

PEFYA Soccer Rules
(Based on FIFA and USSF guidelines)

Revised 11/25/09

***Asterisks are used to indicate where there is a significant departure from USSF rules and an explanation follows. League rules have been adopted in these cases in lieu of FIFA/USSF rules in order to simplify the game and make rules more understandable for the younger players. These clarifications are provided for the benefit of USSF trained coaches and referees who are intimately familiar with USSF rules. U18 teams will use the VA high school organization rules, which differ in some areas from these rules.*

- 1) Team captain will meet with the referee to **flip a coin**. The winner of the coin toss may decide to either a) select a side of the field to defend or b) to kick off. If a) chosen then loser of the toss kicks off. If b) chosen then loser of the toss selects side of field. [****Note that USSF only has the side of field being selected.**]
- 2) **Referees and coaches will check the field, equipment, and players** for the following things: a) goals are lined up properly with each other and with the goal line, b) the field is cleared of debris, c) players are wearing their team's jersey (they may wear long sleeves under the jersey), d) jerseys are tucked in, e) goalies are wearing an alternate color that is a significant departure from both teams' colors, f) players' cleats are not dangerous (no metal), g) shin guards are in place and are inside socks (if not slip on style) and h) the ball is adequately inflated.
- 3) At the **kick off**, the kicking team must kick the ball forward (there is no rule about how far the ball must travel). Players other than the kicker and receiver may not move into the circle until the ball is kicked. The person kicking off may not touch the ball again until someone else kicks the ball (kicking it twice is called a "double touch" and is illegal in this and in several other cases). While it may be rare, a goal may be scored directly from a kick off. [****Note that USSF rules are different—a ball can travel along the center-line to another player. This will be illegal in our league...the ball must cross the line.**]
- 4) **A ball is no longer in play** when it has completely crossed the goal-line or side-line. If the ball is on the line in any way, then the ball is still in play. Coaches and parents must refrain from calling the ball out of bounds when sitting on the side-line. The referee will signal when the ball is no longer in play. The ball must also completely cross the line for a goal to be scored. Coaches should train their players to continue play until they hear the referee call for the ball.
- 5) **When a goal is scored**, the ball comes back to the center circle. The scoring team will receive the kickoff using the same rules as described in (3). Referees will enforce a "no celebration" rule. Spontaneous activities such as jumping, clapping, cheering, high fives, etc. are fine. Dance routines, verbal taunting of opposition, etc. is not allowed. Players who display this type of unsporting conduct will be removed from the field for 5 minutes of play. Referees may choose to give warnings first for behavior that is marginal.
- 6) **If the ball is knocked across a side-line** by one player, then someone on the opposite team will have a **throw in**. A player will use both hands to throw the ball. Hands start behind the head and the ball is tossed overhead. It is best if coaches teach players to keep both on the ground (for youngest leagues coaches often teach kids to cross their legs so that they

cannot jump up) and behind the side-line. If a ball does not go in bounds (crosses part of the line), then the ball is re-thrown by the same team since the ball was never in play.

