

Parent FAQ

Everything You Need To Know About AYSO

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Who do I call?

Contact your local AYSO Region for most information. Check their website first as it will often have all the info you are looking for. If you aren't sure which AYSO Region you have signed up for, visit http://www.ayso.org/region_locator.aspx. It should give you the website address, phone number and email address.

AYSO is a national organization with almost 1,000 individual leagues, called Regions, across the nation. Because of the great diversity of AYSO Regions many decisions are made at the local level, including timing and length of the season, pricing, refund policies, coach assignments, etc.

When do the players get called?

Teams may begin practice 2-3 weeks before the official season start. The coaches will call the players/parents. They will give you all the information you will need in regards to practice times and location. Each coach sets his/her own practice days, time and location.

It's after August 15 and my child has not been called. What do I do?

Please do not panic if you see teams practicing and your child has not been called. Not all teams begin practice at the same time. The very young teams, in particular, do not always begin practice on the same date as other teams. Also some coaches may be out of town. If your child has not been called check on the local AYSO website or contact the local administrator. You can find contact information by clicking on this link: http://www.ayso.org/region_locator.aspx and entering your home zip code!

How often are practices and games?

Practices are held once or twice a week (field and times to be determined by your child's coach). Games are held on weekends. Location of games and practices will be determined by the local AYSO Regional Board with schedules provided to you by your child's coach.

My child withdrew. How do I get a refund?

AYSO Regions set their refund policy locally. They do vary. Please refer to your Region's website for complete information. To find your Region information visit http://www.ayso.org/region_locator.aspx. It should give you the website address, phone number and email address for the various Regions in your area.

How do I register my child?

Use the Find AYSO Near You tool at the top of any page to find your Region and Regional volunteer leadership. Enter your ZIP code and you will be given contact information for the Regions closest to you. Your Region might provide a Web site, phone hotline, e-mail or direct contact number for information on registration dates and fees. AYSO Regions are run by all-volunteer staffs that may need time to return calls and e-mails. If the Region has a Web site, check that first before trying to contact the Region, you can usually find all the information you need there. If you have any difficulty contacting your Region, call the national office at 1-800-USA-AYSO and ask for Member Services.

When is the AYSO soccer season?

The largest season is in the fall with registration taking place in the spring. However, seasons are decided at the Region level and vary greatly due to weather, field availability and other local factors. Spring season is played in many parts of the country as either an additional or the only season.

What's a Region?

Your AYSO Region is one of nearly 1,000 local programs in communities nationwide. Each AYSO Region is the same, yet different. The Bylaws and Rules and Regulations are the same but because community needs and characteristics may be different, Regions have flexibility to accommodate their unique needs.

Your Region is identified by its own number. Your Regional Commissioner and Regional Board of Directors will usually meet once a month during the season and perhaps more often for pre-season planning. You are welcome to attend any of these meetings. Many Regions give out a Region Handbook at registration, with their policies fully defined.

What equipment is needed?

Soccer has limited equipment requirements. Shin guards are mandatory during practice and games. Full-coverage shoes are required, and it is advisable to use shoes designed specifically for soccer. Most AYSO teams play in uniforms (jersey, shorts and socks) supplied by the Region and it is included in the registration fee. Regions also provide field equipment, such as goals, nets and flags. A limited number of balls will be supplied for practices and games, but it is ideal for every child to have their own soccer ball for practicing and playing on their own.

When are practices and games?

Each Region schedules its own practices and games. When your child has been registered and placed on a team, your child's coach will contact you with practice day(s) and time(s), and a schedule of games.

How much does it cost to sign up?

AYSO is very affordable, but the cost differs depending on the Region. The fee is used for insurance, equipment, uniforms, program development, field rental and other needs. None of the Region leadership receives payment for their time.

What if my child drops out and I would like to request a refund?

Go to your Region's Web site for the refund policy and follow the instructions. If there is no information on refunds, contact your Region's Regional Commissioner. For contact information see How do I register my child?

Who will coach my child's team?

AYSO teams are coached by volunteers from your community, many of them parents with children in the program.

