 'get open' and 'move into space'. Understanding the basics of space and movement and looking for it in a game will take you several steps closer to being a soccer whiz.

Not to be too philosophical but, understanding that most of the game has nothing to do with the ball is really important. Movement of the players without the ball forms the foundation of teamwork. If players without the ball don't move into space to receive passes, it's very difficult for the team to keep possession. They end up playing 'kick and run' soccer.



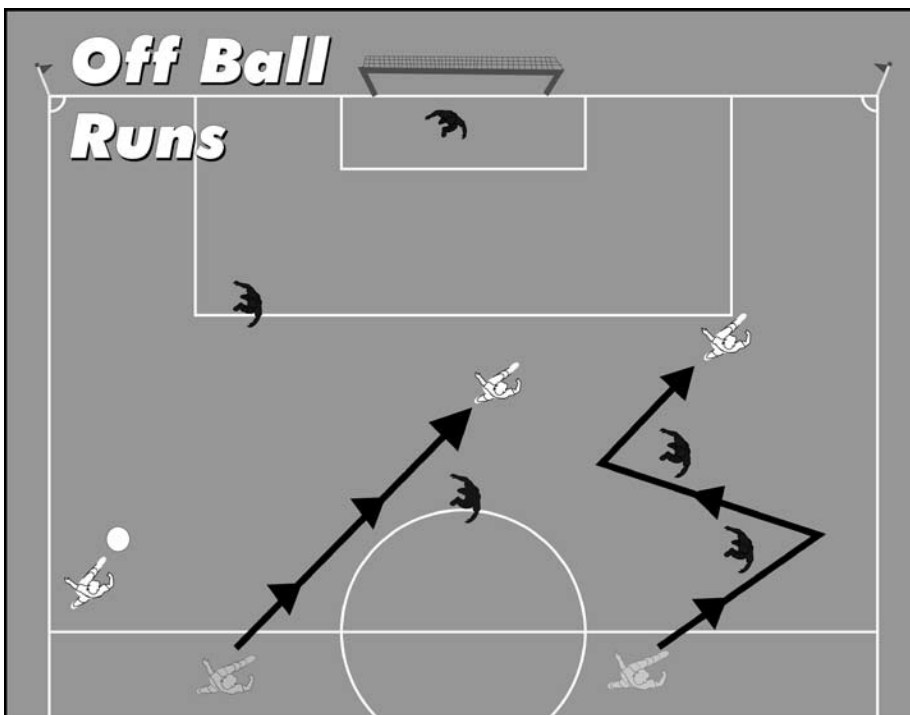
Getting Open

How well a team passes the ball depends on how the players get open. Players without the ball must move into spaces between, behind or in front of their opponents to receive the ball.

Talk Box

"Way to get open Sarah!"
"Great movement blue, keep up the good work!"
"Nice run Andrew, that's the way to get there!"
"Good positioning and anticipation Linda!"
"That's the way to create space Derek! Great Work!"
"Excellent off ball run Nancy!"

Off ball runs, space and movement are good things to comment on after the game. For example "wow you really worked hard to get open today" or "I saw you make that one really fast run into space down the wing, too bad the pass didn't get through" This demonstrates that you were watching the game. Don't try to comment on it until you really start to see it.



Off ball runs

When a player makes a fast vertical or diagonal run without the ball it is called an off ball run. The player is trying to beat the other teams defense with speed and timing. If they receive the ball they are moving so fast it's hard for the other teams defense to catch them.

If several players make vertical or diagonal runs at the same time, the other team doesn't know where the ball is going to go.

Movement of the players without the ball forms the foundation of teamwork.

Marking

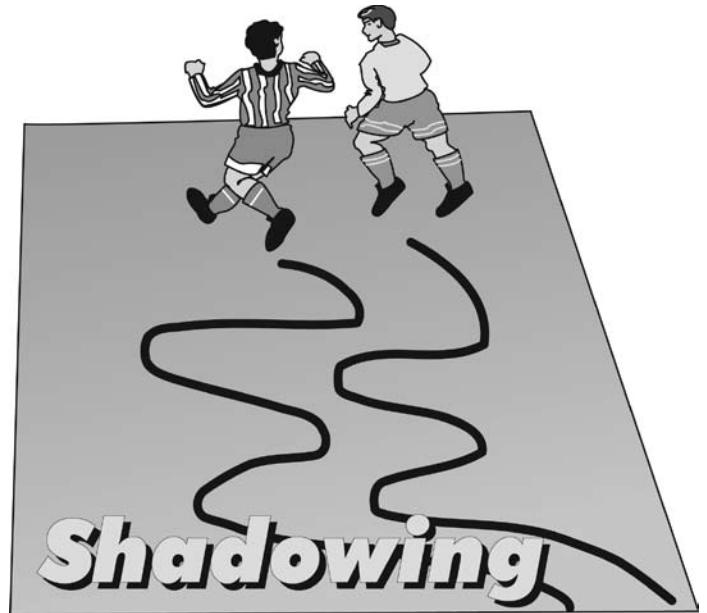
When the other team has the ball, the defending team needs to mark their opponents. Marking is when a player stays close to an opponent in order to make it difficult for him to receive a pass. If the defending team leaves a player unmarked, that player can receive a pass and score.

Marking is often an unrewarded activity, though it's very important. If you watch closely you can begin to appreciate the amount of effort and teamwork required for marking. If only one player on the team fails to mark an attacking player, it can lead to a goal, even if everyone else on the team is marking properly.

Shadowing

Sometimes marking is called shadowing. The player is supposed to stick so close they act like their opponents shadow. The opponents are often called checks or marks.

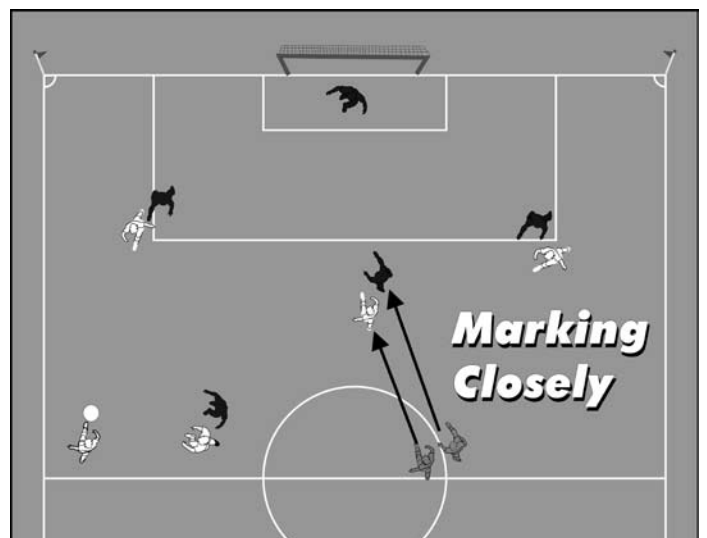
You will often hear the coach yelling out, "Stick with your checks" "Mark tight!" or "Goal Side!" When you hear the coach saying this, they are talking to the players about marking.



When a player marks properly it can mean saving a goal even if the ball never came close to her. A properly marked player cuts off options for the other team. For example the attacking team can't switch the ball if the players on the far side are closely marked.

Talk Box

"Way to stick close blue!"
"Great marking Andrea, way to stick with your check!"
"Way to go yellow, like jam on toast!"
"Excellent job blue, that's the way to mark tight!"
"Super effort Dave, way to cut off their options!"

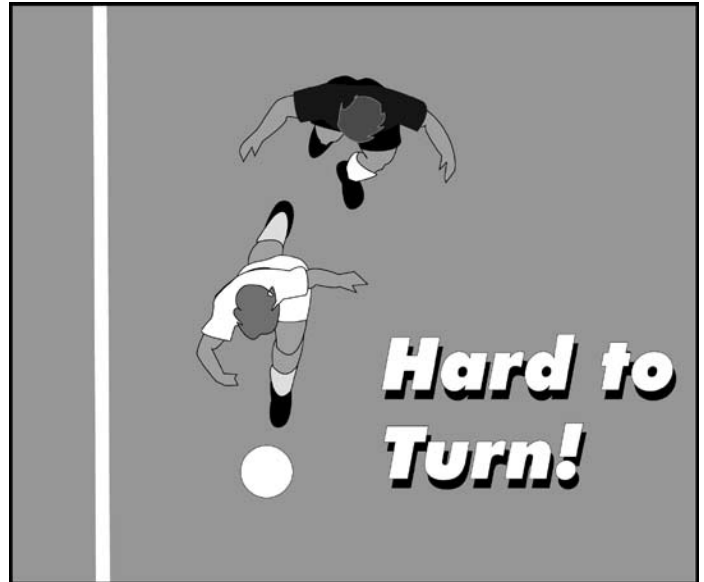


Tackling

When an opponent receives the ball the player marking him becomes the checking player. It is now the checking player's job to try and get the ball.

The first thing they should do is close down the distance to try and keep the player from turning to face the goal. This will force the opponent to slow down, move backwards or pass the ball back.

If the checking player gives the ball carrier too much room, the ball carrier will be able to pass or shoot on goal.



Jockeying

No, this has nothing to do with riding horses. Jockeying is when the checking player is trying to slow down an opponent. The object is not to try and take the ball away, but to slow down the ball carrier. The extra time allows teammates to get back into position.

Tackling

Tackling is when the checking player tries to take the ball away from the ball carrier. Tackling must be done correctly or it will result in a foul.

1. Player must contact the ball.
2. The checking player cannot push the ball carrier.
3. The cleats of the player's shoes must be pointing down
4. It is an automatic foul if you tackle from behind.

A slide tackle is when the checking player slides along the ground and contacts the ball with the front of their legs. It is dangerous and should be an automatic foul if the slide tackle is from behind or the player slides in with her cleats pointing at the ball carrier.

The poke check is a quick touch of the ball by the checking player, usually using the toe to poke the ball away from the ball carrier.

This is a dangerous tackle when the player comes in with one or both feet up. It is often a yellow, even a red card.



Over Committing

You will often hear the coach yelling out "don't commit!" If the checking player lunges at the ball carrier it's easy for the ball carrier to make a move. When the checking player tries to tackle an opponent they have to make sure they are going to get the ball. If they don't they will be off balance and the ball carrier will move around them.

