



TOPSoccer COACHING GUIDE



SIMPLIFIED RULES OF PLAY

The rules presented below are simplified and are offered as a guide. TOPSoccer rules will follow WSYSA Small-Sided Game Rules when applicable and will also be flexible, adaptive, positive, and designed to ensure success and safety for all players.

Field of Play

Participants play on a rectangular field with goals at each end. The field is longer than it is wide and will vary in size depending on the age, abilities and number of players.

The Ball

The size of the ball will be determined based on the ability and needs of both teams involved.

Number of Players

Numbers of players on each team will be determined after registration and will be based on the number of registrants, their ages and abilities. The number of players can vary from 4 to 15.

Player Equipment

Player's equipment should consist of shirt, shorts, shin guards under socks and shoes. All players on a team should be dressed alike except for the goalkeeper. All players must wear shin guards. In the case of a player with autism, it may be necessary to allow for socks under and over the shin guards as players with autism are likely to be sensitive to the feel of the shin guards on their skin.

The Referee

When used, the referee will be in charge of all game activity. The referee will keep the game clock, enforce the laws of the game and evaluate sportsmanship.

Game Duration

The game length will vary depending on the age and abilities of the players involved. For league play, the local TOPSoccer committee will determine the game length.

Ball In and Out Of Play

The ball is out of play when it completely crosses the boundaries of the field or when the game is stopped by the referee. Spectators should not attempt to stop the ball, as the players may be out of bounds and still play the ball as long as the ball has not completely crossed the line.

Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball crosses the goal line under the crossbar and between the goal posts, providing that it was not last touched by a defending player. If a defender kicks the ball into his or her own goal, a goal kick is awarded. If the **goalkeeper is touching the soccer ball, no opponent shall try to take the ball away.**

Fouls and Misconduct

The penal fouls, and non-penal fouls and misconduct will apply. However, the judging of intent is very difficult in TOPSoccer play. Most often an apparent penal foul is really an unintentional, but dangerous act. Preemptive refereeing and cooperation with buddies and coaches will virtually eliminate the need for the caution or sendoff, particularly since the showing and trauma of a yellow or red card is completely inappropriate for TOPSoccer players.

Free Kicks

The distinction between a direct free kick and an indirect free kick is lost with many TOPSoccer players. All free kicks will be indirect.

Penalty Kick

There will be no penalty kicks in TOPSoccer.

Throw-In

Players are allowed more than one chance to accomplish a throw-in. The ball may be kicked in depending on the abilities of the players involved.

Goal Kick

When the ball has completely crossed the goal line, but not in the goal, after last been touched by a player on the attacking team, it is put back into play by a defensive kick anywhere inside the goal area. The ball must clear the penalty area before it is back in play.

Corner Kick

A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when the defending team puts the ball out of bounds over its own goal line. The ball is kicked in from the corner nearest to where it went out of bounds.

MODIFICATIONS AND ADAPTATIONS

The focus of this coaching guide is to assist coaches and participants so that they may realize a positive TOPSoccer experience. Achieving this goal is possible by creating a positive playing environment and not forcing children into situations that are doomed to fail. Coaches and administrators must be willing to adjust rules and activities to match the needs and abilities of the participants.

Modifying the Rules/Activity

There are several ways this can be accomplished. The rules of soccer, if applied as written, can be very complex. In a TOPSoccer program this would lead to frequent stops in play, taking away from the experience and enjoyment of the game. Therefore, TOPSoccer organizers should not hesitate to modify the rules of soccer to meet the specific needs of participants during training and games.

Accommodate Special Needs

Evaluate what your player's special needs are and do everything possible to create the opportunity for each child to make a contribution to the game. This can happen by using special equipment, rule changes or pairing an athlete with a buddy.

Avoid Elimination Games

Most soccer related games can be structured to include rather than exclude participants. Rather than eliminating an athlete, have them freeze in place or do a simple exercise, then have them continue in the game. Developing inclusion games only enhances the experience of the TOPSoccer participant.

Encourage Creativity

Coaches can structure lessons so that the participants are asked to respond to challenging questions such as, "Can you dribble with your right foot or left foot?", " Can you stop a ball with your chest?" or " Show me the two ways of passing a soccer ball". Approaching athletes this way permits them to respond in ways that foster success. Obviously, the response will vary depending on the level of ability and severity of impairments.

Adjusting the Play Area

Reducing or an enlarging an area in which the drill or game will be played can be an equalizer of participants' level of play. By enlarging an area for a drill, for instance, participants will feel less pressure from other players. Reducing a field size, for example, will allow kids with less motor skills to be more active in a game.