- 7) **The following rules apply to throw ins:** a) The player must be facing the field, b) one leg may come up but only after the ball is released, c) the thrower may opt to throw a “soft/slow” ball as long as proper form is used, d) The thrower may have one foot on the line but he or she may not step over the line, e) the thrower throws the ball in from approximately the same point that it went out (1 yard movement is allowed—but traveling a significant distance will result in an illegal throw in), and e) the thrower may not touch the ball again until someone else does (again, the “double touch” is illegal). Referees will be looking for proper form: ball must come from behind the head, hands must be even (cannot twist hands and essentially throw ball with one hand), and feet must remain planted until ball leaves the hands. **Players receiving the throw in** may not “crowd” the thrower—he or she must be at about 2 yards away. Also, it is illegal to interfere by waiving arms, etc. *Note that, for age groups using an offside rule, a player in an offside position is not offside if he receives the ball directly from the thrower.*
- 8) **A throw in is determined to be “illegal”** if the thrower lifts his foot prematurely, crosses over the line, jumps up, does not start from the appropriate spot (or very close to it) and travels up the field when he or she throws, throws ball with a dominant hand where hands don’t remain level with each other, or does not use two hands over the head. In the U6/U9 leagues, players will be given a second chance at all games. In U9 the league, players will be given a second chance for the first 2 games only. Otherwise, the other team will get possession of the ball and will throw it in from the same point. *Note that a goal cannot be scored on a throw in. In the event that the ball is thrown into the goal, the score will not count. Play will restart with a goal kick.*
- 9) **If the ball is kicked out of bound at the goal-line by the offensive team** (the one trying to score), then there will be a **goal kick**. The player taking the goal kick may place the ball anywhere in the goal box—it does not have to be in the corner, although this is common practice for the younger players. All players other than the goalie and the kicker must be outside of the penalty box. Referees should not allow the kick to take place until all players are outside of the penalty box—younger players will need constant reminders for this to happen. Once kicked, the ball must go outside of the penalty box before the ball can be played. If players cross into the penalty box prematurely, the kick is taken again. While it is a rare occurrence, a goal may be scored from a goal kick. *Note that in older leagues, the goalie may be the one taking the goal kicks. Also note that, for teams using an offside rule, there is no offside position on a goal kick.*
- 10) **If the ball is kicked out of bound at the goal-line by the defensive team** (the one whose goal it is), then there will be a **corner kick**. The ball is placed in the corner arc or on the line of the arc (the circle at the corner). Defenders may not crowd the kicker and must stay about 5 or 6 yards back for U9, and about 8 yards for U12/U15. The kicker may not hold the flag to move it out of the way. However, the kicker may start from either side of the flag. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick. *For age groups using an offside rule, note that a player cannot be deemed offside if he receives the ball from a Corner Kick.*
- 11) A) **Use of hands** by field players is not permitted. Use of hands is referred to as a **“hand ball”** and this is a foul. The idea is that a player is using his hands to deliberately block the ball. There is some discretion on the part of the referee in determining hand balls. A hand ball foul should not be called if: (a) a player is instinctively trying to protect himself from

injury or (b) the player did not deliberately touch the ball but the ball hit his arm & he did not move the arm toward the ball. However, if the player's arms were in an unnatural position, such as above his shoulders or sticking out to the sides, then he should be called for a handball. Only the goalie may use his hands in the game of soccer. Handballs result in a **direct free kick** as discussed in (12). *Note that, however, the U9 division will never have direct free kicks...all free kicks will be indirect as (12). Note that in U6, handballs will be called only for deliberate use of hands...players will be given more latitude than in older leagues.*

B) **Handball Infractions** inside the penalty box will not result in a tradition penalty kick. The penalty kick will take place 5 yards beyond the penalty box area.

12) When one **team commits an infraction**, the other team usually gets a **free kick**. There are two types of free kicks, direct and indirect. For both, the ball is kicked from stationary position at the point of the infraction (unless in the penalty box...see 13), and defenders are required to back off. A **direct free kick** means that a goal may be scored by a player kicking it directly or indirectly into the goal. So, if the ball happens to be kicked into the goal, the point counts. It also counts if a second player touches it before entering the goal. An **indirect free kick** means that someone else, other than the kicker, *must* touch the ball before it enters the goal. So, in this case, if the ball happens to be kicked *directly* into the goal, the score does not count. At this point, the defending team takes a goal kick. To indicate an *indirect* free kick, a referee will usually raise his hand and keep it raised until the ball is kicked for a second time. If the referee's hand is not raised, then it is a direct kick. When a free kick is taking place, other players must stay back from the kicker using the same guidelines detailed for the corner kick (see 10). There is also a special case of the direct free kick called the **penalty kick** (see 13). It is often difficult to remember which infractions result in direct free kicks and which result in indirect free kicks. Direct free kicks are generally given when behavior is careless, reckless, or involves excessive force. Often, physical contact is involved (see 15). Generally, indirect free kicks are given for procedural infractions such as the "double touch," when not allowed (see 14). *Note that the referee does not generally blow the whistle for a free kick not in the penalty box. The kicking team may take a quick start if it wishes by kicking the ball after it is correctly placed. If the kicking team may ask the referee to back up the other team if they are not respecting the distance rule. In this case, it is possible that a whistle will be blown when the referee feels that the appropriate distance is given. Coaches should instruct offensive players not to wait for a whistle when making a free kick (except for those in the penalty box). Coaches should instruct defensive players to be ready for the other team to make a quick kick, if they so choose.*