Talk Box

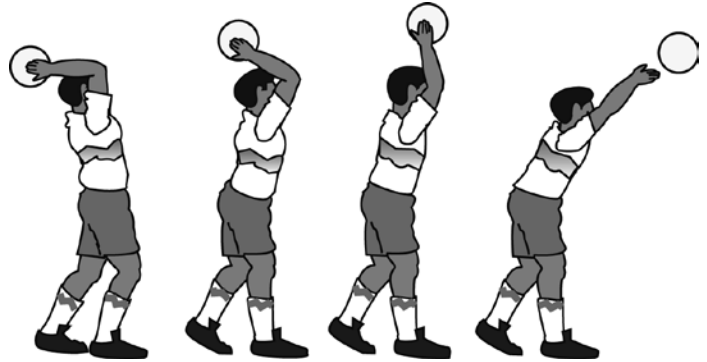
"Wow, nice check Tien!"
"Great Poke check Dean!"
"Excellent slide tackle Randy!"
"Way to slow her down Mima, good Jockeying!"
"Good support red, great teamwork!"
"Well timed tackle, great anticipation!"

Out of Bounds

Throw-ins

If the ball crosses the sideline of the field, it is played back into the game with a throw in. The ball must go completely over the line to be out of play. 99% out is 100% in.

The thrower must use two hands and keep both feet on the ground. They must release the ball above their head using a fluid motion. In other words you can't just drop the ball at your feet.



Goal Kicks and Corner Kicks

If the ball crosses the goal line the game is restarted with either a goal kick or a corner kick. If the defending team had the last touch on the ball, then it's a corner kick. If the attacking team had the last touch, then the ball is given to the defending team for a goal kick.

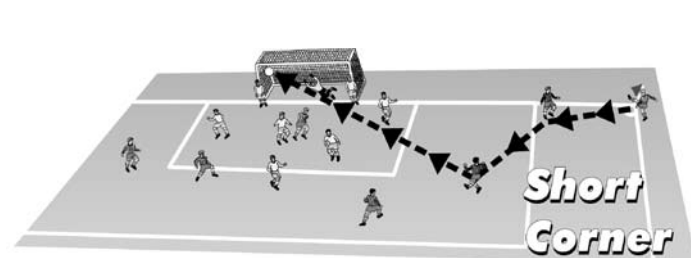


A long corner is played by kicking the ball in the air to the front of the goal. If the ball is curving in it's called an In-Swinger. If the ball is curving out, it's called an Out-Swinger. The picture above is an Out-Swinger.

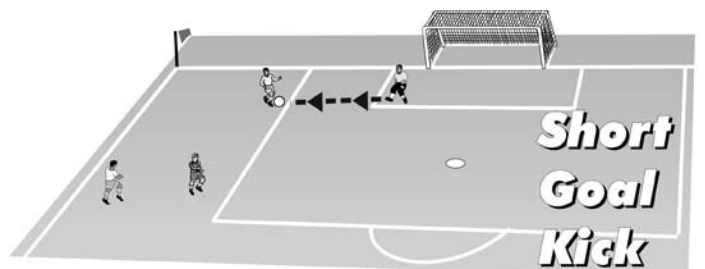
Teams use many different kinds of plays to increase their chances of scoring. Some players move and try to make a defender follow them, while others wait outside and rush into the open space.



Teams will usually take a goal kick by kicking a long ball up the field. They usually do this because it is a safe play. If the goal kick is taken short, the team might lose the ball giving their opponents a good scoring opportunity.



Sometimes a team will take a short corner and dribble the ball towards the goal. This can be a very effective play if the defending team gives them too much space.

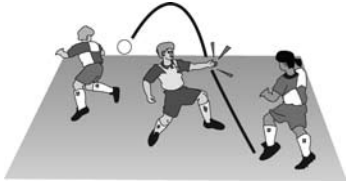


A short goal kick is usually played out on the ground to an open defender or midfielder. In the 1994 World Cup Brazil had over 650 balls played from the goalie and goal kicks. They kicked only *one* in the air.

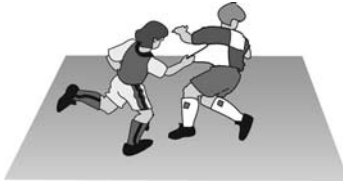
Fouls

The referee can give out three different types of punishment when a foul is committed. They are the indirect free kick, the direct free kick and the penalty shot. The type of foul determines the resulting punishment.

Direct Free Kick



Intentional hand ball.



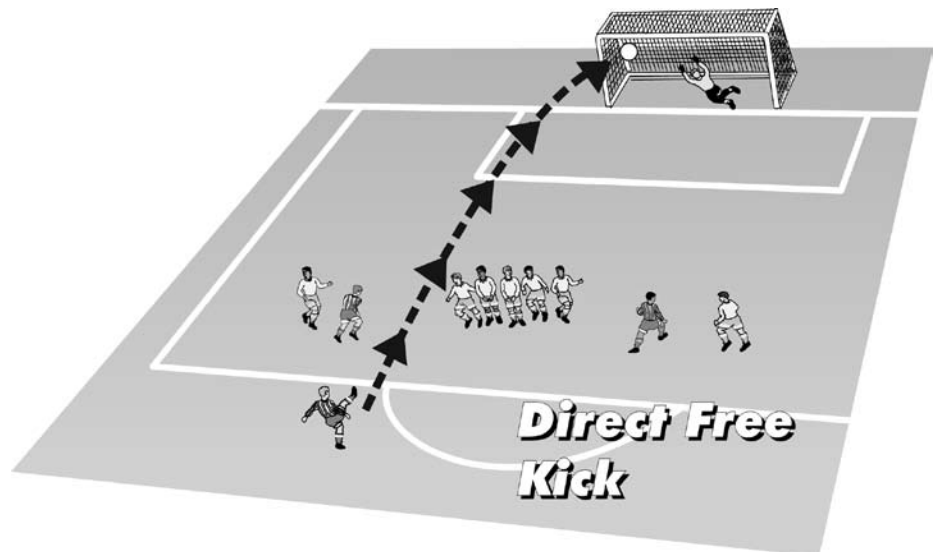
Holding



Tripping



Pushing. Players have the right to occupy a space and can't be pushed out of it.



The direct free kick means that the player can shoot on goal directly. The ball does not have to touch anyone before it goes in the net.

Two of the greatest free kick specialists are David Beckham and Roberto Carlos. Roberto Carlos scored what is considered one of the greatest goals ever in soccer from a direct free kick. He has an amazing ability to curve a shot and catch the goalie off guard.

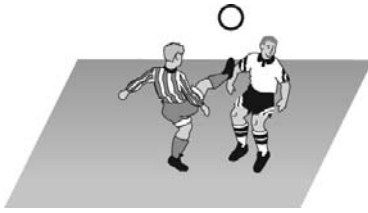


Penalty Shot

A penalty shot is given if a personal foul is committed anywhere within the penalty area. The penalty shot is taken from the penalty spot 12 yards from the center of the goal. A penalty shot is very difficult for goalies to save; however they do save them. The goalie is not allowed to move forward off the goal line until the ball is kicked.



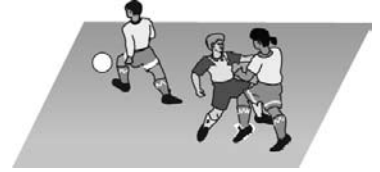
Indirect Free Kick



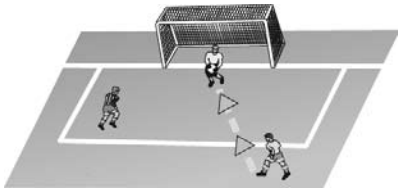
Dangerous play. A high foot or kicking near an opponent's head, even if the player bends over.



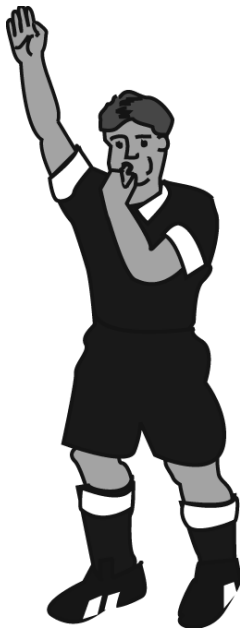
Obstruction. A player cannot impede the goalie's ability to stop a shot.



Obstruction. Players have freedom of movement on the field.



The goalie can not handle the ball from a pass by a teammate. The ball must be kicked.



The indirect free kick means that you cannot score unless another player touches the ball first. The player taking the free kick cannot shoot on goal; he must first pass the ball to another player.

Cards

If a foul is considered very serious the referee can give the player a card. There are two different cards, the yellow card and the red card. If a player receives a yellow card, it's called a caution. If a player receives two yellow cards he or she is ejected from the game. The red card is for serious offenses and results in automatic ejection from the game.

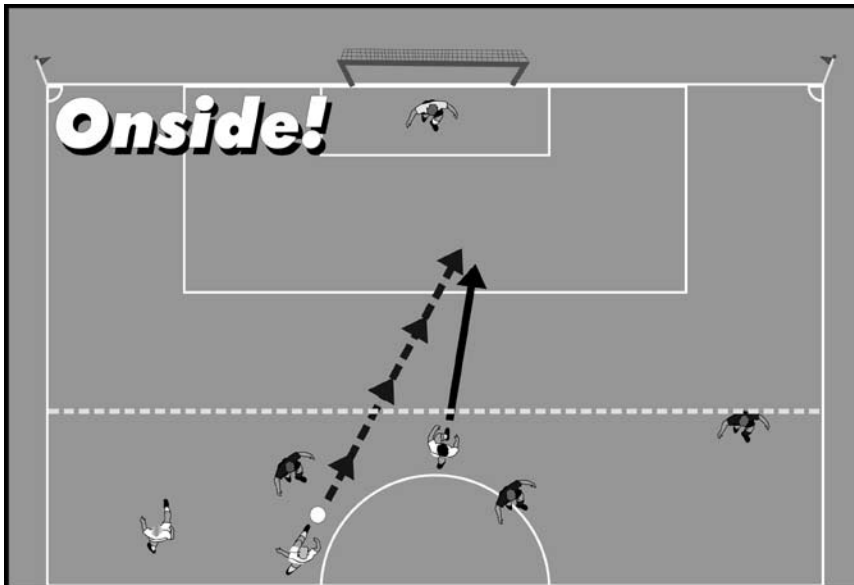


Offside

The offside rule is THE most difficult of the rules to understand. It's also the most difficult call for the referee to make. The offside rule keeps players from just standing in front of the other team's goal and waiting for the ball. Because of the offside rule players must get in front of the other team's defense and build up an attack on the opponent's goal.

