

# Schoolyard Soccer Guidelines

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## Introduction

At the 2004 AYSO NAGM in Phoenix, AZ, AYSO Executive Membership voted on and passed an amendment to the National Rules and Regulations to lower the minimum age requirement for participation in AYSO to four years of age.

The objective of this program is to provide young players and their parents with a "pressure free" introduction to the beautiful and simple game of soccer. At this age, players should be exposed to soccer by playing simple, fun activities and games that require little to no practice, and a minimal time commitment.

This program allows players to discover the game for themselves, while parents are given a soccer foundation on which to build and grow into future AYSO coaches, referees and administrators.

The AYSO Schoolyard Soccer (4-year-olds) is not to be considered a coaching program. It is a program that is designated to be facilitated by a qualified AYSO Master Coach. The AYSO National Coaching Commission supports this program predicated on the basis that the guidelines provided within the Jamboree Master Coach Manual are followed and that all decisions regarding the program are made in the best interest of the players.

## Schoolyard Program Guidelines

### General

- Every effort should be made to institute a U5 division separate from U-6, as there are significant social, emotional and physiological differences between four-year-old and five-year-old players.
- AYSO's membership year begins on August 1st each year and extends to the following July 31st. The effective date of age determination shall be the player's age as of July 31st immediately prior to the start of the membership year. Players who

have reached the age of four as of this date are eligible to participate - NO EXCEPTIONS!

- Every effort should be made to have separate girls and boys divisions.
- The Jamboree One with One format described within this document is the preferred program and should be followed when offering the Jamboree program.
- The Schoolyard program consists of one day per week of the Jamboree One with One format for 6 to 8 weeks.

## Jamboree One with One

### Organization

Jamboree One with One is the combination of two different formats that, put together, will provide the best possible introduction to soccer for our youngest players. In AYSO soccer, a jamboree means that teams are formed on a weekly basis depending on how many players attend a given session. One with One refers to the concept that each player will have a parent (or other adult) working with them on the field.

A "Master Coach" will lead each session. The Master Coach will introduce a game/activity that will practice a certain skill or part of the game using explanation and demonstration. Each pair (player/parent) will then attempt the activity while the Master Coach circles between pairs providing specific help or suggestions so that the activities are performed as intended. After a suitable amount of time, the Master Coach will bring the players and parents back together as a group and recap what they have done, introducing the next game/activity.

Each Jamboree One with One session will end with a 20 minute short-sided game (3 v 3). Details regarding the game are explained later. Most importantly, allow the players to play without coaching or teaching them as this experience is designed to expose them to soccer, not to begin developing them. The two goals of the program are to allow the players to enjoy the activities and to let the game be the teacher.

### Master Coach

The Master Coach must be a currently registered AYSO volunteer. It is highly recommended that the Master Coach be an AYSO Advanced Coach and Advanced Coach Instructor. However, in the case where a Region is unable to run a Jamboree

Program because of a lack of an Advanced Coach who is also an Advanced Coach Instructor, it is permissible to use:

- An Advanced Coach who is also a Coach Instructor
- An Advanced Coach who is not an Instructor
- An Intermediate Coach who is a Coach Instructor
- An Intermediate Coach

It is critical that the Master Coach follow the Schoolyard Program as stated in the Jamboree Master Coach Manual. The Master Coach is the key to a successful Schoolyard program. The Master Coach should have a complete understanding of the AYSO National Coaching Program and full understanding that:

- Young soccer players need special consideration
- They are children playing a child's game
- These young children must be regarded as young children, not mini adults
- Fun activity factors must be a central part of a child-centered program
- Educators agree that early learning experiences are the most important and produce lifelong learning experiences
- Four-year-old players are essentially self- oriented and relate naturally to one or two others, not to large groups
- Most children cannot sustain prolonged activity
- They function best in suitable starts and stops (rest periods)
- Concentration span is limited, so frequent changes of pace and activity is essential
- The young players should learn to discover the wonderful game of soccer, not be taught the game of soccer by adults

The Master Coach will take the lead in program implementation with the Region. It shall be the responsibility of each Section Director and Area Director to ensure that the AYSO Schoolyard Program guidelines are being followed in their respective sections and areas.

### **3 v 3 Game Set-Up and Guidelines**

Each player in the U5 division can receive a uniform, since it is part of the fun to get dressed up for "the big game". Having fun will make the kids want to come back. The

uniforms should be identical for all players. Each week before the game portion of the day begins, players will be divided into groups of 4 (3 on the field with 1 substitute/reserve). Based on how many players arrive, pinnies (different colored 'vests') will be used to differentiate the 'teams' for games for a particular day.

### **Session Schedule**

Sessions should last one hour and fifteen minutes including organizing time and breaks  
- NO MORE.

- 10 minutes - group warm-up and activities
- 5 minutes - water break
- 20 minutes - training activities and games
- 10 minutes - team organizing and water break, assigning players to teams, assigning field locations
- 20 minutes - 3 v 3 game (played in two halves of 10 minutes each with a short break at the quarter to make substitutions and get a quick drink)
- 5 minutes - half time
- 5 minutes -to make changes between quarters

During the game, one parent from each team should be selected to act as the game supervisors for the week. These parents should be required to keep the game going. All other parents should be encouraged to cheer positively and refrain from "coaching" (giving directions) from the sideline. This is the time for the kids to play - LET THEM!

## **The following guidelines include the only elements of the Laws of the Game that apply to the AYSO Short Sided Game Program for Jamboree:**

### **The Field:**

The recommended field size for the Jamboree games is 30 x 15 yards marked with lines or cones (see diagram in manual).

### **The Goals:**

The goals in Jamboree games should be a maximum of 4 feet high and 6 feet wide or 2 tall cones set 6 feet apart.

**The Ball:**

A size 3 ball is used for Jamboree games.

**The Teams:**

Each Jamboree team should have a maximum of 5 on the roster. Games are played with 3 players per team on the field (3v3) and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters. Separate boys and girls teams are recommended at all levels.

**Player Equipment:**

Shoes and shinguards, covered by the socks, are mandatory at all practice and game activities. Soccer shoes, tennis shoes, or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

**The Start of Play:**

To start the first and second halves, and following each goal in all age group games, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the center of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off.

**The Kick-off:**

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least 5 yards from the ball. Do not insist the opponent be a minimum of precisely 5 yards from the ball as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

**Ball In and Out of Play:**

The ball is out of play in all age group games when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line) either on the ground or in the air. In Jamboree games, the game supervisors for the week will determine when the ball is out of play and should guide the restart, interfering as little as possible. It is the player's game, let them play and work on technique later.

**Method of Scoring:**

A goal in all age group games is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone. In Jamboree games, goals are not recorded to determine who wins as everyone is a winner.

**Fouls and Other Stoppages:**

Deliberate fouling should be rare in Jamboree games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any additional reasons to stop play in Jamboree games. If a player is "not playing well with others", or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or as may be appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it. Stoppages must not become a lengthy ceremony.

**Free Kick:**

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to "sort things out" in Jamboree games. When this is necessary, correct the situation then restart with a free kick for a deserving team. The opposing team should be at least 5 yards from the ball in Jamboree games. All free kicks in Jamboree games are direct free kicks which means, if you're lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick without the ball having to be touched or played by another player on the field (indirect kick).

**Throw in:**

When the ball goes out of play in Jamboree games across the touch line (side lines) or the goal lines (end lines) without a goal being scored, a throw-in is awarded at the point it crossed the line. The throw-in is awarded to the team that didn't touch the ball last. In Jamboree games, whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go...teach proper technique later. Again, let them play with minimum interruption. Keep the game moving and fun.