13) A **penalty kick** occurs when a penalty that would ordinarily result in a direct free kick occurs *in the penalty box*. The ball is placed on the mark in the penalty box. Everyone but the kicker and goalie must stay out of the penalty box and semi-circle until the kicker moves the ball. The goalie must stay on the goal line until the ball is kicked and must face forward. The goalie may not make noise or waive arms in attempt to distract the kicker. The ball cannot be kicked until the referee blows a whistle. Since a penalty kick is a form of direct free kick, a goal can be scored from a penalty kick. Again, the "double touch" is not allowed. The kicker must wait for another person to touch the ball before kicking again. For example, suppose the ball is kicked by player A and then bounces off of the goal post. Player A may not kick it again until someone else touches the ball first.

- 14) Note that there will be **no penalty kicks in U6/U9**. If a handball, for examples, occurs in the penalty box in the U6 or U9 divisions, the referee will call for an indirect kick and will place the ball on the far side of the penalty box, furthest from the goal. The defending team may have players defend the goal.
- 15) **Fouls that result in direct free kicks** include things that are unsporting or show excessive force or reckless behavior. These include kicking or attempting to kick opponent, tripping or attempting to trip an opponent, charging/jumping into or at an opponent, striking or attempting to strike an opponent, pushing an opponent, holding or pulling on opponent or clothing of opponent, spitting at opponent, making bodily contact before getting the ball when trying to pursue ball, or a hand ball. The direct kick is taken at the location of the offense (unless in the penalty box as explained above). *Note that there will be no direct free kicks in U6 or U9—all kicks will be indirect.*
- 16) **Fouls that result in an indirect free kick** include a) double touch at kickoff, penalty kick, corner kick, throw in, etc. b) offside, c) dangerous play that is not expressly stated in the list of direct kick fouls in (15), d) impeding the progress of an opponent, where he uses his body to impede another player's movement, e) preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball, by standing directly in front of him, f) goalie picking up ball twice, g) offensive player kicking ball in possession of goalie, h) goalie delaying game (6-second rule) and i) any other offense not listed above for which play is stopped to warn or dismiss a player. This includes offensive or threatening language including swearing. *Note that all free kicks will be indirect for U6/U9.*
- 17) Coaches and parents must realize that the determination of a foul is not solely determined by intent of the player. For example, if a player's lack of skill results in him tripping the player with the ball, a foul will be called. This causes a great deal of confusion in younger leagues, where unskilled players may cause fouls simply as a result of engagement, with no intent to hurt another player or unfairly impede him. Fouls with intent are looked at differently; hence, a card may result.
- 18) Note that free kicks are intended to reward a team. Therefore, it is **not possible to score on your own team during a free kick**. If a team somehow scored on itself during a free kick, the other team will restart play with a corner kick.
- 19) **Sometimes the referee will stop the game to caution or dismiss a player**. In this case, the referee will show the player either a yellow or red card. A **yellow card** is used by the referee to give a player a serious warning when his behavior is not appropriate. The referee will hold up a small yellow card to indicate when this takes place. Yellow card offenses include a) unsporting conduct, b) dissent by word or action (for example, arguing with the referee), c) persistently breaking the rules, d) delaying the restart of play (perhaps an attempt to stall the game when winning), and e) defenders failing to stay the distance required and therefore crowding kicker during corner or free kick or during throw in. A direct or indirect kick will also be awarded. If a player receives two yellow cards, then he will receive a **red card** and will be ejected from the game. [USSF trained coaches and referees, please note that PEFYA will not be overly strict in terms of giving yellow cards for entering or leaving field without referee's permission. However, coaches should be aware that they need to be acknowledged by the referee when requesting substitution.] Note that yellow/red cards will not be used in any way in the U6, U9, and U12 leagues. However, referees will instruct and give warnings about fouls and will give indirect free kicks when needed persistent behavior will result in the player being removed from the game. For the safety of players, coaches should pull

players that are playing carelessly or wrecklessly. Players committing these offenses in U15 will receive yellow and red cards. A **red card** is given for serious offenses and the player is ejected from the game. For PEFYA purposes, if the player is given a red card that is not a result of two yellow cards, the team will play a person short for the rest of the game. If the red card is the result of two yellow cards, the player may be replaced. Red cards are given for a) seriously foul play, b) violent conduct, c) spitting at anyone, d) a deliberate hand ball to deny the opposition an obvious scoring opportunity, e) using offensive or threatening language, or f) receiving a second yellow card