A player must be in front of or level with the defense **when the ball is kicked**. You need to take a 'snapshot' in your mind the moment the ball is kicked. It's only at that moment, in that snapshot, that you look to see if the player receiving the pass is behind the other team's defense. The referee will blow the whistle when the player touches the ball or interferes with the play.

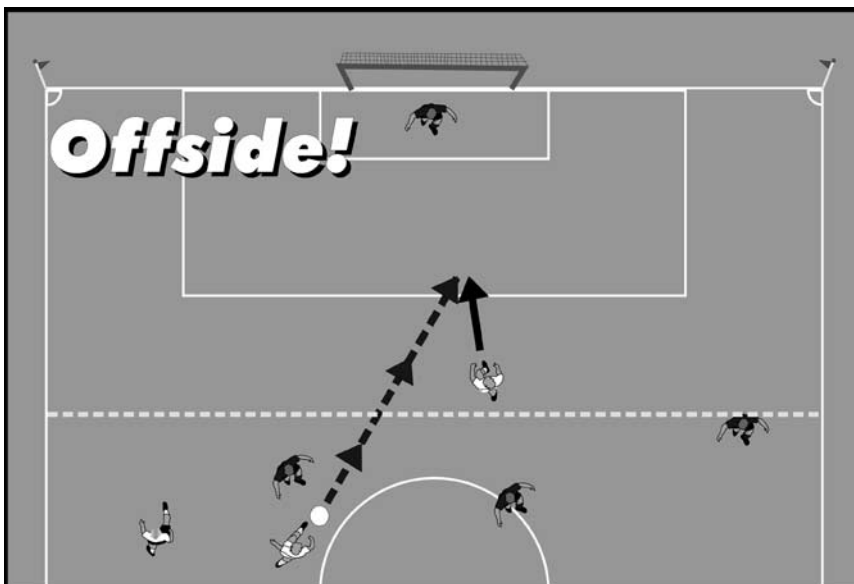
The following way to learn about the offside rule is called the snapshot method. Your mind must become a camera that can take a picture. You need to learn how to take a picture in your mind the *moment the ball is kicked*



This player is offside because he is behind the last defender the moment the ball is kicked. Remember it's only when the ball is kicked that it matters.

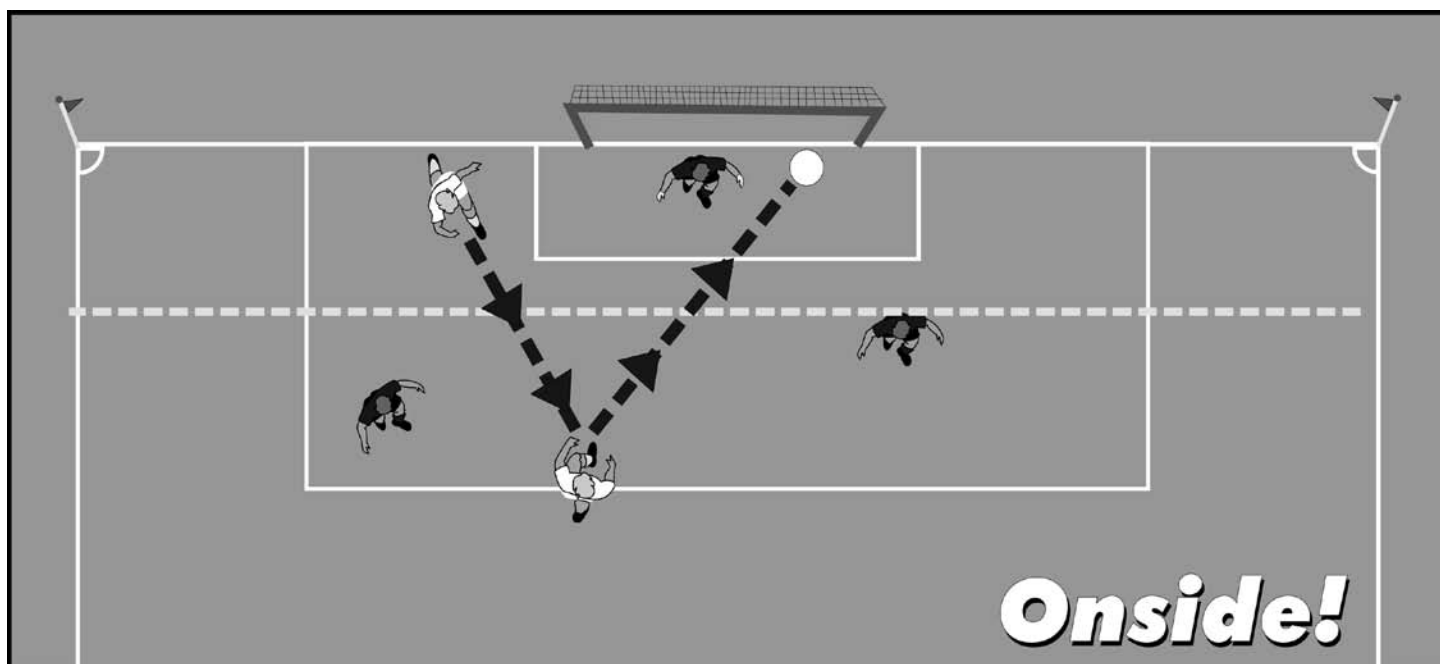
The player must touch the ball or interfere with play before the referee will blow the whistle. If the player does not touch the ball, and is not part of the play, the referee will not call it offside in an effort to keep the game flowing.

The diagram here is drawn to represent the ***moment the ball is kicked***.



This player is not offside because she is in front of or level with the last defender when the ball is kicked. A player can be even with the last defender and still be onside.

The diagram here is drawn to represent the ***moment the ball is kicked***.



Shooting

A player is not offside if they pass the ball back for a shot. This is a judgement call by the referee. Here the player is off to the side away from the goalies and defenders. If the player that passed the ball back were in front of the goalie or behind a defender the referee would consider the player offside because she would be interfering with an opponent.

Throw-ins

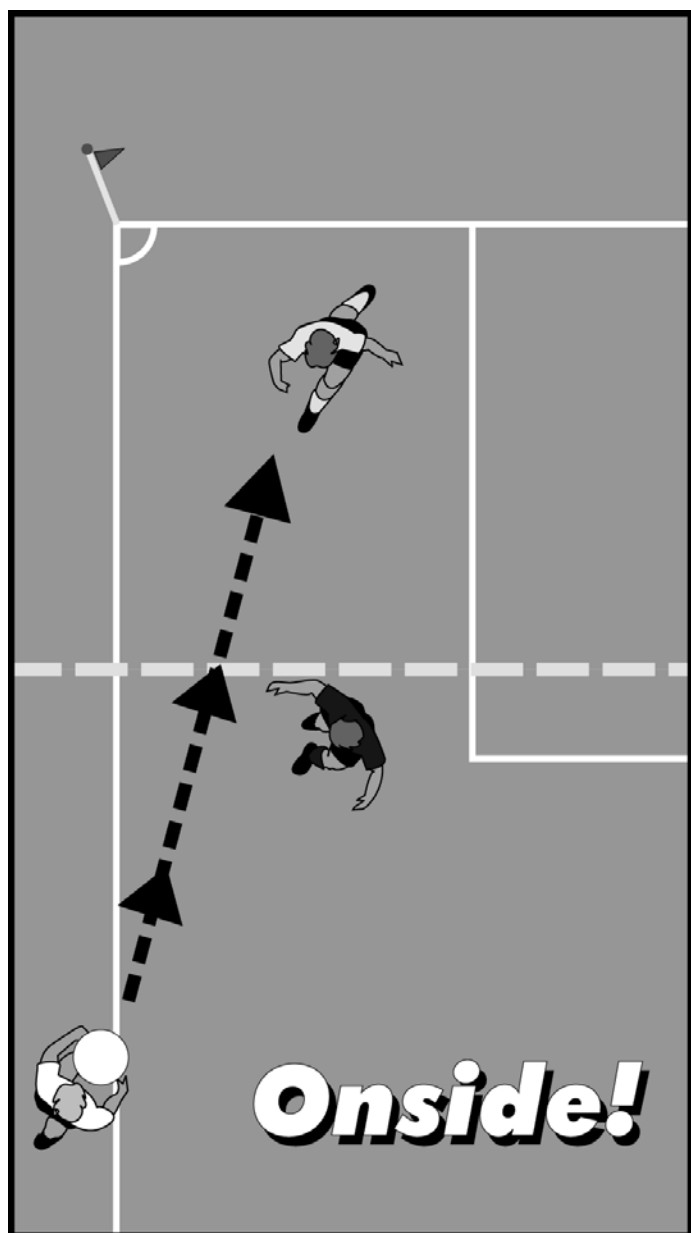
A player is never offside on a throw in. Even if they are behind the last defender.

Exceptions

A player is never offside in their own half of the field.

A player is never offside on a goal kick

A player is not offside when a corner kick is taken.



Officials

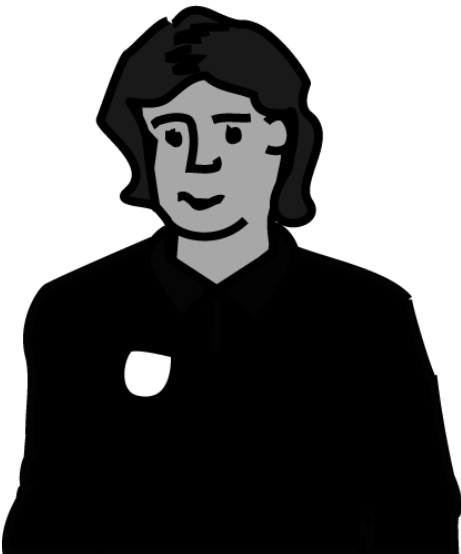
The referee is the official in charge and has complete control over the game. The referee's job is to ensure that the game is played fairly and safely. The referee is there to enforce the rules. His or her decision, whether correct or not, should be respected and according to FIFA regulations is considered final.

