



Rules and Guidelines for Youth Soccer 2025-2026

Nelson County Parks and Recreation (NCP&R) promotes youth soccer to be a fun and developmental experience for all participants. Our younger groups U6 Lil Kickers and U8 is more focused on the development of fundamentals to prepare the athletes as they progress into older age groups. Our U11 league introduces participants into a more competitive environment while also focusing on fundamentals and skill/rules development. Once children move into U15 age group, they are focused on preparing the athletes for the next level and becoming more competitive in regards to game play. At all levels, NCP&R strives to keep the recreational mindset for all participants promoting inclusion and an enjoyable experience for all. As basic or competitive as games may become, all participants will be guaranteed playing time and the chance to make a difference on and off the field.

NCP&R Expectations

1. **Sportsmanship**- NCP&R expects Positive Sportsmanship from all in attendance at NCP&R sponsored activities including but not limited to all practices and games. Failure to abide to general expectations may result in removal from game/practice, banning for remainder of season and potentially future seasons for all involved. These expectations are required by all players, parents, coaches and all in attendance. Determination of situation is on a case by case basis made by NCP&R Staff and/or Game Officials.
2. **Game Conduct**: Any player who is ordered off the field due to receiving a Red Card cannot be replaced. A player who gets a yellow card can be replaced and must sit for at least 5 minutes out (cooling off period, longer if necessary). A player or coach receiving a red card must leave the field and will be suspended from the next game. A player or coach involved in a fight will be suspended for the remainder of the current season and will not be allowed to participate for 12 consecutive months.
3. **Playing Time**: Each player present shall play a minimum of one half of the game, barring injury or unless limited by a medical, physical problem or other unforeseen circumstances.
 - a. Playing time is subject to player commitment in attending all practices and being on time for games. NCP&R reserves the right to authorize reduced playing time to coaches based on unexcused absences from practice and games and any other unforeseen circumstances.
 - b. If a player receives disciplinary action in school resulting in suspension. That player is unable to participate in any NCP&R activities during the duration of the suspension.
 - i. Failure to notify NCP&R and continuing to play will result in further action from NCP&R including but not limited to automatically missing the next game.
4. **Player Apparel**: Players must wear NCP&R provided jerseys during all games. Failure to do so may result it player being deemed ineligible for remainder of game.
5. **Player Equipment**: **Shin guards MUST be worn in all divisions.** Any other equipment must be approved by NCP&R staff or Game Official prior to game.
6. **Footwear**: Cleats or closed toed athletic shoes are required by all participants during all practices and games. Metal cleats are not permitted. Football cleats are allowable if the “toe cleat” is not present or removed.
7. **Jewelry**: All jewelry including earrings, watches, necklaces, barrettes must be removed. Small non-removable earrings may, at the referee’s discretion, be taped.
8. Following each game, ALL PLAYERS & COACHES will line up to shake hands.

Game Structure

9. All Game officials are hired and selected by NCPR Staff. It is their responsibility to call a fair and safe game. Referees are human and will make mistakes.
10. **Coaches- coach, Referees- referee, Parents- cheer.**
11. No one but players and officials should ever be on the field unless invited by the official or coach due to an injury.
12. **Referees are in charge** from the time they arrive until the time they depart the field of play. Referee decisions cannot be appealed at any time.
13. Only the **head coach** is permitted to address the referee.
14. **Scheduled start times:** games will not begin earlier than the scheduled start time, unless both coaches agree to start earlier. In the case where an earlier games runs over, then the following game will start within 3 to 5 minutes immediately after the pre-eding games ends. Therefore, teams should arrive 15-20 minutes ahead of scheduled start time to warm up and be ready to play. No grace period will be allowed to wait for players or coaches to arrive after the scheduled start time.
15. Players may protect their chest and groin areas with their arms as long as their arms are in contact with the body at the time contact is made. Casts and braces are allowed if they are well padded and are not used in a dangerous manner.
16. Substitutions are permitted by either team after a goal is scored, on a goal kick and by the team controlling the ball on throws- ins. Substitutions are not permitted by either team on corner kicks. An injured player may be substituted for at any time. Substituted players may return to the game.
17. If a team is not able to field the minimum number of players, that team will forfeit the game.
 - a. Forfeits will be counted as a 1-0 win for the opposing team in the U11 and U15 standings.
 - b. The opposing team may allow transfer of players to allow the game to be played for the enjoyment of all players, fans and coaches. Game will be recorded as a forfeit.

Season Structure

18. Practices will begin at a minimum of 2 weeks prior to the first scheduled game.
 - a. Each team will be allowed a minimum of 1 practice and maximum of 2 practices per week. Unless otherwise permitted by NCPR staff.
 - b. Practice times are determined by the head coach. Any adjustments to set practice times must be approved by NCPR.
19. Each team will play a 6-week regular season schedule.
 - a. Fall season will include a single elimination playoff.
 - b. A minimum of 5 games will be played over the course of the 6 weeks. Excessive make ups may result in the season being lessened to the minimum 5 games.
20. Fall seasons consists of a single elimination playoff
 - a. Spring seasons WILL NOT include playoffs unless time allows determined by NCPR staff.
21. Make Up games will be at the discretion of the NCPR Office. Dates and times will primarily be based on field availability and referee availability.
 - a. In the event of predicted inclement weather, NCPR staff will do attempt to schedule and communicate possible make up dates prior to the upcoming weekend to allow families the opportunity to plan ahead.
22. Season Standings for U11 and U15
 - a. U11 – Standings will be kept to determine regular season champion and playoff seeding when applicable.
 - b. U15 – Standings will only be kept between NCPR matchups, unless announced prior to the season based on league structure with additional league.

