



8U Youth Soccer Rules

2026

League Soccer Rules

I. **NAME:**

The name of the league shall be the Graham Recreation & Parks Youth Soccer League.

II. **ELIGIBILITY:**

- A. The date used to determine which age group a player is eligible to participate in is February 16th of the playing year.
- B. Each player's age will be approved by the Recreation Department.
 - a. 5U – players age 4-5
 - b. 6U – players age 5-6
 - c. 8U – players age 7-8
 - d. 10U – players age 9-10
 - e. 14U – players age 11-14
- C. A player may move up and play in an older league if he/she so desires, but after he/she has participated in one (1) league game with that team, he/she must play in that age group for the remainder of that season.

III. **PRINCIPLES OF YOUTH ATHLETICS:**

- A. It is the aim of the Recreation and Parks Department to provide organized games and activities, recreation facilities, supervision and leadership to its citizens in their ideals and interests in the area of leisure time activities and/or its organization.
- B. To promote the ideals of good sportsmanship, teach basic skills, develop individual talents, and provide an opportunity to enjoy the best possible recreation advantages and atmospheres.
- C. To recognize the youth participant as an individual with particular abilities and limitations. A great deal of consideration must be given to his physical, mental, emotional, and social development with every precaution taken to ensure that each is developed to its highest potential.

IV. **DISCIPLINARY ACTION:** (Including: parents, spectators, coaches, and players)

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|----------------------------|--|
| A. Ejection from Game | Minimum 1 Game Suspension |
| B. Unsportsmanlike Conduct | Minimum 1 Game Suspension |
| C. Profanity | Minimum 1 Game Suspension |
| D. Threatening an Official | Minimum Suspension for remainder of season |
| E. Under the Influence | Minimum Suspension for remainder of season |
| F. Fighting | Minimum Suspension for remainder of season |
- a. Any coach, parent or spectator suspended must leave the playing facility immediately upon ejection; however, a player may remain at the playing facility.
 - b. All suspensions will be reviewed by Recreation Staff in order to determine if further disciplinary action need be taken. All decisions concerning disciplinary actions by the Recreation and Parks Department are final.
 - c. Individuals can be suspended after the game for unsportsmanlike conduct by a game official or recreation staff member.

V. DUTY OF THE COACH AND CERTIFICATION:

- A. Each parent shall be responsible for seeing that their child is examined by his family doctor before he/she is allowed to play.
- B. The coach must have his/her team ready to play ten (10) minutes prior to game time.

VI. EQUIPMENT:

- A. Cleats are recommended to wear; however, tennis shoes are allowed as an alternate.
 - a. Cleats cannot have a toe cleat.
 - b. Only rubber cleats are allowed.
- B. Shin guards are required; they must be covered completely by socks.
- C. No jewelry, watches, beads, earrings or other hard items may be worn during games.
- D. Mouthpieces are not required but recommended.
- E. The official soccer ball will be furnished by the Recreation Department for all age groups.
 - a. 5U, 6U – Size 3
 - b. 8U, 10U – Size 4
 - c. 14U – Size 5

VII. OFFICIALS:

- A. All officials will be furnished and assigned by the Soccer Booking Agent.
- B. Officials will have complete control of all games.
- C. After the game has begun, the assigned officials or Recreation Staff will be responsible for discontinuing the game for any reason.
- D. The officials' decision on all calls will be final.

VIII. AWARDS:

- A. Individual trophies or medals will be awarded to the tournament champions and runner-up.

TOURNAMENT SEEDING TIE-BREAKERS

- A. Seeding will be determined by highest winning percentage; followed by
 - i. Head-to-head record among tied teams; followed by
 - ii. Goal differential in games among tied teams only; followed by
 - iii. Goal differential amongst every team; followed by
 - iv. Coin flip

PROJECTED DAYS OF GAMES

- A. 5U – Tuesday, Thursday
 - B. 6U – Tuesday, Thursday
 - C. 8U – Tuesday, Thursday
 - D. 10U – Tuesday, Thursday
 - E. 14U – Monday, Wednesday
- *Game days could change based on the number of teams in each division

CHANGES TO THE RULEBOOK

The Graham Recreation & Parks Department reserves the right to change, add, or remove rules from any age division at any time in the interest of the players and the league.