It doesn't mean the ref is always right. Refs do make mistakes; they happen in every game. However the ref is not your enemy. The chances of getting a truly dishonest referee are very very small. If something is serious enough you should go talk to the coach and the coach will talk to the referee at half time or after the game calmly and politely. Maybe they know they made a mistake, maybe they didn't. The same constructive positive criticism that applies to your kids applies to the referee as well. In fact, just as soccer players are always learning, so are the referees.

Assistant Referees

In full field soccer some leagues have assistant referees. They are also commonly referred to as Linesmen. The job of the assistant referees is to help the referee call offsides and balls that go out of bounds. If a play is offside they will raise their flag for the referee to blow the whistle.

Assistant referees can make all the same calls as the referee on the field. If the assistant referee sees a foul, they raise the flag and move it in a circular motion.



Referees often wear different color uniforms so it's easy to tell them apart from both teams.





Advantage Rule

Are you sure about that call? Make sure you know the rules before you start yelling at the ref (not that you should even if you do know). Many parents end up yelling at the referee when the correct call was made. One point, which often leads to problems, is the advantage rule. The referee sometimes will not call a foul if stopping the play will deny an advantage. For example, if a player trips another but the ball bounces to a teammate who gets a clear shot on net, it's considered an advantage.

Communicating with the Referee

If there is a consistent problem that keeps occurring on the field, it's possible the referee is simply not aware of it. Tell the coach, and let the coach approach the referee. For example the coach might say "You know that number nine keeps pushing our players, would you keep an eye out for it?" Always communicate with the referee through the coach or team captain.

Responsibilities of the Referee

- Treats players and coaches with respect
- Is fair and firm in decisions
- Is neutral and not involved with the play of the game
- Keeps up with the play of the game
- Keeps track of the players
- Ensures that all players are eligible
- Checks the safety of all equipment & field conditions
- Enforces the rules of the game
- Is able to discipline players

Dear Parent,

You have to remember that the referee can only call the game as he or she sees it. The referee sees the game from one angle, while the spectators see the game from every angle!

If you have a problem talk to me politely! I am there because I love the game and enjoy refereeing. I want to see everyone do well and I am not out to get anyone, even if I do make mistakes.

If you have a teenager, encourage her to try refereeing some young kids' games. We need more young referees that younger kids can look up to.

Enjoy the game, and remember the referee is your friend!

M. Andreeson
Youth Referee

The Coach

Coaches are probably the most important part of a child's experience in soccer. Studies show that coaches can have a larger impact on a child's behavior than parents or teachers. It may be because the coach is an adult in an accepted position of authority rather than one that's imposed. So it's very important that as a parent you take an interest in ensuring that your child has a good competent coach that can serve as a role model.

The coach is often a parent who was at the last second thrown into the job. It is estimated that there are over 300 000 parent-soccer coaches in North America. Today both the United States and Canada have national coaching certification programs. Most leagues and clubs in youth soccer require coaches to have some level of certification. You should find out what the requirements are for coaches at your child's club. If your club or league does not require coaches to be certified, now is a good time to start.

What makes a good coach? Well, certification is a place to start; though it doesn't guarantee anything. Relying simply on someone who 'played the game' is not always a good idea. Coaching is not simply about knowing soccer. Knowledge is useless if you can't communicate and organize effectively. A lack of soccer experience, but willingness to learn can be a fantastic coaching advantage.

The coach's job can be simply stated. *"The role of the coach, no matter what the level of soccer, is to help the players be the best they can be."* There is no good reason for players at any level not to improve their game. The coach must also recognize that the methods for achieving this are different for every team and player. This can, and must be a process that everyone enjoys.

The coach's primary requirement is establishing a positive environment for the team. Without it, it doesn't matter how much they know about soccer. Players should be having fun because they are being challenged in a positive and constructive way. When players enjoy themselves they are more receptive to learning. This applies to both competitive and recreational soccer.

The coach's primary requirement is establishing a positive environment for the team. Without it, it doesn't matter how much they know about soccer.



Learning is for the coach as well!

Learning and improving oneself is not just for the players; it's also for the coach. A sign of a good coach is one who is aware that there is always more to learn. The coach should never stop learning. Send your coach to seminars and encourage him or her to research a wide variety of coaching material.

For example, the team could get a subscription to a coaching magazine!

The role of the coach, no matter what the level of soccer, is to help the players be the best they can be.

Coaching Checklist

Are they having fun?

A good coach has happy kids. It's that simple. This applies at any level of soccer, competitive or recreational. However the coach is not there to be a clown. The kids should be happy because they are learning and being challenged by practicing and playing at the right level. A coach needs to be able to evaluate and determine that level for each team individually.

Does the coach provide an opportunity for the kids to communicate how they feel about the game?

Kids should have a chance to communicate positive or negative things about the game. For example a smaller player might be getting really knocked around but no one can see it. Unless given an opportunity the child may not say anything. This gives the coach a chance to change things or speak to the ref.

Is the coach alert?

The coach should be able to motivate the players as a team and individually when needed. The coach needs to recognize when something is too complex or too easy. The coach needs to be an active problem-solver at both practices and games.

How does the coach deal with winning and losing?

The coach must be able to put winning into perspective and encourage the children to respect the rules, players and officials. If the coach values winning above all else, this attitude will be passed on to the kids. It will also produce more stress and anxiety within the team. The coach should not be upset by a loss, but view it as an opportunity to learn.

Is there a lot of standing around at practice?

Practices should be well organized and the coach should always maximize the amount the players touch the ball. 15 kids should not be lined up to do a drill with one ball. Small groups ensure the kids get to touch the ball as much as possible. The more the players touch the ball, the better they get. A common complaint about practice is that it's boring and the kids don't get to play enough.

Is the coach in control?

The coach should be in charge and the players should be paying attention to what the coach is saying. The kids should be listening because the kids understand that it's their team. The coach needs to nurture the idea that the kids make the team what it is. It is their responsibility to listen and learn.

Does the coach communicate effectively?

The coach should provide positive feedback to the group and individual players. A coach needs to be able to express what he or she wants clearly and if possible demonstrate it. They should be able to do this in a constructive manner. The coach should also be communicating with the kids at the right level for their age and ability. For example, coaches of younger children should crouch down to speak with the kids at eye level.



... things that make a practice fun

Maximize the amount the players touch the ball
Absolute minimum of 1 ball for every two players
Balance of personal ball skills and team tactics
Drills that don't have players standing around
Variety of drills that build on each other over time



... things that make a good coach

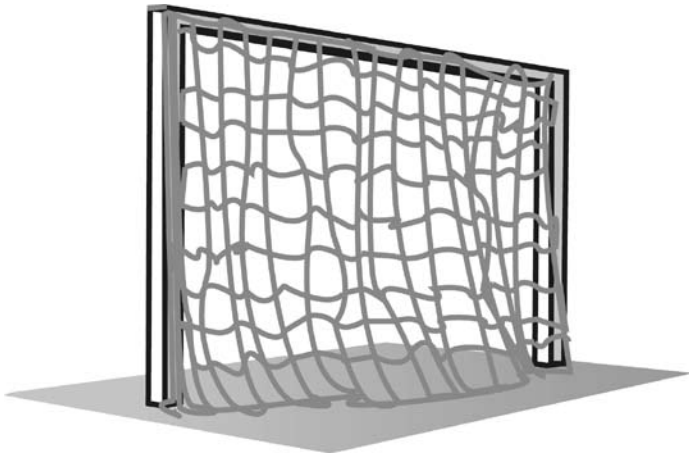
Makes it fun for the players.
Conscientious, punctual and well organized.
Provide positive constructive feedback.
Able to motivate the players.
Always willing to learn more about soccer.

Safety

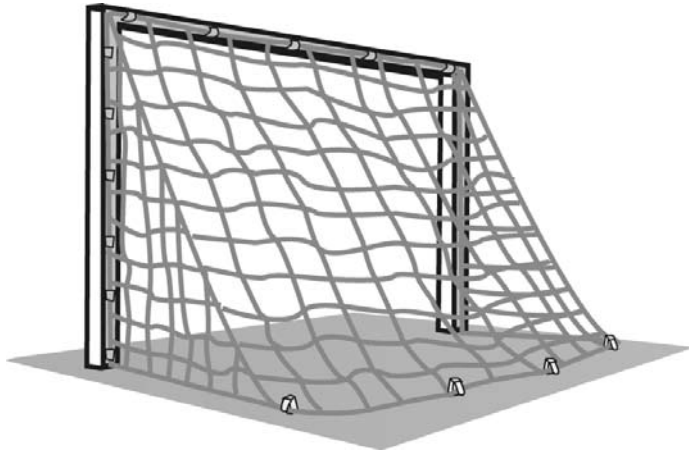
Kids and Soccer Nets

Soccer nets if not properly maintained or secured can pose a safety hazard. Young kids may try to climb on the net or goal posts. Nets should not have holes in them that are large enough for a child's head to fit through. Kids can strangle themselves by getting caught in an old net full of holes.

Nets should also be properly secured by being pulled away from the goal line. Nets should never be left hanging off the top of the goal without being pulled back and secured by pegs. A diving goalie or player running across the goal line can easily get caught on the net and be seriously injured.



Dangerous!



Properly secured.

