FishHawk Premier FC Recreation Playing Rules

Fall 2026 | U5 through U10 | Updated October 18, 2026

These rules guide coaches, players, families, and game officials throughout the Fall 2026 recreation season. Apply the division rules below together with the rules that cover all divisions.

- **Club authority:** These Fall 2026 rules are subject to change at the Club's discretion. The Recreation League Director will communicate revisions to referees, coaches, and game officials.

Division overview

Division	Format	Game length	Coaches
U5–U6 Coed	4v4	2 × 20 minutes	One per team on field
U7 Coed	4v4	2 × 20 minutes	One per team on field
U8–U9 Boys	7v7	2 × 25 minutes	Sideline
U8–U10 Girls	7v7	2 × 25 minutes	Sideline
U9-U10 Boys	7v7	2 × 25 minutes	Sideline

All divisions take a water break at the halfway point of each half – typically 10/12 mins. Time keeps running.

Rules for every division

- **Playing time:** Every player must play at least 50% of the game, and must play in both halves.
- **Halftime:** Lasts 5 minutes in all divisions.
- **Equipment:** Players must wear shin-guards covered by socks and appropriate soccer footwear. Players must remove jewelry before playing. **Covering earrings is not permitted.**
- **Heading:** No heading in practices or games. For a deliberate header, award the opposing team an indirect free kick. In 7v7, move the restart outside the penalty area if the offense occurs inside it.
- **Slide tackles:** Players may not slide to challenge an opponent. A player may slide solely to keep the ball in play, provided the action does not endanger another player. In 7v7 games, a deliberate slide tackle results in a direct free kick when the offense occurs outside the penalty area or a penalty kick when it occurs inside their own team's penalty area. In 4v4 games, restart play with an indirect free kick.
- **Player shortages:** Coaches should work together before kickoff to keep the game balanced and give players the opportunity to participate. Use these options in order:
  - **Borrow players:** With both coaches' agreement, borrow players from the opposing team within the same division.
  - **Match team sizes:** If borrowing is not practical, the opposing team should reduce its number of players on the field to match. Rotate substitutes to maintain the minimum 50% playing-time requirement.
  - **Play short:** Use unequal team sizes only as a last resort, with both coaches' agreement and only when the game remains safe.

  - Notify the referee of the arrangement before play begins. Coaches my adjust the arrangement if additional players arrive or conditions change.
- **Default rules:** When this document does not address a situation, follow the FIFA Laws of the Game, as published by IFAB, and applicable FYSA requirements.
- **Injuries and suspected concussion:** Player safety takes priority over minimum playing time. For minor injuries, a coach or parent may authorize a player's return when the player can participate safely. Remove any player with a suspected concussion immediately; only a qualified medical professional may clear the player to return.

Coach Responsibilities and Sideline Conduct

These responsibilities apply to every division. Coaches must put player safety first and create a respectful environment for players, officials, and families.

- **Player safety:** Referees help provide a safe game, and coaches remain responsible for the safety of their players. Coaches must monitor dangerous play, injuries, player distress, and escalating behavior throughout the game.
- **Pause an unsafe game:** If a coach believes the game is becoming unsafe, that coach must promptly work with the referee to pause play. The coach must discuss the specific concerns with the referee and opposing coach and agree on steps to address them before play resumes. Raise concerns calmly and specifically; a safety discussion is not an opportunity to argue calls.
- **Immediate danger:** Alert the referee immediately when a player faces an urgent safety concern. In 4v4 games without a referee, both coaches must pause play and address the concern together. Contact the Recreation Director or field staff if the concern remains unresolved.

Respect for Referees

- **Lead by example:** Coaches must model respectful communication and sportsmanship. Respect the referee's decisions and raise questions calmly at an appropriate stoppage.
- **Prohibited behavior:** Do not insult, taunt, belittle, threaten, intimidate, or harass officials. Do not question their honesty or integrity. Physical abuse, discriminatory remarks, and online harassment have no place in our program.
- **Protection throughout the event:** Respect officials before, during, and after games, including their arrival and departure. Take particular care to protect young referees from sideline pressure and abuse.

Parents and Spectators

- **Coach responsibility:** Coaches must set expectations for their team's parents and spectators and promptly address inappropriate sideline behavior. Families should encourage players and support a positive game environment.
- **Respond to misconduct:** Work with the referee and field staff to stop abusive or disruptive behavior. Cooperate with any direction to remove a spectator, and do not allow play to resume while an unresolved safety threat remains.
- **Report concerns:** Notify the Recreation Director of referee abuse, threats, or serious sideline misconduct. Document the incident and follow the club and FYSA reporting procedures. Applicable club, FYSA, and U.S. Soccer disciplinary rules govern consequences.

