



Fall 2025 Merced United Recreational Soccer League Rules

Mission and Vision:

- Promote youth development through soccer
- Ensure fun, safety, sportsmanship, and inclusivity
- Provide equal play opportunities for all participants
- Support physical and social growth through structured programming

General Rules Overview by Age Group

Age Group	Numbers of Players (Including Goalies)	Half Length	Build-Out Line	Headers	Sliding	Lose game if lead by more than:	Field Rules
U6	4v4	4 x 8 min (Qtrs)	Half-Line	No	No	9	1 Coach per Team allowed on the Field
U7-U8	5v5	20 min	Half-Line	No	No	9	-
U10	7v7	25 min	Marked Line	No	No	9	-
U12	9v9	30 min	None	No	Yes	9	-
U16	9v9	30 min	None	Yes	Yes	9	2 Girls Minimum on field (not including goalie)

Age-Group Specific Rules and Notes

U6

- No referees; games facilitated by coaches.
- Emphasis is on learning basic rules (throw-ins, goal kicks, etc.).
- Coaches are encouraged to assist during game play to ensure the safety of all players and to ensure all rules are followed and implemented- One coach per team is allowed on the field.
- Coaches are responsible for monitoring and addressing parent behavior during games.
- Quarters are timed by the home team's Assistant Coach or Team Manager (four 8 Minute quarters to allow for water breaks and rests).
- No Goalies.
- Substitutions on the fly.

U7-U10

- Opposing players must retreat behind half (U7-U8) or to marked build-out line (U10) during goal kicks or when the keeper gains possession.



- [Explainer Videos: Build Out Line](#)
- Promotes playing out from the back.
- No punting or drop kicks allowed for goalies in U7–U10.
- Helps reinforce "No Headers" policy and reduce pressure.

U7 and Up - Standard Substitutions

- Substitutions are made at the halfway line.
- Players must exit the field before a sub enters.
- No more than allotted players on the field at any time.
- Goalies must play a full half and only subbed at halftime.
- All players must play at least 50% of the game.

U12

- More emphasis on tactics, teamwork, and positioning.
- Referees enforce full rules including offside (offside rule is enforced in U10 as well.)

U16 Coed

- Emphasis on character development, fair competition
- 2-girl minimum on the field at all times (excluding goalie) and goals scored by girls count as two.
- Full contact rules allowed (within FIFA limits), however boys can not take away from girls as long as they have control.
- All PKs count as 1 point, regardless of gender (for regular season play as well as postseason Jamboree).

Jamboree Rules and Seeding (U10-U16 Coed)

- In the event of a tie at the end of regulation, games will go to a penalty kick shootout.
- If at any point a team leads by more than 9 goals, at the end of the game the team trailing in the score will be declared the winner and advance.
- Offside enforced (during season as well).
- All players must be played.

Teams will be seeded for end-of-season Jamboree matches based on total points accumulated. During league play, points for seeding will be calculated as follows:

- **Win** = 3 points
- **Tie** = 1 point
- **Loss** = 0 points

In the case of teams tied in points, seeding will be determined in this order:

1. Goal Differential (Goals For – Goals Against)
2. Head-to-Head Result
3. Most Goals Scored

Discipline & Sportsmanship

- Sliding is not allowed in U10 and under. Indirect free kick awarded.
- U12 and above may allow sliding if done safely and without contact.
- Headers are prohibited in all age groups until U16.
- If at any point a team leads by more than 9 goals the team trailing in the score will be declared the winner at the end of the game for advancement purposes.
- Respect opponents, coaches, and referees. Unsportsmanlike conduct can lead to removal from the program.

Player Conduct

- Players, coaches, and parents must demonstrate sportsmanship at all times.
- Negative behavior, arguing with referees, taunting opponents, or using inappropriate language will result in removal from the match and potential league suspension.
- Fighting, threats, or referee abuse will result in a league ban.
- Referees have full authority to stop or end games due to misconduct.

Sportsmanship Rule & Mercy Guidance

- U6–U16: Stop scoring up after 9-goal margin, if team surpasses this goal differential at the end of the game the team trailing will be declared the winner.
- Coaches should rotate players, encourage passing, and show sportsmanship if the margin is reached.

Equipment & Uniform

- Shin guards are mandatory.
- League-provided jerseys must be worn and tucked in at all games.
- Proper footwear required; no metal cleats.
- No pants allowed to be worn during the game, only black shorts.

Coaching & Volunteer Conduct

- Coaches are mentors and role models. No arguing with refs or excessive yelling.
- All head coaches must complete a volunteer background check.
- Only registered coaches are allowed on the sideline.

Game Logistics, Field Setup Responsibilities, and Forfeiting Game

- Teams must arrive 30 minutes before game time.
- Each morning, coaches are responsible for setting and takedown of one goal and net.

- Last Game, teams are responsible for returning the net w/bag, corner flags, field signs, and goals post. (those teams who do not breakdown and return equipment will be penalized with a 1 game suspension.)
- Please ensure no pets are brought to the fields during play.
- Referees will start games on time. No grace period unless confirmed in advance.
- If a team does not have the minimum number of players to start a match within 10 minutes of the scheduled time, the game will be recorded as a 3-0 forfeit loss.
- Coaches are expected to notify the league if their team will miss a game so efforts can be made to create a replacement scrimmage.

Crossover Players

- Players registered in Merced United Competitive (travel) teams or other competitive teams are not eligible to participate in Merced United Recreational Soccer games in the same season. (Postseason as well: BML, Jamboree.)
- This is to ensure balanced competition and fair development opportunities for all Rec players.
- Violations may result in player suspension and team forfeiture of games.

Contact & Reporting

- Rule clarifications or incident reports: rec@mercedunited.com
- Website for schedules and updates: www.mercedunited.com

If there is any disagreement with regards to the above rules, the Merced United Rec Program Coordinators shall have the final word and responsibility to interpret such rules. All decisions are final and made with the intent to promote fairness, safety, and development for all players. Let's keep the focus on fun, learning, and comMUnity.