Who runs my AYSO Region?

Volunteers - AYSO is a volunteer organization with more than 220,000 parents and friends working as coaches, referees and administrators. It's not unusual to find two, three or more children in the same family playing AYSO soccer - while Dad serves as referee and Mom as coach. A coach, a referee, a registrar, a fundraiser, a field marker, a publicist, a treasurer - many people, all contributing their time and efforts to make AYSO a great program for our soccer-playing kids.

AYSO works because the volunteers work.

What am I expected to do as an AYSO parent?

Support Your Child

Take your child to practices and games with the proper equipment. Support your child by giving encouragement and showing an interest in his or her team. Help your child learn soccer skills and good sportsmanship. Teach your child that hard work and an honest effort are often more important than victory.

Always Be Positive

You are not on the team, but you have strong influence on the team's environment. Applaud good plays by your child's team and by the opposing team. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from youth sporting activities.

Be Enthusiastic And Supportive

Let children set their own goals and play the game for themselves. Don't put too heavy a burden on your child to win games.

Reinforce Positive Behavior

The best way to help a child to achieve goals and reduce the natural fear of failure is through positive reinforcement. No one likes to make a mistake. If your child does make one, remember that he or she is still learning. Encourage your child's efforts and point out the good things your child accomplished.

Let Coaches Coach And Referees Ref

Coaches and referees are usually parents. They volunteer their time to help make your child's youth soccer experience a positive one. They need your support, too. What coaches and referees don't need is your help in coaching from the sidelines. So please refrain from coaching during games and practices. Referees are not the "bad guys." Treat them and their calls fairly and respectfully.

How do I become an AYSO volunteer?

It's easy. Talk to your child's coach; call your Regional Commissioner or any of the Region board members. They will be most helpful - and happy - to find the right job for you.

How does AYSO protect its athletes?

Safe Haven™

Safe Haven is a program designed to address a growing need for child and volunteer protection by:

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

1. Screening and registering all AYSO volunteers
2. Requiring training and certification
3. Providing specific child and volunteer protection policies and guidelines
4. Promoting safety and injury prevention

The Volunteer Protection Act of 1997

This law grants immunity from certain types of liabilities for volunteers who meet its requirements. In order to receive full protection under the law, AYSO requires all volunteers to:

- Sign and submit a Volunteer Application every year,
- Be authorized to do their job,
- Act within the scope of their Job Descriptions and AYSO's policies, procedures and guidelines,
- Complete Safe Haven Training and
- Be properly trained in their jobs

Child Abuse is against the law and AYSO's Safe Haven training is designed to help volunteers recognize abuse and most importantly, to prevent opportunities for abuse to occur.

How do you play soccer?

Soccer is a simple game. It requires a field, a ball, two teams of players and their equipment, and a referee. The field is approximately the size of a football field. Smaller fields may be used for younger players.

The game is played in two timed halves of equal length. To advance AYSO's Everyone Plays™ commitment, quarter breaks can be made within each half to allow for player substitution. The length of each half is determined by the age of the children playing.

Physical size is not an important factor in becoming a skilled and successful soccer player. Because of the game's pace, every child participates in the action while on the field.

What are basic soccer skills?

The sport involves several basic skills: passing/shooting, dribbling, and controlling (or trapping) the ball. These skills can be learned at any age, and a good soccer player works continually to improve them.

Passing/Shooting

Passing is kicking, pushing or heading the ball to a teammate or to a space where a teammate can run to the ball. A player may lightly tap the ball to a teammate several feet away or kick it strongly to move it down the field. The ball may scoot along the ground or may be kicked into the air.

Most players use two types of kicks to pass to a teammate or shoot towards the goal. One is the instep drive which is a powerful kick. The other kick is called a push pass. Performed using the inside of the foot, the push pass is much more accurate than the instep drive, but is less powerful.

Dribbling

Dribbling is transporting the ball under control from one area to another. Soccer players cannot use their hands. Players dribble the ball with their feet, using light taps on the ball to move it along the ground.