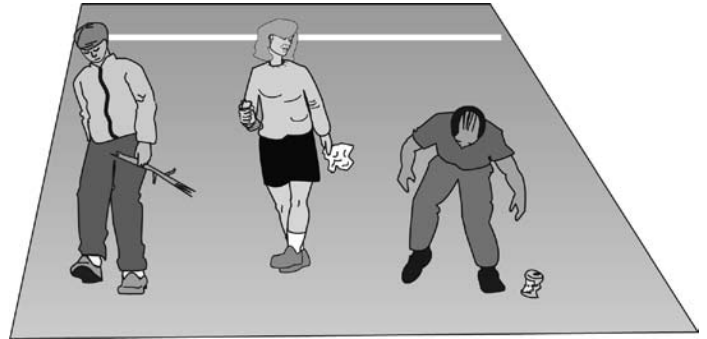
Jewelry

Players should not wear any jewelry during a game or practice. A watch or ring can scratch or cut another player. Earrings and necklaces can get caught and pulled off. If a player can't remove a ring, it should be taped up. Players are responsible for removing watches and jewelry. If the referee notices it, he or she can stop the game and ask the player to remove it.

Field Safety

It's a good idea if a group of parents walk the field before the game. Broken glass, sticks, golf balls, rocks and even needles can be found on playing fields. A simple five minute walk and chat over the field can save some serious injuries.

Rocks and sticks can cause a player to twist an ankle if they step on either while running.



Sunburns

A sunburn is most likely to occur between the hours of 10:00am and 4:00pm. It's important that you apply the sunscreen before your child is exposed to the sun. If you have a game that starts at 10:00am the players will be out warming up at 9:30am. You should ensure that your child has sunscreen on because the game may not end until 11:30am, which is a great time to get a sunburn.



You can buy special sunscreen that is designed for sports. It will not run when you sweat so it stays out of your eyes.



None of the suggestions here are a substitute for proper medical attention. If you are unsure about anything or have the slightest concerns over any injury or condition seek professional medical advice immediately.

R.I.C.E

Rest: If it hurts, stop playing. Continuing to play can cause further damage. Players must also have sufficient time to recover. An injury that might only take a few days to heal could turn into one that takes several weeks to heal if a player comes back too soon.

Ice: Use ice to keep down the swelling. Apply the ice first for 15 minutes and then on and off in 10 minute intervals. You do not have to apply the ice directly to the skin. You can use a thin towel or shirt. However if it's too thick it will defeat the purpose, which is to cool the area.

Compression: Compression will also help prevent swelling. You can wrap the ankle or knee with an elastic bandage. It should be firm, but not so tight that it cuts off the circulation.

Elevation: The player should raise the injured area above the heart. This will help control the swelling by preventing more blood moving to the injured area.

Nosebleeds

Using latex gloves press the bleeding nostril towards the center of the nose. Use some ice wrapped in cloth or an ice pack to apply compression to the nose

The player should always lean forward and sit down in case he or she gets dizzy.

If the bleeding does not stop, you should go to the hospital.

Playing Hurt

"Play through the pain" is a thing of the past. Players should not play injured. What is the point of playing in one game if you miss six, or worse.

Scrapes and Cuts

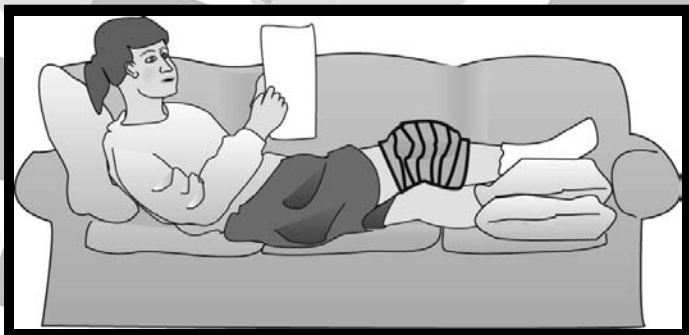
It is a good practice to always use latex gloves when dealing with scrapes and cuts. First stop the bleeding by elevating and applying direct pressure to the wound.

Once the bleeding has stopped, clean the wound and apply a sterile gauze or bandage.

Team First Aid Kit

First Aid kit essentials

- Athletic Tape
- Elastic Tape
- Lubricant
- Exam Gloves
- Antiseptic Spray
- Non-Adherent Sterile Gauze
- Strip Dressings
- Cotton Tip Applicator
- Bandage Scissors
- Blister Skin
- Instant Ice Pack
- Tensors



Equipment

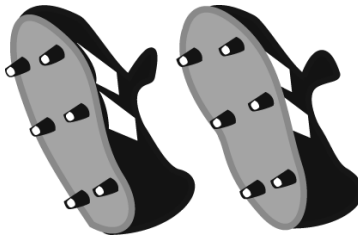
Soccer really requires very little, if any, equipment to play. The only real cost in soccer is that kids tend to outgrow their shoes. However, do not buy large shoes for your child to grow into. Improperly fitting shoes can cause ankle or knee injuries.

Do not buy large shoes for your child to grow into. Improperly fitting shoes can cause ankle injuries, knee injuries, or blisters.

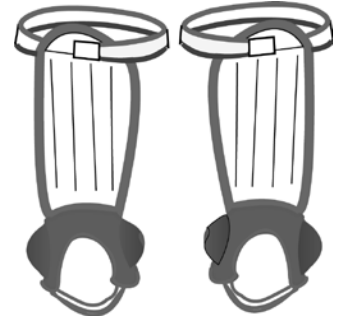
For younger kids just buy one pair of multies. Wait until they are older before you consider buying six-stud style shoes.



Multies are shoes with a formed rubber sole with many cleats. These shoes are good for dry fields and gravel.



Six-studs are shoes with screw in cleats. These shoes are used on very wet fields for traction. Players should not wear these on hard fields because it is easy to twist an ankle.



Shin pads either slip into a soccer sock or pull on like a sock. Both have hard plastic to protect the players shin. Its really up to the player to decide which kind they like. Shin pads are required in all games.



Warmups

Rain Poncho

Soccer Bag

Water Bottle



Cap

**Sunglasses
&
Sunscreen**

Kleenex

Towel

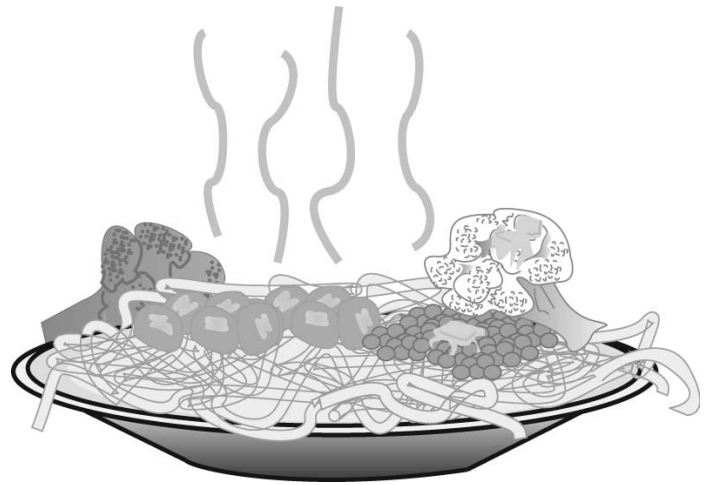
Nutrition

Thankfully many of the urban myths about food, water and sports are starting to disappear. What were once specialized sports diets are now considered healthy eating habits. This section doesn't have any secret diets to turn your child into the Hercules of soccer. However, food can have a big impact on a player's game and the better your child eats, the better he or she will feel.

Eating properly can avoid cramps, indigestion, and contribute to the mental health of a player. In order to benefit fully, players must not only watch what they eat, but when. Timing is important, so what you eat depends on when you play.

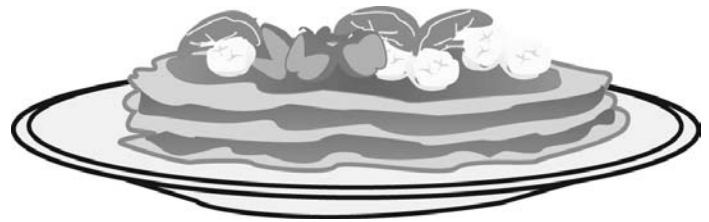
The day before

The day before a game, you should focus on complex carbohydrates. Pasta is often considered the 'fuel of choice' for athletes the day before a game or race. Fruits and vegetables are also an excellent source of complex carbohydrates. You should still provide a well-balanced meal, but the emphasis should be on complex carbohydrates.



Game Day

What a player should eat, and how much depends on how soon the game is. You should try to avoid feeding your child within the hour before a game. If it's one to three hours before a game, you should avoid any high fat foods such as bacon, eggs, or French toast with syrup. Focus on a high carbohydrate breakfast such as low sugar cereal, bagels, or pancakes topped with fruit instead of syrup.



After the Game

Now you can focus more on protein rich foods. These foods will help build and repair muscles after exercise. This is a good time for the cheeseburgers or pizza they keep asking for.



Water

It's very important to stay hydrated when involved in any sport. It's amazing that even today you still find people trying to argue that water gives you cramps and you shouldn't drink it. They are wrong. Water is the most important fuel we have for exercise. You should get your child to drink water before, during and after a game. Often by the time a player is really thirsty he or she is already dehydrated. Players should still drink lots of water even if it's raining or cold outside.

Parents should always bring water for their child. Even if the team has its own water bottles as it may not be enough or someone might forget to bring it. Feel free to give them sports drinks as well. Sports drinks are designed to replace electrolytes that the body loses during the game by sweating. Some of these drinks you can buy in a concentrate and mix yourself before the game.

Competition in Soccer

As your child gets older he or she may become interested in competitive soccer. Perhaps you have college scouts knocking on your door. Perhaps your child declares their unshakeable interest in becoming a professional soccer player. Here are a few opinionated notes on competition.

What is Competition?

Perhaps the largest controversy within youth soccer is competitive vs. recreational play. It's a debate that's been going on for years and is not likely to be resolved soon. The reason it won't be resolved is that neither side is really right or wrong. Kids vary in their personalities and abilities and thrive in different environments. Too many people feel that competition and recreation are mutually exclusive. They aren't and the problem is the extreme views of both sides.

One extreme is dedicated to total recreation and fun, and the other is dedicated to professional soccer. Competition and recreation however, are not black and white issues. Instead of thinking in terms of one or the other, we should be thinking about degrees of competition.

All competition is actually recreational.

Why? Because most kids play for fun regardless of their level or competitive attitudes. Kids on the highest or lowest skilled teams still play because they enjoy it.