Methods of Communication

Participants sometimes acquire communication systems that are specific to their needs. For example, verbally explaining a task may not work with the manner in which participants process information. Information that is more specific might provide a better understanding by the participant. A coach or buddy demonstrating the task that the athlete is being asked to perform may also provide a better understanding. Some athletes may require a coach physically helping the athlete to perform the activity. An example would be holding a person's foot in the way the coach would like them to strike and follow through with the ball.

Modifying Equipment

In some cases coaches and administrators will have to assist athletes with special equipment. Creating the opportunity to play can be as simple as modifying the game itself, for there are no set guidelines for the kinds of adaptations for walkers or wheelchairs, other than the safety of all that are playing must be considered.

Suggestions for Modification and Adaptations

Orthopedic Impairments

- Reducing field size
- Increase the number of players
- Use wider goals
- Use buddies to help push wheelchair athletes
- Use a larger or slower ball
- Use 2 goalkeepers
- Play indoors

Visual Impairments

- Increase ball size
- Use a brightly colored ball
- Wrap goal with brightly colored tape
- Use flags to mark sidelines
- Use a beeper ball
- Have a sighted buddy assist players
- Use a beeper or boom box behind the goal

Hearing Impairments

- Use and teach Referee hand signals
- Station helpers on four sides of the field

SPORTSMANSHIP

TOPSoccer provides opportunities for players to have fun and to learn good sportsmanship, self-reliance and teamwork. Participation and self-improvement are emphasized; winning is secondary. This philosophy was developed to help kids to learn to love to play the game of soccer as well as learn to work with others.

To encourage sportsmanship, coaches need to emphasize these important points while teaching kids to play soccer.

- Play the game for the game's sake
- Be generous when you win
- Be graceful when you lose
- Be fair always no matter what the cost
- Obey the rules of the game
- Work for the good of your team
- Accept the decisions of the official with grace
- Believe in the honesty of your opponents
- Conduct yourself with honor and grace
- Honestly and wholeheartedly applaud the efforts of your teammates and your opponents

WSYSA and TOPSoccer require their coaches and spectators to behave in an adult and sportsman-like manner. Each coach is responsible for the behavior of his or her players, parents and spectators. Coaches must instruct the parents of improper game behavior prior to the start of the season and must reinforce correct parental behavior. If a parent or spectator is disruptive the coach is encouraged to speak to the person responsible and remind him or her of the importance of role models for good sportsmanship. If a coach, parent or spectator becomes a continuing problem, the necessary measures may be taken to have the person banned from game fields for the duration of the season.

Reminders for parents:

- Do not coach the players, including your own child, from the sidelines during the games
- Respect the judgment of the game official. Remember your actions will reflect on your child
- Focus on learning and enjoying the game
- Decrease the emphasis on winning
- Be understanding and supportive when your child makes mistakes
- Be supportive of the coaches role on the team
- Understand your role as the parent in sports
- Avoid the use of fear: players development is rarely fostered by fear of the consequences of failure
- Show empathy for the young developing soccer player

Youth sports programs provide an enjoyable learning environment for the physical, social, and personal development of the children participating. The likelihood that kids will realize positive sports values are enhanced when adult leaders take the responsibility to serve as facilitators of desirable sports spectators. This can be achieved when parents and coaches work together to emphasize good sportsmanship, develop skills progressively and encourage lifelong interest in sports participation by fostering a positive environment in which kids can be creative and mistakes are an accepted part of the game.

MOTIVATING PLAYERS

As a coach, your goal should be to first create a good learning environment where kids can learn good individual skills and also learn to be part of a team. You should also create a good social environment where participants can relate well with each other, the mentors, buddies, the coach and the program administrators.

The positive approach to coaching in which desired activities are recognized and reinforced is the most successful coaching method. By taking a positive approach with players, coaches are trying to strengthen and encourage correct behaviors. The motivational force at work for the players is a positive desire to achieve. The positive approach, through its emphasis on improving, fosters a desirable learning environment and tends to promote more positive relationships between the participants and the coach.

Some tips on motivating players:

Coach - Athlete Relationship

A good relationship between coach and player is the foundation of player motivation

- Use each player's name during training
- Use plenty of encouraging words and phrases
- Have one on one talks with players
- Make feedback specific to performance - explain how to do the task correctly, rather than emphasizing that they did it wrong

Building Self Confidence

Players develop the ability to believe in themselves by being allowed to make mistakes and learn from them.