Referee conduct guidance: U.S. Soccer Referee Abuse Prevention Policy 531-9, updated May 15, 2026. ussoccer.com/rap
https://www.fishhawkpremierfc.com/about/referee-corner/rap/

4v4 Age Group Rules for U5, U6, and U7

- **Players and ball:** Play four players per team with no goalkeeper. Use a size 3 ball.
- **Coaches:** One coach from each team may be on the field to guide players and help manage the game. Coaches must avoid interfering with play or directing every touch.
- **Offside and build out lines:** Do not call offside. Do not use build-out lines in 4v4.

4v4 Restarts

- **Kick ins:** When the ball crosses the sideline, the opposing team kicks it back into play from where it went out. Opponents stay at least 10 feet away. A goal cannot count directly from a kick-in; another player must touch the ball first.
- **Goal kicks:** Award a goal kick when the attacking team last touches the ball before it crosses the goal line without a goal. Take the kick near the goal. Opponents retreat to halfway and may advance once the kicker kicks the ball and it clearly moves.
- **Corner kicks:** Award a corner when the defending team last touches the ball before it crosses the endline without a goal. Take the kick near the corner. Opponents stay at least 10 feet away.
- **Free kicks:** All free kicks are indirect. Another player must touch the ball before a goal can count. Opponents stay at least 10 feet away. Do not award penalty kicks.
- **Kickoffs:** Use a kickoff to start each half and restart after a goal. Opponents stay at least 10 feet from the ball.

4v4 Substitutions and game balance

- **Substitutions:** Allow unlimited substitutions. Coaches signal each change and ensure the outgoing player leaves before the replacement enters.
- **U7 extra player:** A team trailing by four or more goals may add one player. Remove that player when the deficit falls below four goals. Allow only one extra player at a time.
- **U5–U6 game balance:** The published extra-player rule does not apply to U5–U6. Coaches should focus on participation, learning, and enjoyment.

7v7 Age Group Rules for U8, U9, and U10

These rules apply to U8–U9 Boys, U8–U10 Girls, and U9–U10 Boys.

- **Players and ball:** Play six field players and one goalkeeper per team. Use a size 4 ball. Coaches remain on the sideline.

7v7 Build out lines and goalkeepers

- **Line location:** Place each build-out line halfway between the top of the penalty area and the halfway line.
- **Goalkeeper possession:** When the goalkeeper holds the ball, opponents must retreat behind the build-out line. The goalkeeper may roll, throw, or place the ball down and pass it. Opponents may cross the build-out line only after a teammate of the goalkeeper touches the ball or the ball crosses the build-out line, whichever happens first.
- **Goal kicks:** Opponents must retreat behind the build-out line. They may cross only after a teammate of the player taking the goal kick touches the ball or the ball crosses the build-out line, whichever happens first.
- **Quick distribution:** The goalkeeper may release the ball before opponents finish retreating, accepting their existing positions. Opponents must still make a genuine effort to retreat.
- **No punts or drop kicks:** Award the opposing team an indirect free kick for a goalkeeper punt or drop kick. If the offense occurs inside the goal area, take the kick from the nearest point on the goal-area line parallel to the goal line.
- **Offside:** Apply offside only between the build-out line and the opponent's goal line. Merely standing beyond the line is not an offense; apply the normal offside requirements in that area.

7v7 Restarts and substitutions

- **Throw-in:** Use throw-ins when the ball crosses the sideline. Allow unlimited retries for improper technique. Explain the correction and let the same player retry.
- **Free kicks and corners:** Opponents stay at least 8 yards (24 feet) away. Apply direct and indirect free kicks according to the offense. Another player must touch an indirect free kick before a goal can count.
- **Penalty kicks:** Award a penalty kick for a direct-free-kick offense committed by a defender inside their own penalty area. Take the kick from the marked penalty spot.
- **Substitutions:** Allow unlimited substitutions at any stoppage with the referee's permission. The outgoing player leaves before the replacement enters.

7v7 Extra player rule

- **All 7v7 divisions:** A team trailing by five goals may add one player, by six goals may add two players, and by seven or more goals may add three players. Teams must remove additional players as the deficit decreases to match these thresholds.
- **Ten-goal differential:** The game ends as a forfeit when the goal differential reaches a 10 goal differential. The trailing team may elect to continue playing for development and enjoyment, but continued play does not change the recorded result.
- **Limit:** The extra-player rule does not change the 50% minimum playing-time requirement.