Competitive soccer is about playing at the right level, not necessarily the highest. The right level is a combination of skills, physical abilities and attitude.

The goals of competitive or recreational soccer shouldn't be any different. The job of all coaches, recreational or competitive is to ensure that their players become the best they can be. This goal must be accomplished by ensuring that everyone, the coach included, enjoy the process.

If the players' don't enjoy themselves at any level they will quit. We need to work on making more options for kids and not more extreme ones. We need to change our notion of recreation vs. competition and replace it with kids playing at the right level. Learning how to identify what the right level is and providing those options is the soccer community's biggest challenge.

Competition and Kids

Kids play soccer for fun. What is fun? There are a tremendous number of kids playing soccer now, and many reasons for participating. Some enjoy the social aspects, while others enjoy the physical challenge. The physical aspect comes from the balance of ones personal skills against challenge. Kids like to improve themselves. (Unfortunately it seems to apply more to sports and video games than math and history) If there is no challenge, kids get bored and quit. If their skills don't match the level of play it can lead to stress and anxiety which again causes kids to drop out.

Part of your job as a parent is to make sure your child is playing at the right level. You need to listen, and keep track of your child's attitudes to make sure he or she is in the right place. You can do this by watching their behavior on days when there are games or practices. It's important to provide an open environment and encourage them to talk about how they feel. For example, you could ask before a game

"Are you feeling nervous?"

"Are you worried about making a mistake?"

Competitive soccer is about playing at the right level, not necessarily the highest. The right level is a combination of skills, physical abilities and attitude.

Anxiety is perfectly normal and can be healthy in the right amount. If it's creeping into other parts of your child's life then it could be an indication that there is something wrong.

Some indications of a player playing at the wrong level include:

- Boredom
- Extreme self criticism
- Lack of concentration
- Decrease in performance
- Avoiding participation
- Mood changes around games and practices.

Poaching

A common problem in leagues is called poaching. Good players are picked up from another team or a team in a lower division. If the players themselves want to move to a more competitive environment then by all means they should be allowed to move. What happens though is that the loss of even one or two players can damage a team.

This can make for a lot of frustrated coaches and players. Players, coaches and parents have a responsibility to communicate their goals clearly. They should be honest and up front about their intentions. Players should not be poached secretly, or sneak off to another team just before a season starts. Be honest and let everyone know what is going on.



Part of what makes competition a problem for kids is often the parents. Soccer should not be viewed as a means to an end. Getting a soccer scholarship or becoming a pro athlete is not a good reason to encourage your kids to play any sport. For the majority of kids encouraging competitive goal oriented play before the age of 13 is probably not a good idea.

Personal
Skills

Challenge



Playing up in age

There are players that mature differently or are naturally gifted players for their age. Allowing these players to move up offers them a new challenge and keeps them from becoming bored.

Should a 14-year-old player be allowed to play with 15 and 16 year olds? Clubs and leagues handle this in different ways. Everyone needs to be flexible on this issue. The most important person to ask is the player.

Is the player having fun at his or her own age level?
Does the player want to move up?
Does the player want to be with friends?

The simplest solution is to allow a player to move up only if they can play as a starter in their new age category.

Do Select Teams Matter?

If your child is keen on making a future in soccer there is tremendous pressure to make select and rep teams. The question is do these things matter? Research is now showing that on average players fast tracked at a young age are not all that better off when it comes to succeeding at the professional level. A superstar at age 8,10, 13, even 18 does not necessarily translate to a professional player at over 20.

There are countless professional soccer players who would not be playing today if players were selected at ages even as late as 18 or 19. Many pro players didn't make it until they were in their early twenties. The point is that your child should not be discouraged if he or she does not make a select team at a young age.

Dealing With Sideline Problems

Parents who are continuously a problem need to be dealt with by highest possible league or district authorities. Their continued participation must be decided at this level, or they will just take the problem to another team or club.

Leagues, clubs and regional associations have a duty to protect all of the participants. It is not enough that clubs simply ban them, or they will just end up being on the receiving end some time later.

Parent Coach

Chronic Problems

Goodbye

That is all there is to say. Chronically nasty coaches don't coach.

There may be a group of parents and players that are willing to take the abuse because the coach is supposedly 'good' or 'successful'. However, abuse is rarely self contained and the referees and other teams don't deserve it.

Chronically abusive coaches should be dealt with by the highest possible governing organizations.

Education of the parents needs to be addressed at the club and coach level.

Is this person getting angry because they do not understand the offside rule or what a hand ball is? This is a common problem.

People get angry at the referee when they see a 'foul' not called, that really isn't one at all.

Listening to what the person is angry about can help in figuring out how to solve the problem.

There is this great soccer guide for parents.....

Education & Knowledge

Education is extremely important for coaches. Coaches should never be angry about the performance of their players. It is the coaches job to find solutions to problems, not get angry about them.

Do the expectations of the coach match the level of play?

Do the coaches solutions match the level of play?

Clubs need to train, evaluate and properly place coaches. A mismatched inappropriate level of coaching be it above or below the level of play can be very frustrating for the coach.

Having a bad day is something that needs to be dealt with by the parents or coach.

Everybody has a bad day. It can happen to all of us. Calm and patient communication is called for.

These are people that just need a little nudge to come back into the real world. Try the lollypop rule.

Having a Bad Day

Coaches have bad days. They might be more likely to have bad days as they tend to get more involved in the game than anyone else.

Coaches sometimes see a bad result as a reflection on themselves and get personally involved in the outcome of the game.

The lollypop rule and some calm communication is needed to bring the coach back to reality.

Example

The team is getting knocked around and it doesn't seem like the referee is calling the fouls. A parent is getting angry, yelling at the referee and the other teams players.

What You Think

Now you as a parent might actually agree and be frustrated yourself. However, you know that getting angry at the referee will not help the situation, and it will not be long until the players start doing the same thing.

You decide you want to approach this person.

Basic Steps

1. Talk to the other parents first and assess the situation.
2. Try to understand the nature of the problem. Is it education? Is it the physical play? Are they crazy?
3. Understand your goals, know your bottom line and above all NEVER GET MAD!
4. Do not be confrontational. The person is already tense and is not being objective
5. Open up a dialog with the person in any way you can. Opening up a dialog could be as simple as asking a non confrontational question about the game. Give this person an opportunity to talk about what they are mad about. Sometimes it's all that is needed.

What do you think about the game so far?
How are the players playing today?
Have we played this team before?

Lolly Pop Rule

The lollypop rule is a simple one. If someone gets out of hand they get a lollypop to suck on until they calm down. The lollypop should be yellow to simulate receiving a yellow card.

It might seem like a good idea to have red lollypops as well.... but it's not. If you have to kick someone out of the park, they probably don't want a lollypop.



3 Key Problems

Coach	It's MY kid!	I know EVERYTHING!
The coach is in a position of authority with respect to the team. This can make it awkward or difficult for parents to complain when a coach is acting innapropriately.	When a parent is yelling constantly at or coaching their child from the sideline they often feel that they have the right to do that because it is thier child.	Mr. Einstein of soccer knows everyting about the game. No one is going to tell him anything and he is always right!
Bottom Line	Bottom Line	Bottom Line
Your bottom line? The coach is in charge of the team, but not he environment that everyone participates in. That is everyones responsibility.	Your bottom line? It is a team game and team environment. The behavior is not acceptable regardless if it's their child or not.	Your bottom line? It doesn't matter what they know. They may be right, it's their approach that's wrong.

Boundaries and Guidelines

Clubs and individual teams need to set up boundaries and guidelines at the start of the season. The parents and the coach have to decide how you want your team to be run and coached. Setting up the boundaries is good for everyone. It can often alleviate problems before they ever start. Examples include, playing time, cheering & communication, the referee, positions, sideline coaching and team duties.

If your team or club is having sideline problems, consider this a major part of a team meeting before the start of your next season.

Ideas or techniques for dealing
with sideline problems?

Let us know!

www.soccerparent.com

Winning & Losing

Winning & Attitude

While kids vary in their reasons for participating, the overwhelming majority of kids do not rank winning high on the list. Many players, particularly young ones, may not even mention it or be aware of it.

It doesn't mean they don't want to win, it just means it's not their only or most important reason for being there. Many kids would rather play on a team that's losing than sit on the bench of a team that's winning.

What's important is that parents and coaches be aware that they play an important role in defining how kids learn to deal with winning and losing. If winning at all costs is on the minds of the parents, it is likely to be transferred to the players. If cheating is ok for the coach, then players will likely think so too.

From the sideline you might be surprised how excited you get while you are watching the game. Winning and losing can affect you as well and there is nothing wrong with that. However, parents and coaches must learn to abstract themselves from the outcome of the game.

A child's success or failure has no reflection on the parent. Parents should not be living vicariously through their children. The kids are there to participate, not to win the trophy their parents didn't get in high school.

What is important is your overall attitude towards winning. Try not to be preoccupied with the results of the game. For example, is the first question you ask, "did you win today?" It's an innocent question, but a different approach might be:

"Did you have fun today?"
"What was your favorite part of the game?"
"Is there anything you want to practice?"
"Was it rough out there today?"
"What was the other team like?"

Once they know that your love for them is not conditional on their success, it will relieve a great deal of stress. When that stress is removed, learning from mistakes is a lot easier.

Dealing with Losing

As a parent, you should view losing and mistakes as an opportunity. It's usually the time when a child learns the most and often needs you the most. Even if kids rank winning low on their list of reasons for participating, it doesn't mean that it doesn't affect them.

When they do lose a game or perhaps miss the important goal the team needed, it's important you maintain a positive attitude towards them as a person. It's not a time to open a coaching book. However, it doesn't mean kids can't learn from their mistakes. What it does mean is that it's time to be a parent and you must first make sure that your child understands that they are more important than any game. Once they know that your love for them is not conditional on their success, it will relieve a great deal of stress. When that stress is removed, learning from mistakes is a lot easier.

Do's

You can remind them that everyone, even the pros, misses shots and loses games.

You should reward them for the effort and not dwell on the loss or mistake.

You can teach them that it's possible to learn from your mistakes. Encourage your child to talk to the coach to learn how he or she can improve.