- 20) **Note that yellow/red cards will not be used in any way in the U6/U9 and U12 leagues.** However, referees will instruct and give warnings about fouls in U9 and will give indirect free kicks when needed. Players committing these offenses in U12 will be warned and persistent behavior will result in the player being removed from the game by the referee. For the safety of players, coaches should pull players that are playing carelessly or recklessly. **The referee may send off an overly aggressive player or one demonstrating unsporting conduct for any length of time or for the remainder of the game.** The coach needs to explain to the player why his or her behavior is unacceptable.
- 21) Sometimes play will be stopped and no penalty is assessed. To restart play in a way that does not provide an advantage to one team over another, a **dropped ball** will be used. The referee will call for a player from each team. The referee will hold the ball up and will drop it. The ball is in play when it touches the ground and the players may kick it at that point. Double touch is allowed after a dropped ball. [USSF trained coaches and referees, please note the departure from USSF rules that allow the entire team to participate in a dropped ball. It is safer approach to call for two players to participate and they may kick it to their teammates.]
- 22) **Offside rules** apply in the U12, and U15 age groups. You are not considered to be in an offside position if you are: a) you are on your own half of the field (side where your goalie is), or b) you are even with or behind the ball, or c) you are the one with the ball, or d) there are two of the other team's players between you and their goal (you don't go past the "second last defender"). You are NOT offside if you receive the ball DIRECTLY from a goal kick, corner kick, or throw in. You CAN be offside if you receive the ball directly from a free kick and you are in an offside position. The one thing that many people do not understand is that it is not a penalty to be in an offside position. In other words, a referee does not call a foul simply because a player is positioned at a point that makes him offside. A player is only penalized if he or she is in an offside position and at the moment the ball is touched or played by one of his teammates he is in **active play**. The means that he a) is gaining an advantage by being in that position (perhaps the ball is passed to him while standing in an offside position), or b) he is interfering with an opponent (perhaps he is blocking the view of the goalie by being in an offside position), or c) he is interfering with play (perhaps he is preventing a defender from getting the ball while being in an offside position). It is possible for team A to score a goal while having a player in an offside position if the player in the offside position is not involved in active play. Perhaps player B dribbles up to the goal and scores while player C is in an offside position. If player C did not receive the ball, did not interfere with the defense, did not block the view of the goalie, etc.—is not involved in active play—then there will be no offside penalty and the goal will count. Furthermore, offside position is evaluated at every touch of the ball by the offensive team. So, it requires a trained eye and a clear understanding of the "active play" issue to accurately call offside penalties.