Controlling

Controlling (or trapping) is stopping the ball in flight or on the ground, and then controlling it by either dribbling or passing the ball to teammates. There are many ways to trap a ball: (1) allow it to hit the chest at an angle that deflects the ball to the ground where it can be controlled; (2) allow it to hit the thigh or bent knee to deflect the ball to the ground where it can be controlled; or (3) use the foot to stop the ball.

Heading

Heading is unique to the game of soccer. When a ball is too high to kick, players "head" the ball to pass to a teammate or score a goal.

What are the soccer positions?

The goalkeeper is responsible for guarding his or her team's goal and preventing the other team from scoring. Goalkeepers are generally not used in U-8 soccer.

The Defender's primary duty is to prevent the opponent from having a good shot at the goal. This player also works to gain possession of the ball and pass it to a teammate for an attack.

The Midfielder (or halfback) plays a "transitional" game from defense to offense and vice versa. Usually the midfielder is the most active player on the field and key to maintaining team continuity.

The Forward's primary responsibility is to score, and also assists the midfielder in shifting play from defense to offense.

What are the rules?

The object of the game is for the players to get the ball into their opponent's goal using any part of their body except their hands and arms. Only goalkeepers may use their hands while inside their own penalty area.

Generally, the Laws of the Game require that referees stop the game when something has happened which is unfair or unsafe.

Kickoff

To start the game or the second half, and after each goal, a kickoff is taken from the center circle.

Throw In

After the ball has completely crossed the side lines - commonly called touch lines in soccer - a throw in is awarded against the team that last touched the ball. The throw in is taken from where the ball left the field and must be thrown with two hands from behind and over the head, while both feet are on the ground on or behind the touch line.

Goal Kick

The goal kick is taken by the defending team each time the ball crosses the goal line without a goal being scored and was last touched by an attacking player. The ball may be placed anywhere in the goal area and is not considered back in play until it has been kicked out of the penalty area.

Corner Kick

This kick is taken by the attacking team each time the ball is kicked by the defense over its own goal line without a goal being scored. The ball is placed within the three-foot arc in the corner of the field (nearest to where the ball went out of play) and kicked into play by the attacking team.

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded when a defending player commits one of the 10 major fouls within his or her own penalty area while the ball is still in play. The penalty kick is taken by a player from the offended team from a spot 12 yards from the goal. All players must remain outside the penalty area, 10 yards from the ball, and behind the penalty kick mark until the kick is taken, except for the kicker and the goalkeeper. The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line until the ball is kicked. Once kicked, the goalkeeper may try to stop the ball from entering the goal. The kicker, after waiting for the referee's signal, may score by kicking the ball directly into the opponent's goal.

Misconduct

There are two kinds of misconduct:

1. when an action results in a caution (yellow card) from the referee
2. when an action results in a player being sent off or ejected from the field (red card).

A referee may also warn a player to improve his or her conduct (or unsporting behavior) before a caution is issued. The referee also has the authority to suspend or terminate play because of misconduct or interference on the part of coaches or spectators.

The Team

A team has a maximum of 11 players on the field at any one time, although a game can be played with as few as seven players on a team. Regions use small-sided teams in younger age divisions. Players get more "touches" on the ball, learn skills quicker and have more fun using this method.

What is offside?

A player is offside if he or she is ahead of the ball at the moment the ball touches or is played by a member of the same team, except if that player is in his/her own half of the field or has two opponents even with or between

him/her and the opponent's goal line. The referee's "moment of judgment" is the instant the ball is played, not when it is received.

A player is not offside if he/she is the first to receive the ball from a throw-in, corner kick or goal kick, or is not involved in active play by interfering with play, interfering with an opponent, or gaining an advantage by being in that position.

Who are the officials?

AYSO recommends the use of three game officials-one referee and two assistant referees.

The referee is the ultimate authority during the game. The referee's chief responsibilities are to make the game as fun, fair and safe for the players as possible. The referee enforces the rules - which, in soccer, are called "Laws" - by calling offenses and determining if goals have been scored.

Assistant referees provide vital assistance to the referee by signaling when the ball has gone out of play and which team gets possession. Assistant referees also assist with substitutions and the general control of the game.