8U Soccer Rules 2026

Ball: Size 4 | Goal Size: 24 ft. long by 8 ft. high | Field Size: 45 yards x 30 yards

Half Length: 20 minutes | Overtime (playoffs only): 5-minute period followed by a shoot-out

CLOCK RULES

- Games are played with two 20-minute halves; 40 minutes total gametime.
- Officials can add stoppage time at the end of each half at their discretion.
- There will be a running clock during game play with the following exceptions:
 - If there is an injury or interruption in the game.

PLAYING TIME RULES

- Athletes are required to play half of the match (20 minutes).
 - If an athlete shows up late this is adjusted based on when they arrive.
 - If a player receives a card the minutes requirement becomes void.
 - If the mercy rule is in effect the minute requirement is void for players sitting due to the mercy rule.
- Every 5 minutes substitutions will be required at the dead ball closest to the 5-minute mark.
 - The official will blow their whistle after a ball is out of play and ALL bench players must enter the game.

GAME MANAGEMENT RULES

- Only three (3) coaches are allowed on the bench during a game. One head coach and two assistant coaches.
- There will be a ten (10) minute grace period for the first game of each night.
- Games will be played 8v8.
 - 7 outfield players plus a goalie.
- Goals cannot be scored directly from a kick-off.
- Goals cannot be scored from the inside of your own half.

OFFSIDES

- Offsides will not be called in the 8U age division.
- An official can award a free kick if an attacking player is taking advantage of the offside rule.

FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

- Slide tackling is prohibited in all age divisions.
- Yellow and Red Cards | Cards can be given out by officials at their own judgement.
 - Cards can be given to any players or coaches.
- Punishment
 - 1 Yellow Card in a game – The player must sit on the bench for the teams next rotation.
 - 2 Yellow Cards in a game – Player will be suspended for the remainder of that game and the next.
 - 1 Red Card in a game – Player will be suspended for the remainder of that game and the next.
 - 2 Red Cards in the season – Player will be suspended for the remainder of the season.
- Free kicks will be either direct or in-direct; decided at the officials' judgement.
- Direct kicks can result in a goal directly from a free kick.
- In-direct kicks have to be touched by another player on either team before being scored.
 - If the ball goes into the goal directly after a free-kick, the goal will be void and the ball will go to the defending team for a goal kick.

- If a foul occurs in the penalty area by the defending team the attacking team will receive a penalty kick.
 - Penalty kicks will be taken from the penalty spot.
 - The attacking team can choose any player on the field to take the penalty shot.
 - The shooter has to wait until the official blows the whistle before they attempt the kick.
 - If the player shoots before the whistle is blown by the official the result is voided and the penalty kick will be retaken.
 - All players will remain outside the top of the penalty area until the ball is kicked by the shooter.

Mercy Rule

- If a team is up by 4 or more goals the highest scorer for the leading team must come off the field.
 - The leading scorer has to sit the remainder of the game or until a deficit of 3 or less is restored.
 - If two players have the same number of goals one must sit, they can only be substituted into the game for the other leading scorer.
 - In the situation of a tie the tied player in the game has to play on the defensive line.
- If a team is up by 6 goals a second player will come off; every two goals from thereon will require another player to come off.
 - Every time a player has to come off due to the mercy rule it's required to be the highest scorer currently in the game.

Overtime (Playoffs Only)

- All regular season games will end in a tie if the score is tied at the end of regular time.
- In the playoffs if the score is tied at the end of regular time there will be a 5-minute overtime period.
- Overtime will be golden-goal.
 - The first goal scored in overtime will end the game.
- If the game is tied at the conclusion of overtime the teams will participate in a shootout.
 - Each team will select 5 players who are on the field to participate in the shootout.
 - The players participating in the shootout will be lined up on midfield and guided by the GRPD staff or official.
- If a game goes into overtime coaches can substitute however, they want.

* All other rules and regulations will follow the North Carolina High School Federation Soccer rules and will be called at the discretion of the officials