- 23) **Offside depends on location of body parts:** It used to be the case that offside was determined by the location of only the player's torso. This rule has been recently changed. Offside is determined by any part of the body off of which the ball may be legally played. So, it is based on the feet, legs, head, etc.
- 24) The **penalty for being offside** is that an indirect free kick is given to the opposing team. The ball is placed at the point where the infraction occurred. If the infraction takes place in the goal box, then the kick will be made from the outside line of the goal box.
- 25) It used to be legal for a player to pass the ball back to his own goalie. This is referred to as a **pass back** and there are now restrictions on this maneuver (the reason for this is that in professional soccer, it became a successful stalling technique because the fullback and goalie could monopolize the ball and run down the clock.) It is not legal for a goalie to pick up a ball that has been intentionally passed back to him by his own teammate. If the ball is deliberately passed back to the goalie, the goalie may kick it or head it. But, using his hands will result in an indirect free kick.
- 26) **Rules for Goalies:** Goalies may use their hands anywhere in the penalty box. Goalies may move outside of the penalty box at any time, but they may not use their hands at that point (for example, a goalie may exit the box to kick a ball.) Once the goalie has possession of the ball, offensive players may not continue to attack the ball (it will result in a foul and possibly a card). The goalie has 6 seconds to clear the ball. Also, the goalie may not throw the ball to himself/herself. If the goalie throws up the ball and it does not go far, he or she may not catch the ball again. Offensive players must also be careful about charging into goalies, although they are allowed to follow through on a kick and run up to the goalie. The pass back rule above should also be reviewed.
- 27) **If a player gets injured,** referees should stop the game as quickly as possible without causing great penalty to the offensive team. Clearly if an injury appears very serious or if there is blood, the game should be stopped immediately, as opposed to waiting for the ball to go out of bounds. If the injury is not overly serious, the referee will wait until a stopping point in the game and then will quickly check on the player. If the ball is in or near the penalty box and a team has clear possession, then the referees will wait for a few seconds in hopes that the ball is cleared away. Referees should use their discretion about how to proceed after the player has been removed from the field and a substitution has been made. If one team had clear possession of the ball, referees will start with an indirect free kick at the point where the ball was last played. If the ball was inside the penalty box, the game will restart with an indirect kick in the penalty box. If injury occurred quickly after a throw in, goal kick, or corner kick, it may make sense to simply replay from that point. If the injury results in a significant delay of game, time should be stopped until the game resumes.
- 28) **Removal of a player is required** if the game is stopped and coaches enter the field to check on the player. The player **MUST** be removed from the game until the next substitution opportunity. Parents may **NOT** enter the field of play.
- 29) **Fallen players** may not kick the ball from the ground. This can be extremely dangerous for all players. If a player falls down, even if not injured, he or she must return to his or her feet before continuing play. If unable to get up, the referee will attempt to stand in between the player and the ball and will stop the game at an appropriate time. Parents and coaches must understand that games are not stopped immediately. The referee will use his discretion based on a) extent of injury, b) position of ball, and c) whether or not a team has clear possession with a goal scoring opportunity (so a stoppage might be called quickly when the ball is at

midfield but may be called less quickly if the ball is in the penalty box with the offensive team having possession.)

- 30) **High kicks** are an attempt to kick a ball that is high in the air by kicking above your waist. This can be done as long as other players are not close enough to be injured. It is a foul to use a high kick when other players are close enough to be injured. High kicks that don't result in contact with another player will be penalized with an indirect kick to the other team. The referee will consider proximity of other players in making his or her decision.
- 31) **Delay of game due to time wasting** is a serious offense. Players are not allowed to use stalling tactics to run down the clock or give their team a chance to rest. Delay tactics include a) faked or exaggerated injury, b) overly slow to restart with a throw-in or goal kick, etc. A team will be charged with a foul that will result in an indirect free kick. Time may also be added to the clock by referees.
- 32) **Slide tackling** is not allowed in PEFYA, although it is a technique commonly used in varsity and junior varsity soccer. Players are not allowed to slide to kick a ball. This will result in an indirect free kick for the foul of dangerous play.
- 33) **If the ball bounces off of a referee**, play will continue. The referee is considered to be part of the field in the same way that the goal posts and corner flags are part of the field.
- 34) **If a foreign agent enters the field and comes in contact with the ball**, for example, a dog or thrown bottle, the game will be temporarily stopped and will restart with a dropped ball.
- 35) **Substitutions** may be made ONLY when the game is at a) a throw-in, b) a goal kick, c) a corner kick, d) a kick off, or e) to replace an injured player. Your team must have possession of the ball in order to request a substitution. If Team A opts to substitute, Team B may follow suit. The coach must call for a substitution and be acknowledged by the referee. Referees will use a waiving motion to signal to the coach that it is okay to substitute. [**Note that this is a departure from VHSL and USSF.]
- 36) **Parents and other spectators** are welcome to cheer on players. However, disparaging remarks made to players, coaches, or referees will not be tolerated. Coaches have a responsibility to remind parents that the environment must remain professional and supportive. Parents who detract from the positive environment will be asked to leave the field.
- 37) **Coaches** are asked to model good sportsmanship to their players. This means that they must be professional when challenging a call, disagreeing with a referee, etc., and their demeanor must remain pleasant. Coaches must refrain from making disparaging remarks about players, coaches, or referees. Coaches who are unable to provide a positive environment for players will be asked to leave the field.
- 38) **Additional rule for U6/U9: Goalie Protection:** The U6/U9 field has a goal box intended to protect the young goalie from contact with offensive players. This is the "off-limits zone" and offensive players are not allowed to enter this box. If an offensive player dribbles down the field and kicks the ball only after entering the off limits zone, the goal will not count. Since it is difficult for young children to control their bodies when running, referees will use their judgment in these cases. If a player has a foot on the line of the off-limits zone but makes a clear effort to not enter the box, the goal may be accepted by the referee if he or she chooses. To keep the game fair, the same degree of latitude will be extended to both teams. Defensive players may help assist in defense by entering the off limits zone. But, since it is unusually small (relative to a penalty box), players should be careful not to crowd the goalie. Coaches and referees should remind players to be wary of the off limits zone and should give

