



# YOUTH SOCCER RULES

## SPRING 2026

OCONEE COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

## GOVERNING BODY

The Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department will be the governing body of all Spring 2026 Youth Soccer Leagues and will have final authority concerning all rules and decisions. All rules and guidelines for each league are subject to change by OCPRD during regular and post season.

## PHILOSOPHY

Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department offers recreational youth sport programs that allow children to participate, develop skills, and learn the game in a fun and safe environment.

## CODE OF CONDUCT

- All participants are governed by the Oconee County Parks and Recreation Department Code of Conduct.
- Players, spectators, and coaches should display a good sporting attitude. Spectators, parents, coaches, or participants who display unsportsmanlike behavior will be asked to leave the premises. If such behavior continues, the parent, participant or both may be removed from the program.
- Any coach, assistant coach, or player ejected from a contest must leave the vicinity immediately (out of sight and sound). Anyone ejected is prohibited from any further contact with the team (direct or indirect) for the remainder of the game and will not be permitted on the premises for the team's next scheduled game and potentially the team's remaining games.

## PARENTS

- At least one parent or guardian of each child participating must have completed the NAYS Parent Orientation & Membership Program (formerly known as PAYS).
- This program is offered online at <https://www.nays.org/parents/>.
- Select "Oconee County Pks and Rec Dept". (No payment required).

## COACHES

- All coaches must complete the Online Criminal History Check and fill out a coach application each season.
- All coaches must complete the CDC Head's Up Concussion Training (<https://headsup.cdc.gov/>).
- All coaches must also be certified through the National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA).
- Attend coach clinic provided by OCPRD
- Teams must practice at the time, date, and location assigned by OCPRD. Violation of this rule will result in a two (2) game suspension for the head coach.

## CONTACT INFO

**U6-U8** Program Coordinator:

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**U10-U15** Program Coordinator:

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## LEAGUES

### Age Divisions

Age Divisions	Age
Under 6	4 – 5 years (Micro)*
Under 8	6 – 7 years (Micro)
Under 10	8 – 9 years
Under 12	10 – 11 years
Under 15	12 – 14 years

### Age Control Date

**Spring 2026: September 1, 2025**

***\*Must be 4 years old on or  
before age control date***

## LOCAL RULES

1. All games will be played under Georgia High School Association (GHSA) rules except where local rules supersede:
2. A participant's age and gender are determined by the date of birth and gender noted on his/her birth certificate.
3. Shoes, socks, and proper shin guards are required. Shin guards should be covered entirely by the socks.
4. A participant's gender is determined by the gender noted on his/her birth certificate.
5. Players may not wear anything that can be potentially dangerous, i.e., metal cleats, jewelry, etc.
6. Each age division will have specific rules per league.
7. Roster sizes and the number of players per side during games may vary season to season. This will be dependent on the overall registration numbers for each age division.
8. Field sizes are dependent on field size appropriate per age group and field space available for usage.
9. Post-season tournaments/jamborees may be offered for U10 and older when the schedule permits.
10. Any child that is a member of a school sponsored team is eligible to participate *only* if such participation does not violate school policy and *only* if the child is able to fully participate in OCPRD practices and games from the beginning of pre-season to the conclusion of season.
11. Each player, except when sick or injured, must play at least half of the game.

## U6 – U8 RULES (MICRO SOCCER)

1. Coaches serve as the referees on the field during the game.
2. Coaches or a volunteer must keep time for each quarter and notify everyone when it is time to substitute.
3. Ball Size: 3
4. U6 games are played in four 10-minute quarters.
5. U8 games are played in four 12-minute quarters.
6. Halftime break will be 5 minutes.
7. Playing sides: 4 v 4 - No goalkeeper.
8. Coaches/parents/spectators are not allowed behind the goal lines.
9. Score is not kept.
10. Substitutions *can* be made at the quarter breaks. The game *may* stop at the halfway point of each quarter for substitutions. (Stoppage at those marks is optional). Substitution breaks midway through a quarter should not last more than 1 minute.
11. We recommend taking substitution breaks at the halfway points of quarters.
12. Players must play a minimum of half the game. No player is allowed to play the entire game unless no substitutions are available.
13. The start of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarters will begin with a kick-off. The team who began the game on defense will take the kick-off to start the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.
14. The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarters will restart with the ball going to the team last in possession of the ball.
15. Restarts are determined from where the ball was last ruled dead. Restart options are listed below.
16. A goal cannot be scored "directly" from a kick-off, throw-in, or indirect kick.
17. If a foul is committed, the coach should blow the whistle and explain to the player what happened and how to make a better attempt at the ball. Fouls include pushes, trips, holds, handballs, high kicks, etc. All violations will result in an indirect kick.
  - a. Coaches should consistently remind players to refrain from using their hands to push or grab opponents in an attempt to gain possession of the ball as this is considered a foul.
18. Coaches shall briefly explain all rule infringements to the offending player.
19. Slide tackling is **not** allowed.
20. Heading the ball is **not** allowed.
21. The offside rule will **not** be enforced. However, coaches should not encourage "cherry picking".
22. **No goal tending** – Players **cannot** guard or block the goal box/front of the goal for extended periods of time. As play moves to different areas of the field "defenders," if used, should also move with the ball.