How is the field set up?

The field is divided in two halves. The center circle in the middle of the field is used to start the game, to start the second half and to restart after a goal has been scored.

There is a large rectangular area and a smaller rectangular area found at each end of the field. These are vital areas for both teams, and are where penalty kicks are taken.

The four corners of the field are inscribed with three-foot arcs where corner kicks are taken.

What are fouls?

Major (Penal) Fouls

There are 10 major fouls that result in a direct free kick (DFK), and from which a goal may be directly scored against the opponents.

The 10 major fouls are divided into two groups. Six within the first group require that the foul be committed carelessly, recklessly, or with disproportionate force:

1. Kicking or attempting to kick an opponent.
2. Striking or attempting to strike an opponent.
3. Pushing an opponent.
4. Charging an opponent.
5. Tripping or attempting to trip an opponent.
6. Jumping at an opponent.

The other four require only that they be committed:

1. When tackling an opponent, making contact with the opponent before the ball.
2. Spitting at an opponent.
3. Holding an opponent.
4. Handling the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeepers within their own penalty areas).

Minor (Non-Penal) Foul

Minor fouls result in an indirect free kick (IFK). At least one additional player of either team must touch the ball before a goal can be scored from an IFK. Minor fouls include:

1. Playing in a dangerous manner (including high kicking near another player's head or trying to play a ball held by a goalkeeper).
2. Impeding the progress of an opponent.
3. Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands.

Goalkeeper Offenses - An IFK is also awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper, within his/her own penalty area, commits any of the following offenses:

1. Takes more than six seconds while controlling the ball with the hands.

2. Touches the ball again with the hands after it has been released from the keeper's possession and has not touched another player.
3. Touches the ball with the hands when the ball is deliberately kicked to the keeper by a teammate.
4. Touches the ball with the hands after receiving it directly from a throw-in taken by a teammate.

Does AYSO have programs for children with special needs?

The Very Important Player (VIP) Program is for players with mental or physical disabilities.

What is Good Sportsmanship?

AYSO has always encouraged good sportsmanship in its programs. In fact, "Good Sportsmanship" is one of the philosophies listed in the AYSO National Bylaws. AYSO strongly recommends that its individual Regions promote good sportsmanship through dynamic programs. Elements of these programs may vary from Region to Region, but all define the conduct of players, coaches, referees and even parents. They explain the fundamentals of good behavior-which is simply showing courtesy and respect for all involved in the game.

We figure that if players, volunteers and parents understand what is expected of them when it comes to good sportsmanship, that's probably how they will act. AYSO is proud of its many good sports, but understands that good sportsmanship doesn't just happen. It needs to be taught, encouraged and demonstrated.

How did AYSO begin?

AYSO was founded in 1964 in Torrance, Calif. with about 125 players. Today that number has grown to more than 600,000 nationwide. AYSO's founders based its formation on community involvement. Regions are encouraged to organize in ways best suited to their needs.

How is AYSO organized?

The Region: The foundation of AYSO is the "Region", or basic community program. Each Region is headed by a Regional Commissioner who, with the help of a Regional board, conducts business within the framework of AYSO's philosophies, Rules and Regulations and Bylaws. Depending on its stage of development, a Region may have as few as 200 players or as many as 5,000, grouped into boys and girls divisions based on age.

Regional Commissioners report to Area Directors.

The Area: Several bordering Regions compose an "Area." Each Area is headed by an Area Director who is responsible for performance and growth of the Area.

Area Directors report to Section Directors.

The Section: Section Directors are responsible for the general welfare and administration of a "Section." A Section is composed of several bordering Areas and may cover a portion of a state, an entire state, or several states.

The Board of Directors: A National Board of Directors governs the overall AYSO organization. Regional Commissioners, Area and Section Directors, along with the National Board Members, serve as executive members with voting rights.

The National Staff: The staff at AYSO's National Office in Torrance, Calif. works closely with these volunteer executive members and interfaces directly with each Region. The National Office provides many services: computerized registration; publications; liability and accident insurance; training for coaches, referees and administrators, and more.