Division Specific Rules

U6 Lil Kickers & U8 (4-5 & 6-7 yr. olds -as of Sep. 30th of the current year)

Game Length: 4 – 10 minute quarters

Ball Size: Size 3

U6 Lil' Kickers: 5 vs 5 (can play down to 4 vs 4) **Including Goalie

U8: 7 vs 7 (can play down to 5 vs 5) **Including Goalie

Game size: Must be agreed upon by both teams

- Don't keep score
- No penalty kicks
- Referees will explain infractions; referee Shall allow players to "re-do" throw-ins with instruction
- No offside
- No slide tackles or heading the ball
- 2 coaches allowed on the field to give verbal instruction and encourage, but should not interfere with the game
- If players get "bunched up" play will stop & award one team a free kick. (Not right in front of the goal)

U11 (8-10 yr. olds - as of Sep. 30th of the current year)

Game Length: 4 – 10 minute quarters

Ball Size: Size 4

Game size: 11 vs 11 (can play down to 9 vs 9 if agreed upon by both teams)

- Score will be kept by the Head official
- Standings will be kept, 3 pts for a win, 1 pt. for a tie
- **No slide tackles**
- **No Headers**
- A second try will be given if a throw- if a foul is committed on the first try, after the 2nd attempt the possession of the ball goes to the other team at the same place.
- Substitute on any game stoppage
- No offside (but no "excessive offside allowed") Unless Leading by 3 Goals then Offside will be called.
- Tiebreaker:
 - Regular Season: If time expires with a tie score. Match will be called a Draw.
 - Playoffs: Two (2) five minute periods will be played. If there is a tie after that, we will go to best of 5 penalty kicks.

U15 (11-14 yr. olds) (as of Sep. 30th of the current year)

Game Length: 2 – 24 minute halves

Ball Size: Size 5

Game size: 11 vs 11 (can play down to 9 vs 9 if agreed upon by both teams)

- Score will be kept by the Head official
- Standings will only be kept between NCPR matchups unless announced prior to season.
- NFHS rules apply
- Substitute on any game stoppage
- Tiebreaker:
 - Regular Season: If time expires with a tie score. Match will be called a Draw.
 - Playoffs: Two (2) five minute periods will be played. If there is a tie after that, we will go to best of 5 penalty kicks.

SOCCER RULES & TERMS

Start of play: Choice of end and possession is decided by a coin toss. Captains meet with the referee (or coaches in the younger groups)

Goalkeeper: May pick up the ball with his/her hands, within the penalty box

Must have a different color shirt or penny

Must either throw or kick the ball to put the ball back in play.

Ball in & out of play:

The ball is out of play when:

It is completely over the side or end line

The referee has stopped the game

The ball is in play when:

It bounces off the goal, corner flag or the referee.

Goal: A goal scored when the ball is completely over the goal line between the goalposts.

Fouls: push, trip intentionally handling the ball to gain advantage.

Free kicks: awarded to a player after a foul. Direct kick- may be kicked into the goal.

Throw in: When the ball completely crosses the sideline, a throw-in is awarded to the team who did not touch it last. It is thrown from the point where it crossed the line. The thrower, at the moment of delivery of the ball,

1. Must face the field of play
2. Part of each foot must be on the ground either on or behind the sideline
3. Both hands must be used, the ball must be delivered from behind and over the head.
4. Play begins when the ball enters the field of play. The thrower cannot play it until it has touched by another player.
5. A goal cannot be scored from a throw in.

Goal kick: Taken by the defending team after the attacking team puts the ball over the end line. The ball is placed within the goal box. Opponents must be outside the penalty box. The ball must clear the penalty box.

Corner kick: Will be taken by the attacking team when the defenders put the ball over the end line. The ball is placed within the corner arc. A goal may be scored directly from this kick.

At kick off: The ball can now be kicked in any direction, including backwards so no team-mates allowed to stand in opponents' half.

Penalty Kick (U11 & U15 ONLY): When a player is fouled inside the box attempting to score, a penalty shot may be awarded and taken by any member of the team.

Nelson County Parks and Recreation
Soccer Division Rules Chart

Age Division	U6	U8	U11	U15
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 3	Size 4	Size 5
Score / Standings Kept	No	No	Yes	Yes Standings NOT Kept Against Non-NCPR Teams
Number of Players On the field – Including Goalkeeper *Will play with max unless player shortage	Minimum – 4v4 Maximum – 5v5	Minimum – 5v5 Maximum – 7v7	Minimum – 9v9 Maximum – 11v11	Minimum – 9v9 Maximum – 11v11
Goalkeeper	Optional: Coaches Choice	Yes	Yes	Yes
Coaches Allowed On The Field During Game	2 coaches allowed	2 coaches allowed	No	No
Off-Sides Forced	No	No	Not Strict: Excessive Off-Sides Enforced	Yes
Game Length 2 minutes b/w Quarters 5 minutes b/w Halves	Instructional Play: Game Length Varies	Four 10 Minute Quarters	Four 10 Minute Quarters	Two 24 Minute Halves
Heading	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Allowed
Slide Tackles	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Not Allowed	Allowed