indirect penalty kicks only as a last resort. The goal box dimensions should be 2 feet to the left or right of the goal post and 6 feet from the goal line.

- 39) **Length of Games/# of Players:** Games time are as follows:
- U6: 4 quarters of 8 minutes for a 32 minute game
 - U9: 2 halves of 22 minutes for a 44 minute game
 - U12: 2 halves of 25 minutes for a 50 minute game
 - U15: 2 halves of 30 minutes for a 60 minute game (note that if playing on a full-sized field coaches and referees may choose to play 15-minute quarters instead)
 - Number of players will be determine at the start of the season depending on the field size as well as the amounts of players per team.
- 40) **“Borrowing of Players” from other teams:** (This is most applicable to the older leagues.) Occasionally, a team might find that it does not have enough players to field a complete team. In this instance, a coach is allowed to borrow players from another team, assuming that certain guidelines are followed. First, the coach must select a player to borrow that does not create an unfair advantage for his team. He or she can do this by borrowing mid-level players and not the stars of other teams. If, for some reason, a coach only has access to highly ranked players, he must put them in a position that minimizes the players’ impact (perhaps goalie or defense). Coaches will be trusted to make good decisions that are fair. Any concerns should be discussed between coaches and with the referees.
- 41) **Playing without a full team:** Teams that are unable to field a full team are still allowed to play. However, the game becomes more unsafe as the imbalance in team size grows. When possible, coaches should borrow players (per previous guidelines). Referees should not allow a game to proceed if conditions do not allow it to be safe. Referees may help in recruiting volunteers to fill in (per previous guidelines) or they may ask coaches to have players switch teams. Remember that it is the goal of PEFYA for games to be safe and fun. A game of 7 against 9 is neither safe nor fun.
- 42) **Tournament tie-breaking procedure:** During tournament time, games are not able to result in a tie. The following procedure will be used to break a tie game: a) a 5-minute sudden death overtime period will be played. A coin flip will be used to determine sides and who starts with the ball. First team to score a goal wins. If that does not break the tie, then move to b) a second 5-minute sudden death overtime period is played after switching sides. If the second overtime period does not determine a winner, then move on to c) penalty kicks. To do penalty kicks, the coach will select 5 players to kick the ball and a goalie. The goalie may be one of the kickers. All players will meet for instruction at the center circle. A coin toss will determine which team kicks first. Teams will alternate kicking until all 10 players have kicked or the score is such that a winner is already determined. Penalty kicks proceed as follows: goalie must start with feet on the line. Kicker must wait for referee’s whistle. Goalie may move as soon as ball is touched. This process will continue until a winner is determined. Coaches should instruct goalies to use whatever means necessary to keep the ball out of the goal, including catching, kicking, heading, etc. since play does not continue after the ball is deflected. Goalies must also be wary of stepping across the goal line with the ball in their hands, since that would result in a goal. During goal kicks, one referee will stand at the goal line and the other will stand near the kicker.

43) The U4 program is exempt from all PEFYA rules due to unique conditions of dealing with three year old children.

The Soccer Field

This drawing is not to scale. It is for the purpose of showing the names of parts of the field, not for showing dimensions. The U6/U9 Off Limits Zone is essentially a very small goal box.