Don'ts

When consoling your child on losing a game or missing the winning goal, it's important not to lie to them. Do not lay the blame on a coach, referee or some other players. Even if the referee made a bad call it's part of the learning process and it's part of the game. It happens and it will happen again.

However, depending on the situation it might be a good idea to just shut up. Move on, what's next. Trying to cheer them up with comments like "you'll get them next time" can be really annoying and frustrating for kids. Instead ask them something like "what kind of pizza do you want?"

Of course none of this applies if they lose a contract worth over a hundred million dollars.



Team Meeting

The new season is starting. Filled with enthusiasm you want to know about the coach, practice times, equipment, the schedule and what you can do to help. All these topics and much more can be made clear at a team orientation meeting. Every team should have one at the beginning of the season. The coach usually organizes the meeting but most coaches would be happy for any assistance.

Start the new season right! This is the first time the parents will be together with the team so get to know each other, have fun and be constructive. Remember that you will be seeing and hearing each other for months in different weather conditions, different moods, good days and bad days so you as a group can shape how much you enjoy the experience.

Agenda for Team Meeting Jaguar Strikers U14G April 12. 2001

7:00 Introductions

7:15 Coaches' Introduction

The coach should introduce themselves and discuss his or her plans for the year.

Questions you can ask: What is the coach's certification, coaching and playing experience.

7:30 Team Objectives

Decide on the objectives of the team. It is important that the team establish the goals clearly at the outset of the season. A common problem with teams is that different attitudes towards competition arise midway through a season.

Topics include: Tournaments, style of play, competitive goals, and winning/losing.

7:45 Responsibilities of Players

Discuss the responsibilities of the players. Many people will be putting a great deal of effort into making the team operate. It is important that all the players clearly understand their responsibilities for the respect of the team and those who are volunteering their time.

Topics include: Being on time for games, having the proper equipment, and conduct.

8:00 Responsibilities of Parents

Discuss the responsibilities of the parents and designate duties for running the team.

Duties include: Phone people, assistant coach, manager, equipment and fund-raisers.

8:15 League and Club Policies

Soccer is a physical game, so it is always worthwhile to find out about medical issues.

Inquire about: Medical insurance, first aid policies, allowing kids a proper amount of time to recover from injuries.

Playing with your Kids

You don't have to be a pro soccer player to enjoy playing soccer with your kids. There are lots of simple things you can do. You can ask, "is there anything you want to work on?" Or you can ask them to teach YOU what they learned at practice, they love that.

If you want your kids to improve the answer isn't necessarily more structured soccer in practices and games. Having fun with their friends playing 3v3 or practicing moves they see on TV is the best thing they can do. In many countries the kids play in the alleys, on beaches and in the parks. They have fun and play until the sun goes down or the ball goes flat. So instead of mortgaging your house to pay for expert coaching, take them to a few games and encourage them to play pick up soccer with their friends.

Penalty Shootout

It's the World Cup final and the game is tied. The only way to decide a winner is the penalty shootout. You each take a turn as the goalie and the shooter. Each player gets five shots just like the pros do!

Quick Tip: One way to make this really fun is always give up a rebound. Yell out "REBOUND!!!!" and your kid has to come rushing in to get the second shot.

Kick the Can

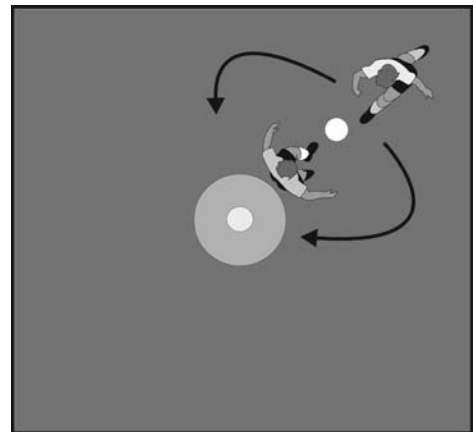
Kick the can is a great one-on-one game. All you need is a can or a milk jug. You take turns defending the can against the player with the ball. The defending player must stay at least two steps away from the can. This is great for practicing individual ball control skills.

Quick Tip: Try to find a can that makes some noise when you hit it. A metal garbage can that makes a loud bang works really well.

Goals and Kick Back Nets

There are a wide variety of portable and mini nets you can buy. Some are free standing nets and some include elastic webbing that throw the ball back to the player.

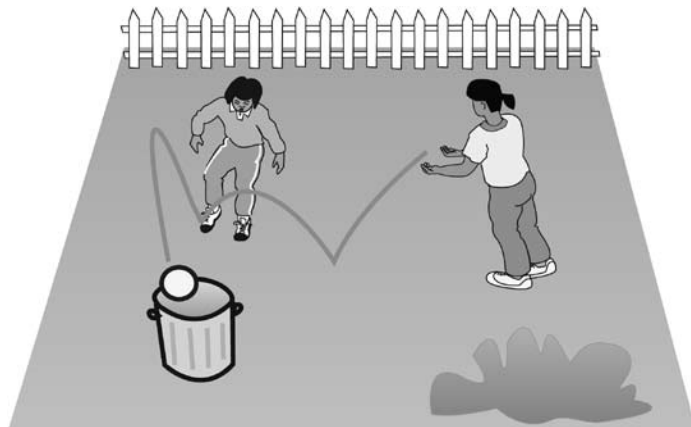
Quick Tip: A set of folding mini nets is a great way to get your child playing small-sided neighborhood games.



Garbage Cans

Garbage cans make a great target. Angle them for shooting practice or leave them straight up to develop subtle ball chipping skills.

Quick Tip: You can try all sorts of variations such as throwing the ball, using left and right feet, or using obstacles so they have to curve or chip the ball into the can.



VolleySoc

VolleySoc is a great game, and as you guessed it's a volley ball version of soccer. You can use a clothesline or even a volleyball net. The net should be low enough so that it is easy to get the ball over, but high enough so the ball is not kicked horizontally. You score a point if the ball goes out of bounds or the ball bounces twice in a row.

Shooting on Goal

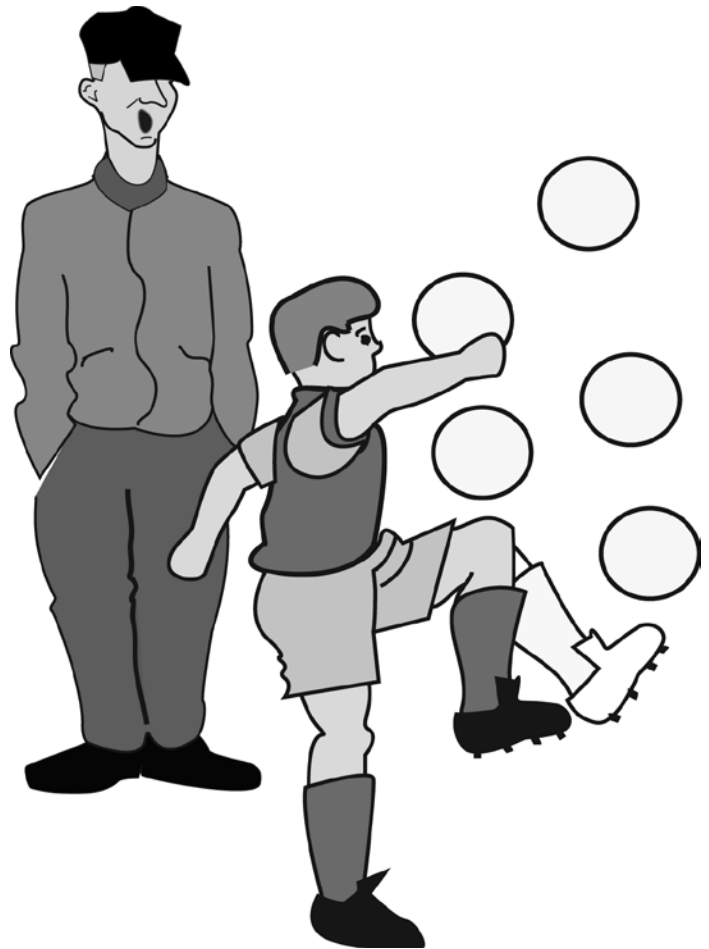
There are lots of creative ways to make a goal. Used milk containers filled with water make great posts. Use chalk to draw on a wall. Build a small goal out of wood or PVC pipe from a hardware store.

Try to make up all different kinds of shooting situations. For example you throw the ball in the air so players have to control the ball and then shoot. Kids should practice shooting moving balls and learn to use both feet. This will improve their coordination and soccer skills.

Ball Juggling

When a player ball juggles the objective is to keep the ball in the air without the ball touching the ground. They can use their feet, thighs, head and chest. Ball juggling improves coordination and concentration. Kids really enjoy beating their personal best. There are two things you can do to help. If they are getting good at it, and kind of bored, try having them juggle in different patterns with the ball. The second thing is to encourage them to put on their own freestyle ball juggling show.

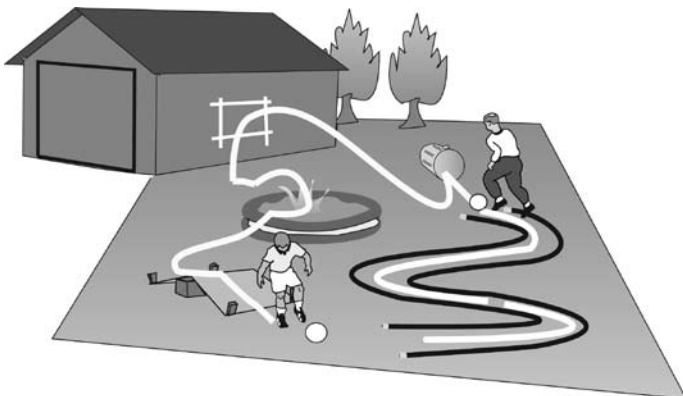
Quick Tip: You can tell them that if the ball stays on the ground too long that alligators or some mysterious creature will eat the soccer ball!!!!



