

# *Soccer-for-Parents*

**Presents**

## **6 for U-6**

**6 Simple Soccer Rules  
For Parents of U-6 Kids**



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## Introduction

One of the greatest problems in youth soccer is the number of completely baffled parents who have never played the game and don't understand the basic rules of soccer. In many cases like my own, parents didn't have the opportunity to play soccer in their youth and consequently have never learned this great sport.

Many soccer leagues, however, are desperate for volunteers willing to help out and knowledge is not a prerequisite. On the job training is a mainstay in youth soccer. Unfortunately, sometimes these new parents never get the training for various reasons and end up either incorrectly teaching their kids or a soccer team or yelling at the referees.

It's not your fault. You're not alone. 😊

***Believe me, I've been there. I just described myself 6 years ago.***

Sadly, even though the fundamental soccer rules are simple, finding an easy-to-understand, cheap resource for these parents is nigh impossible!

Enter **Soccer for Parents**. **Help is here!**

As my son's U-6 coach for the Fall of 2005, I needed to develop a short and simple handout for my parents that explained the basic rules to be used at this level. Here is the result - a **FREE** ebook for parents and soccer leagues to assist in the fundamental training of parents and new soccer coaches **at the U-6 level**. The book is by no means an exhaustive review of the soccer rules. It is simply the basics.

Likewise it is not organized according to nor does it follow the 17 Laws of the Game. Many of the laws have been combined to simplify things. For a detailed discussion of the Laws of the Game, see the [Resources page](#).

Please, kick the book along to any friends or associates who need the same help. Print it out. Pass it out. Burn it. 😊

Just get the word out.

Now go kick some..... er, soccer balls!

Randy

P.S. Have a suggestion for the next version? Try the [suggestion box](#).

## **RULE 1 - No Hands, please**

I bet you knew that one. Most people who know nothing about soccer still know that you aren't supposed to use your hands unless you're the goalie.

A couple of points to clarify.

First, the rule for a hand ball includes using any part of the body from the tips of the fingers to the shoulder.

Second, the proper way to look at this soccer rule is that a player cannot "handle" the ball. A ball that is kicked and hits a player's hand or arm is not a hand ball. This means that the referee must use his or her own judgment to some extent in determining whether or not a hand ball is accidental contact or a purposeful attempt to gain an advantage.

Put another way, the referee must determine if the play was

**Ball to Hand** (legal)

or

**Hand to Ball** (illegal)

## RULE 2 - Equipment

The basic equipment for soccer required by the FIFA Laws of the Game are:

- a jersey or shirt
- shorts
- stockings
- shinguards
- footwear

Many youth recreational soccer leagues will provide everything but the shinguards and the footwear.

### Shinguards

According to FIFA, shinguards should be "*covered entirely by the stockings, made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic, or similar substance), and provide a reasonable degree of protection.*" This leaves a lot of wiggle room!

Most soccer leagues will not allow a person to play or practice soccer without shinguards. Purchasing good shinguards should be a top priority for every parent.

For more information I suggest you [read my reviews & recommendations on shinguards](#).

### Footwear

There are no requirements by FIFA that your child have shoes with cleats. Technically, regular tennis shoes are fine - not recommended, but legal. Of course, local league rules may apply.

There is also [more information on soccer cleats](#) on the Soccer for Parents website.

There is also this general safety clause in the FIFA rules:

*A player must not use equipment or wear anything which is dangerous to himself or another player (including any kind of jewelry).*

No necklaces, earrings, nose rings, belly rings, bracelets, or tiaras. Soft "scrunchies" in the hair are generally allowed as are soft head stockings.

If a child just had their ears pieced, the studs should be covered with tape or removed. *Many leagues will require that the studs be removed.* As one fellow commented, is the hole going to grow back in an hour?

## **RULE 3 – Kick-offs, Corner Kicks & Goal Kicks**

A kick-off is the way a soccer game is started or restarted:

- at the start of a game
- after a goal has been scored
- at the start of each quarter

The ball is placed in the center of the field. All players must be in their own half of the field and the opponents of the team taking the kick-off must be at least 4 yards from the ball. The center circle on the field is used to show this distance but it frequently is not marked at this age.

The referee/coach will blow his/her whistle to indicate they are ready for the kick-off. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

Note that the two-touch rule applies here ([see Rule 5](#)).

After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team.

A corner kick or goal kick is taken when the ball leaves the field across a goal line – you know, either end of the field with a goal. 😊

If the offensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a goal kick. If the defensive team kicks it out, play is restarted with a corner kick.

The goal kick is taken from anywhere inside the “goalie box” as it is affectionately called. It can be taken by any player. The opposing team should be at least 4 yards from the ball. At this age the “goalie box” may not be marked so the ball is just dropped a few yards into the field.

The corner kick is taken from – yes, you guessed it – the corner nearest to where the ball left the field.

## RULE 4 - Throw-ins

A throw-in is taken when the ball crosses a sideline and leaves the field. The two basic soccer rules for a proper throw-in are to have both feet on the ground and to throw the ball with both hands over the head.