- a. The goal of Micro Soccer is for players to gain more touches on the ball and stay involved in play as much as possible. Players that stand in front of the goal for extended periods of time are not getting the benefits of being involved in play.
23. Opposing coaches and players should line up on opposite ends of the center line at the end of the game to shake hands.
24. No overtime.
25. No post-season play.

### Playing the Game

1. Only one coach per team is to be on the field during games.
2. The Ball In and Out of Play: The ball is out of play when it has fully crossed the goal line or sideline whether on the ground or in the air. The ball is also out of play when play has been stopped by the referee/coach. The ball is in play at all other times, including when it rebounds from a goal post, crossbar, or coach.
3. Throw-Ins will be taken from the sideline at the point where the ball exited the field of play.
4. U6 Goal Kicks will be taken from the end line.
5. U8 Goal Kicks will be taken from the goal box.
6. U6/U8 Corner Kicks will be taken from the 3' arc in the corner.
  - a. U6: Opponents must be three yards away from the ball.
  - b. U8: Opponents must be six yards away from the ball.

### Restart Options

1. Throw-in – Entire ball crosses over the sideline. The ball is put back into the field of play by a two-handed overhead throw. Both feet must be in contact with the ground on or outside the sideline.
2. Goal Kick – Entire ball crosses over the end line and the attacking team last touched the ball. (U6) ball placed on the end line. (U8) Ball placed anywhere inside of the goal box marked on the field. Any player on the kicking team may perform the kick. All U6/U8 defending players must start behind the center line for goal kicks. Defending players may advance past midfield once a player receives the goal kick or the ball crosses the midfield line.
3. Corner Kick – Entire ball crosses over the end line and the defending team last touched the ball. Ball is placed on the sideline/end line corner of the field on the side the ball went out of bounds. Any player on the kicking team may take the corner kick.
4. Kick-Off – Start the game with a kick-off and re-start play after a goal is scored with a kick-off. Ball is placed on the center of the center line (middle of the field). Any player on the kicking team may take kick off. Defending players must remain outside the center circle and behind the half-line until the ball is in play.
5. Indirect Kick – Indirect kick should be awarded at the spot of the foul or where game stoppage may have occurred.
6. U6-U8: All free kicks will be indirect.
7. U6: All fouls shall result in an indirect free kick with the opponents three yards away.
  - a. No indirect kicks shall be taken by the attacking team within three yards of the defenders' goal.
8. U8: All fouls shall result in an indirect free kick with the opponents six yards away.
  - a. No indirect kicks shall be taken by the attacking team within six yards of the defenders' goal.

### U10 – U15 RULES

1. Players must play a minimum of half the game. No player is allowed to play the entire game unless no substitutions are available.
  - a. EXCEPTION: Goalkeepers
2. Slide tackling is **not** allowed.
3. Offside Rule is enforced.
4. Halftime break is 5 minutes.

5. NO overtime in regular season games. Overtime will be played during post-season games only.
6. Substitutions:
  - a. Either team: At the end of a period, a goal, a goal kick, a caution, if the referee stops the clock, disqualification (not for disqualified player), or injury (blood on a player or uniform, sign of concussion, etc.). **Players must have reported to half field prior to the ball going out of play, and the referee must signal all subs on.**
  - b. Team in possession: Throw-in (if the team in possession subs, the other team may also sub). **Players must have reported to half field prior to the ball going out of play, and the referee must signal all subs on.**
7. A goal cannot be scored “directly” from a throw-in or indirect kick.
8. Goal Kicks: A goal kick is in play when the ball is **kicked and received by a 2<sup>nd</sup> player**. Once the ball is kicked, the ball may be played by any player except the player who executes the kick. The kicker may not play the ball until it has been touched by another player. The ball is considered in play once it is either received by a teammate or crosses the half-field line.
9. When a violation results in any type of free kick players defending the kick must be outside a 10-yard radius from the ball.
10. Any player or coach who receives a red card in a game will be ejected from the game and suspended from the next scheduled game. Upon investigation by the governing body, the suspension may be longer or permanent.
11. A maximum of three OCPRD Certified coaches are allowed on the sidelines during games. **All coaches must remain on their designated side of the field between the top of the penalty box and the center line.**
12. A maximum of two players down from the official playing side to start a game. A team not able to make the minimum requirement for a start will be subject to a forfeit. Forfeits will be recorded as a 1-0 loss for the offending team.
13. In case of inclement weather, a game is considered official after one half of gameplay. The league coordinator may reschedule games not reaching the end of the first half.
14. Parents/spectators must sit on the sideline opposite the team benches. Anyone on the teams’ sideline will be asked to move to the spectator side.
15. Coaches/parents/spectators are not allowed behind the goal lines.

