

U-5 & U-6 Short-Sided Games Guide 572

The Teams:

Games are played with 3 or 4 players per team on the field and no goalkeepers. Substitutions are made at quarters, halftime and for injuries. A minimum of 2 quarters is required for each player and it is recommended that no one play 4 quarters until everyone has played 3 quarters.

Player Equipment:

Shoes and shinguards covered by the socks are mandatory at all practices and games for all age groups. Soccer shoes, tennis shoes or similar type athletic shoes are recommended. The type and condition of cleated shoes must be inspected for safety before use.

The Ball:

A size 3 ball is used for U-6 games.

Duration of Game:

U-6 games last twenty minutes and are played in 2 ten minute halves with substitutions allowed 5 minutes into each half.

The Start of Play:

To start the first and second halves and following each goal in all age group games, play is started or restarted with a kick-off in the center of the field. A coin toss is used to determine which team kicks off to start the game and the other team kicks off to start the second half. Following a goal, the team scored upon kicks off. Teams must switch sides of the field at half time.

The Kick-off:

The kick-off is taken from the center of the field with each team in their own half and the team not kicking off at least 5 yards from the ball in U-6 games. Do not insist the opponent be a minimum of precisely 5 yards from the ball as this is just a guide to give the kicker room to kick the ball without it immediately hitting an opponent. Remember, let them play and do not interfere for technicalities.

Ball In and Out of Play:

The ball is out of play in all age group games when it completely crosses the touch line (side line) or goal line (end line) either on the ground or in the air. The coach, in U-6 games, will determine when the ball is out of play and should interfere as little as possible in the restart. It's the player's game, let them play and work on technique later.

Method of Scoring:

A goal, in all age group games, is awarded when the ball completely crosses the goal line into the goal. Goals should be enthusiastically celebrated by everyone but, in U-6 games, they are not recorded to determine who wins. Everyone wins in U-6 games.

Fouls and Other Stoppages:

Deliberate fouling should be rare in U-6 games. Kicking, tripping, handling the ball and dangerous play may occur. There should be few, if any, additional reasons to stop play in U-6 games. If a player is "not playing well with others" or if play must be stopped for any other reason (injury, substitution, confusion, or to watch a passing train, butterfly or frog), refocus the players and begin again with a free kick or throw-in as appropriate. Award the restart to whichever team deserves it or flip a coin to decide but do not make it a lengthy ceremony. Exercise common sense, briefly explain infractions and stand back and let 'em play.

Free Kick:

Play may have to be stopped occasionally to “sort things out” in U-6 games. A player may pick the ball up and start running with it or want to keep it away from the other players or perhaps there is a pile of kids on the ground kicking at both the ball and each other. Stop play and correct the situation, then restart with a free kick for a deserving player. All free kicks in U-6 games are direct free kicks which means, if you’re lucky, a goal can be scored directly from the kick.

Throw-in:

When the ball goes out of play, in U-6 games, across the touch lines (side lines), a throw-in is awarded from where it crossed the line to the team that didn’t touch it last. In U-6 games, whether the throw-in is properly taken or not, let it go! Proper technique can be taught later. Again, let them play, give quick explanations when necessary and minimize interruptions. Keep the game moving and fun.

Kick-in:

When the ball goes out of play across one of the goal lines (end lines) and a goal is not scored, a kick-in is awarded for the defending team if the offensive team kicked the ball out. If the defending team kicked the ball out then the offensive team moves to the touch line and throw the ball in.