- Encourage everyone to be involved
- Develop skills through game related activities
- Use numerous demonstrations and repetitions of correct performance
- Deemphasize winning and focus on participation and learning

Coach Expectations

Coaches need to understand that their expectations must be reasonable and be the same for each child with respect to his or her disability.

- Do not ignore the faults of better players or pick on minor faults of weaker players
- Each child should always know what is acceptable behavior
- Always give players the benefit of the doubt, until proven otherwise

DEALING WITH PROBLEM ATHLETES

No matter how you look at a group of children, no one is the same whether they are disabled or not. As a coach, you must be able to relate to each athlete as an individual to achieve desirable behaviors. Kids come in all shapes

and sizes and personality types. The added factor with the TOPSoccer program is a disability or two. Regardless of the child or his or her disability, rules and sidelines must be set and every participant must abide by them.

Problem athletes fall into a number of groups. We will attempt to describe them, and provide possible solutions for with each type of child. The first and most important thing is to be flexible and patient.

The “hard-to-coach” player is one of the most frustrating types of player to reach. This child will often not listen, or will say they understand, but then do things their own way. Players that are “hard-to-coach” typically have problems with authority. Attempting to put more control on them just lends itself to more problems in other ways. The best way to deal with this type of player is to set specific guidelines of behavior for the team and hold him or her to it while providing lots of positive reinforcement.

Athletes who have a low self-esteem often have had their weaknesses made fun of. This type of child typically sets unreachable expectations for himself/herself. Low self-esteem will show itself by players acting out in inappropriate ways for attention. To help this player, you as the coach should help set reasonable individual goals. Find a talent at which the player excels and build from there.

The withdrawn child will sometimes avoid getting close to others. Many times they have never been in situations where they played sports or have been part of a group. The important thing to remember is to build trust by telling her or him when they have done something well. Do not put a lot of pressure to immediately become part of the group.

The self-centered athlete can be another very challenging child with which to deal. He or she are self-focused. As a coach, the best way to deal with this child is to enforce the team rules and make the player accountable for his or her actions to you and the team. Ensure that the player knows he or she is a valued and equal part of the team.

When coaching, you will discover that each child has his or her own way of dealing with pressure and new activities. The important thing to remember is to show no favoritism toward players. Your expectations for each player should be geared toward that individual player’s best effort. Success and abilities are not measured against the level of play of his or her teammates. Finally, the coach or program administrators should deal directly with problem players and their parents. Do not have the mentors or buddies correcting behavior of participants. Deal one-on-one so no embarrassment occurs.

PRESENTATION TIPS

- Plan your training and know the drills you are teaching
- Make sure you have planned for all the equipment you need
- Always be in a position so all players can see you when you speak
- Speak clearly and for short periods
- Demonstrate only when you are confident that you can perform the required skill. Otherwise have an assistant or mentor do it.
- Ask questions of participants
- Players learn by doing, so allow as much time as possible for training the drills
- Keep sessions realistic
- Make sure participation is meaningful for everyone

HOW PLAYERS LEARN

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Observing: | By watching the coach, or other players perform the skill they are trying to learn |
| Feeling: | By touching the part of the body that will be involved while attempting to learn a skill |
| Hearing: | By listening to instructions that are repeated as necessary, particularly while performing the skill |
| Visualizing: | By seeing him- or herself performing the skill |
| Imitating: | By attempting to perform the skill observed |
| Practicing: | By repeating the skill and correcting errors until the skill becomes learned |

PLANNING YOUR TRAINING SESSION

When planning your TOPSoccer training session, keep in mind the types and levels of disabilities of the players participating in your program. You should have a plan that includes a theme for your training session, what you would like players to accomplish and keeps all participants involved and having fun.

Training sessions should be 90 minutes long with time at the end for free play. Allow time for a fun game while waiting for late arrivals. Usually allow 15 minutes at the scheduled start time to get into your practice and a little time for the players to get reorganized after breaks. Remember to have a plan but to be flexible.

Keys to a successful training session:

- Have a theme for your practice and stick with it. Varying topics within a practice session leads to confusion.
- Develop a practice plan and make sure all your coaches and buddies know what it is.
- Keep sessions varied and challenging, recognizing that some players may do better with routine rather than a varied training session.
- Don't give long explanations. Give brief explanations and corrections when problems occur.
- Make sure your practice is set up for success.
- Make sure your practices are upbeat, positive and fun.
- Demonstrate the skills you would like performed.
- Allow players to make mistakes and learn from them.
- Focus on individual improvements rather than comparisons.
- Be patient!