## U10 LEAGUES ONLY

1. Ball size: 4
2. Playing sides: 7v7\*
3. Game time: two 25-minute halves
4. All field violations will result in an indirect free kick from the spot of the foul. Fouls committed within the penalty box will be placed outside the box parallel to the goal line. No PK’s will be awarded.
5. **EXCEPTION**: Deliberate handling of the ball inside the goal box (what is known as the six-yard box) in an attempt to prevent an obvious goal-scoring opportunity will result in a yellow card given to the defending player and a penalty kick awarded to the opposing team.
6. Heading is NOT permitted. An indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team at the spot of the infraction. If within the penalty box, referee shall move the ball outside the penalty box (an indirect free kick to opposing team).
7. Goalkeeper distribution: the opposing team must be behind the midfield line. When in play, goalkeepers can throw or roll to a teammate, but may not punt or drop kick the ball. This will allow the goalkeeper to distribute the ball in an unpressured setting. Once the ball is put into play, the opposing team can then cross the midfield line and play resumes as normal.

### U12 LEAGUES ONLY

1. Ball size: 4
2. Playing sides: 9v9\*
3. Game time: two 27-minute halves
4. All field violations will result in a free kick (direct or indirect kick) from the point of the foul. A penalty kick shall be awarded when a foul, which ordinarily results in the awarding of a direct free kick, occurs within the offending team's penalty box.
5. Heading is permitted. Players may practice heading the ball in organized team practices, but coaches need to monitor so that no single player heads the ball more than 25 times per week.
6. Goalkeeper distribution: goalkeepers may not punt or drop-kick the ball past the midfield line. An indirect kick will be awarded to the opposing team at midfield if this occurs. No limitation on how far a goalkeeper may throw the ball. Goalkeepers can kick the ball past midfield in the air if played from the ground. Other methods to distribute the ball such as rolling, throwing, etc. are permitted in place of a punt.
7. Bicycle kicks or other high kicks that are potentially dangerous are not allowed and will fall under the "Dangerous Play" call.

### U15 LEAGUES ONLY

1. Ball size: 5
2. Playing sides: 9v9\*
3. Game time: two 30-minute halves
4. All field violations will result in a free kick (direct or indirect kick) from the point of the foul. A penalty kick shall be awarded when a foul, which ordinarily results in the awarding of a direct free kick, occurs within the offending team's penalty box.
5. Heading is permitted.
6. Goalkeeper distribution: goalkeepers may not punt or drop-kick the ball past the midfield line. An indirect kick will be awarded to the opposing team at midfield if this occurs. No limitation on how far a goalkeeper may throw the ball. Goalkeepers can kick the ball past midfield in the air if played from the ground. Other methods to distribute the ball such as rolling, throwing, etc. are permitted in place of a punt.
7. Bicycle kicks or other high kicks that are potentially dangerous are not allowed and will fall under the "Dangerous Play" call.

## SOCCER LEAGUES OVERVIEW

Age Group	Player Eligibility	Playing Sides	Ball Size	Heading	Field Size	Duration of Game
U6 (Micro) Boys/Girls	4 – 5 Years	4 v 4 No Goalkeeper	Size 3	Not Permitted	80' X 60' Subject to Change	Four 10 Minute Quarters
U8 (Micro) Boys/Girls	6 – 7 Years	4 v 4 No Goalkeeper	Size 3	Not Permitted	100' X 70' Subject to Change	Four 12 Minute Quarters
U10 Boys/Girls	8 – 9 Years	7 v 7	Size 4	Not Permitted	165' X 105' Subject to Change	Two 25 Minute Halves
U12 Boys/Girls	10 – 11 Years	9 v 9	Size 4	Permitted <i>Limited to 25 per player per week</i>	240' X 150' Subject to Change	Two 27 Minute Halves
U15 Boys/Girls	12-14 Years	9 v 9	Size 5	Permitted	240' X 150' Subject to Change	Two 30 Minute Halves

\*Above playing sides are targets for the Spring 2026 season and subject to change

## LEAGUE STANDINGS

Standings are kept in U12 and U15 leagues and are calculated based on a point system applied to regular season games. Tournament brackets will be seeded based on each team's total end of season points.

Win = 3 Points

Forfeit = 1-0 Win

Lose = 0 Points Tie = 1 Point

Team Tie Breaker Criteria (In Order):

1. Head-to-Head Record
  - a. \*\*If tied teams played more than once during the regular season, aggregate goals will be used to determine the head-to-head competition winner. \*\*
2. Wins
3. Goal Differential
  - a. \*Up to three goals can be gained or lost towards goal differential in each game. Each additional goal in a game will not count toward goal differential. \*\*
4. Coin Toss

## TOURNAMENT DETAILS

- Tournament brackets will be seeded based on regular season standings. All regular season rules apply. Additionally, overtime will be played to determine a winner of the game when needed.
- In tournament play, games ending in a tie will go on to play **two** five-minute overtime periods played in their entirety.
- If still tied following the overtime periods, the game will go into penalty kicks. Coach will select the first five shooters/kickers. Coach may only select players on the field at game expiration to take the penalty kicks. If the game is still tied after five shooters from each team have kicked, the game will advance to a sudden death shootout consisting of five NEW shooters until a winner is determined.