To clarify, both feet must be on the ground ***when the ball is thrown***. The player can hop, run, or do cartwheels up to the point where the ball is released but not *when* the ball is released. Dragging the toes of one foot is considered legal.

There is some disagreement about whether or not to even have throw-ins at this age. USYSA recommends a restart by a kick-in. Check your local league's rules to see how this will be done.

Certainly at this age the referee/coach will allow players to take more than 1 attempt.

## **RULE 5 - Two-touch Rule**

A player cannot touch the ball twice in a row when putting the ball in play. You will see this called many times in youth soccer. It applies everywhere. You will see it frequently on kick-offs, corner kicks, or direct kicks. If a kid barely hits the ball and decides to take another swipe at it, that is a two-touch violation.

This also applies to throw-ins. A kid cannot throw the ball in and then kick it. Nope. No way. No can do.

The only exception to this rule is on a drop ball restart.

## RULE 6 – Fouls

The common rule of thumb on fouls is “If it looks like a foul, it probably is.”

Too true. A player cannot kick, trip, jump at, charge, strike, push, hold, or spit at an opponent.

So what’s the problem?

Soccer can be a physical, contact sport when two opposing players both want the soccer ball and no parent or grandparent likes it when little Susie loses the ball and ends up on the ground!

“**Foul!**” cries the parent. “**Little Susie was pushed!**”

What you need to know as a parent is that bumping or going shoulder-to-shoulder while competing for a ball is *not a foul* until the hands or elbows come up. This is a bit of a judgment call and not all referees/coaches will call it the same way. Some soccer rules are actually not black-and-white.

This can be especially hard to call at the U-6 age level for two reasons.

First, the kids tend to move in packs and will naturally try to make space for themselves in the pack by using their arms. If this is called a foul every time, the kids would never play any soccer.

Second, the referees for this age group are commonly the coaches so there will be a natural reluctance to call fouls on the opposing team in an effort to appear impartial.

## Resources

Below are my personal recommendation for improving your knowledge of the Laws of the Game beyond the "6 basics" that I have outlined.

Read the [official rules for small-sided games](#) from US Youth Soccer.org.

Download my other soccer rules book, [10 Simple Soccer Rules for Baffled Parents](#). This book includes a few more rules that apply to the older age groups.

Download the official version of the Laws of the Game. FIFA has also made an online version available very recently. Here are the [Laws of the Game 2005](#) in html format.

Another great, free reference from FIFA is their document called [Questions and Answers to the Laws of the Game](#). [539kb]

Buy a soccer rule book. Browse through my [recommended soccer rule books](#) at Amazon.com and start reading.

These books offer a detailed description of the Laws of the Game with background, application, and examples.

Attend a soccer referee clinic. Contact your local soccer league for information on when and where the next referee clinic will be held. Due to turnover, clinics are usually held at least once a year to certify new referees and to recertify the old ones. Even if you don't want to be an official, attending a clinic will give you great insight into how referees work and make calls and certainly will give you an advantage as a coach.

## Definitions

**Corner kick** – a direct free kick that is awarded when the defending team puts the ball over the end line. A corner kick is taken by the offensive team from next to the corner flag.

**Direct Free Kick** – a free kick that is awarded at the spot of the infraction for a physical contact foul such as tripping, holding, pushing, tackles from behind, jumping into an opponent, or for hand balls. A direct free kick can score by going directly into the goal. It does not have to be touched by anyone other than the kicker.

**Drop Ball** – a method of restarting a game where the referee drops the ball between 2 players facing each other. A drop ball restarts the game after play is stopped for no penalty situation (e.g. after an injury) and in other circumstances (more than one soccer rule about this). The ball is dropped where it was last in play or at the nearest point outside the penalty area.

**Foul** – when the referee judges a violation against an opposing player. The team that suffers the foul is awarded with a direct free kick unless the foul is committed by a defensive player inside his own penalty area, in which case the foul results in a penalty kick.

**Goal Kick** – a type of restart that is awarded when the attacking team puts the ball over the end line. The ball is kicked from anywhere inside the goal area away from the goal to restart play. After the kick is taken, the ball cannot be touched again by any player until it is outside of the penalty area.

**Throw-in** – a way to restart play when the ball goes out over the sidelines. The team that did not touch the ball last is allowed an overhead throw.

## FAQs

**Question:** Can you score directly from a kick-off?

**Answer:** Yes. Even if no one else touches the ball – GOOAAAALLLLL!!

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**Question:** Can you score directly from a throw-in?

**Answer:** No. If the ball goes into the goal directly from a throw-in without anyone else touching the ball, that is not a goal. Play would resume with a goal kick.

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**Question:** If a ball bounces off of a defender and goes in their goal, does it count?

**Answer:** Yes, it is a – GOOAAAALLLLL!! However, if on a goal kick a wayward defender miss-kicks the ball and it goes into the goal it doesn't count. Play would resume with a corner kick.

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**Question:** Can my child use his/her baseball cleats?

**Answer:** No. Baseball or softball cleats have a toe cleat which is dangerous in soccer. These shoes are usually allowed if the toe cleat is cut off.

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