Soccer Golf & Obstacle Course

Now you get to be creative. You can do this in an apartment, backyard, or a park using just about anything. You can use all different types of targets and obstacles. Under a bench, hit a tree, chip over the clothesline or into a garbage can. If you can, try to make two different kinds of courses, one that is speed and time based and another that is accuracy and target oriented.

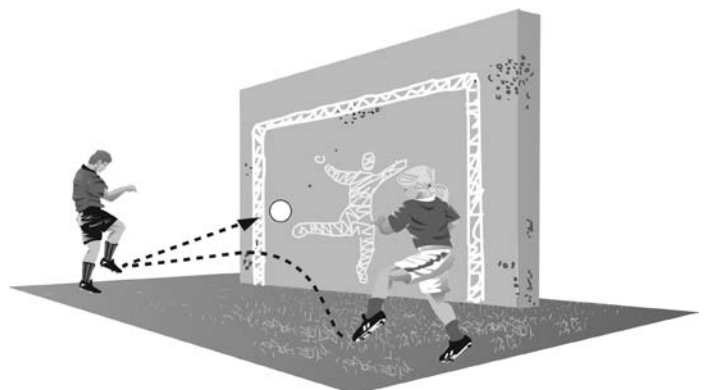
Quick Tip: Try having your child keep a diary for a course. It could be based on speed through an obstacle course or the number of times it takes to hit some targets. It's fun for them to keep track and try to keep improving.



Wall games

A wall is like having a teammate every time you want to play. Kids can practice their shooting, trapping, turning, and passing all with a wall. Try putting targets on the wall, and if its large enough a whole goal! You can use tape or chalk if you don't want it to be permanent.

Donkey is a great wall game. The game is played by each player alternately taking a shot at the wall. First you need some kind of a target on the wall, preferably a big one. Every time you miss you get a letter. The person that spells Donkey first loses. You can vary the game by allowing one touch to control the ball, or just first time it.

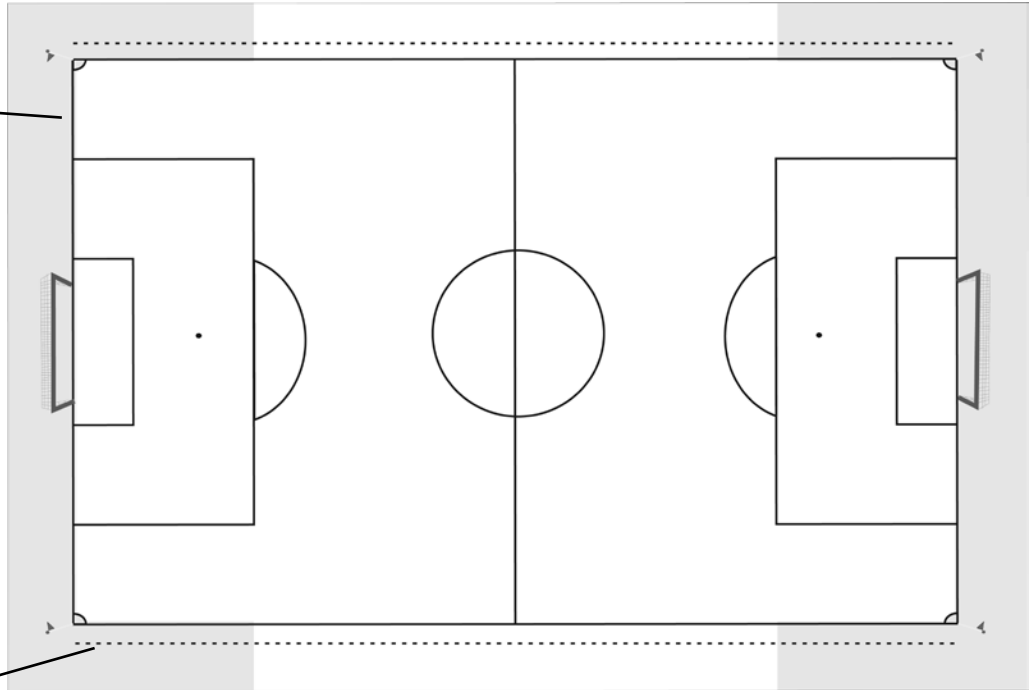


TECHNICAL AREAS

Goal Area

Soccer games should be viewed from the sidelines. Many leagues have a ban on people standing behind the nets, and in general it is not liked by referees or players.

Some clubs and leagues prohibit anyone viewing the game from behind the 18 Yard line.



Sideline Rules

The sidelines need to be kept clear for both safety and officiating.

Provide a clear line of movement & sight for assistant referees.
Remove equipment for safety of players.
Substitute players must cover uniforms while standing on the sideline.

Security

Configurations and SECURITY! The configuration for technical areas are often determined by the nature of the park. Depending on the age of the players it may not be a good idea to separate players and parents for security reasons. The game itself may be organized, but soccer is not a babysitting service and coaches are usually focused on the game.

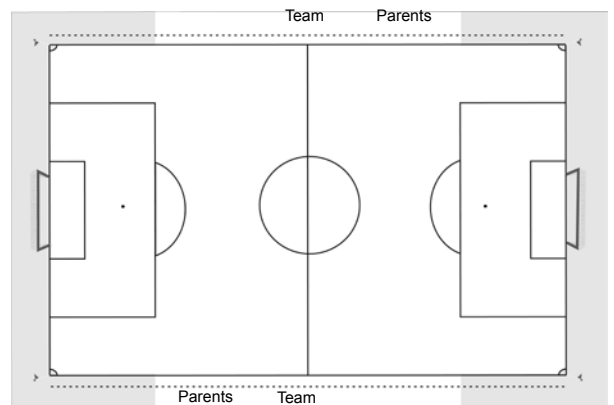
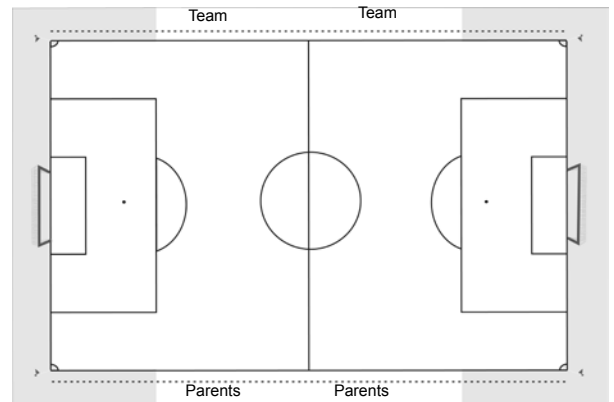
A Casual Affair!

Generally speaking parents just spread out along the sideline, often standing somewhere relative to their child's position on the field. It is casual and relatively easy going. People move around to follow the flow of the game.

While soccer should always do its best to remain casual, it's not always possible. Some leagues and clubs due to crazy parents or competitive environments create designated viewing and coaching areas.

This prevents:

1. Coaches and parents sideline coaching or criticizing by chasing the game up and down the field.
2. Reduces confrontations between parents and coaches of opposing teams.
3. Reduces parental interference with players and coaches.



Dear Parent,

As a coach with 10 years experience there is an aspect of playing on a team I would like to share with parents. Among the most important skills kids can develop are social skills. Soccer demands the players be able to communicate and play together. I have seen kids, especially teens change and improve their ability to get along with others. Kids with anger problems have learned to control their tempers. Kids who are extra shy learn to be more expressive.

The key is to provide a supportive environment for kids to build up their self-esteem. Soccer should be a place where your child can succeed on a personal level without any pressure.

The coaches and players share one thing in common, they are all on the team because they want to be. Since we're all together because we enjoy soccer, the game can be a great catalyst to learn how to improve as a group.

Alfred Simms
U15 Boys

Dear Parent,

My seven-year-old son Tom plays mini soccer. When he plays he likes to kick and run with the ball just as all the other kids do. However, it was very frustrating for him in his first year because most of the other kids all wanted to be the goal scorer and would never pass the ball. These kids always see on TV that the goal scorer is the star and that's what they want to be. I talked to the coach and he was aware of this problem. This year the coach set up games at practice which emphasize passing and teamwork. My son is excited about playing now because the rest of the kids are passing more and playing as a team.

I was amazed at how aware my son was about the lack of teamwork. I was even more amazed how the coach was able to get a group of seven year olds playing together! If your child is having problems with the game, talk to them. It might not be because they don't like soccer. It could be players on the team, the coach or the level of the team.

Joanne Kobylka

Support the Sport

In North America there is a staggering number of clubs, leagues, teams, and tournaments. A vast army of volunteers run these organizations and events. This includes coaches, managers, league administrators, referees, and countless other people who are just there to make things work. Many are involved because they love soccer and enjoy working with kids.

However, these volunteers are often unappreciated by the kids and the parents. There is a tremendous amount of effort that goes into running a league, club or team. It is extremely important that parents recognize the efforts of these volunteers. One of the best ways you can do this is to volunteer yourself. Your kids' benefit by seeing you involved. The team benefits by having another dedicated parent and you will have a lot of fun doing it.

Encourage your kids to Volunteer!

Please encourage your kids as they get older to volunteer. This is a chance for them to give back something for the tremendous volunteer effort that allowed them to play. They could help out some coaches or referee some games. It is a tremendous boost for kids to see older more experienced kids play and referee. Often the age gap between the coaches and the players is large and a couple of young volunteers can have a huge impact on younger kids. Many high schools offer credit in community and recreational programs for coaching.

Facility Crunch!

Soccer is growing in North America very fast. It is growing so fast that in many cases there isn't enough infrastructure to support the game. Soccer needs facilities and soccer communities across North America must get together to build them.

Please be aware of any efforts to develop new facilities. Participate in letter writing, fund raising or perhaps even build something yourself! If we don't build new facilities many kids and adults will not be able to play in the future or the existing facilities will suffer from overuse.



Artificial Turf

There are several new kinds of artificial turf that are fantastic to play on. A single artificial field can sustain a tremendous amount of use and relieve a lot of pressure on grass surfaces.

Add Lights

Adding lights to an existing field can be like adding a whole new field. It can increase capacity by allowing practices or games in the evening.

Shot Walls

A shot wall is a wall that lets kids shoot on a fake net but the ball comes bouncing back to them. It's a great way to get a couple of kids playing on their own and having fun.

