



Youth Soccer Coaching Manual



Message from OCPRD

Thank you for volunteering your time this season to coach a group of up and coming soccer players! *The mission of OCPRD is to, through a coordinated effort, enrich the quality of life of the citizens we serve, by providing safe and accessible recreational facilities and a diversified program of recreational activities for all citizens. We would not be able to do that without soccer coaches like yourself, so thank you for making this program happen!*

The philosophy of OCPRD's soccer program is to allow players to participate, develop skills, and learn the game in a **fun and safe** environment. We have all the confidence in you to help us make that happen for our players!

The OCPRD soccer program has grown to 1,200+ players, 120+ teams – which brings a necessity of 120+ volunteer coaches! You are such an integral part of giving the youth of this community an opportunity to get out and play soccer, so we cannot thank you enough for that.

The following manual will give you information on the season, specific things you need to do and a great collection of advice on the season to come. Please read through in its entirety. If you have any questions on players, parents, practices or games throughout the season, know we are here for you. Your direct contact will be the Youth Soccer Program Coordinator(s), whose name and contact information can be found on our website, via the [Youth Soccer page](#).

We are looking forward to a great season!

OCPRD Youth Soccer Team

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I volunteered to coach...now what?

Listed below are some tips to help coaches for the upcoming season:

- **Learn the league specific rules and policies.** As the coach, it is essential you attend pre-season organizational meetings and make sure you read and understand league rules. Be sure your assistant coach understands the rules as well, if you have one. Pre-season meetings are a great time to get clarification on rules and policies you may not fully understand.
- **Know what items the league requires you to complete.** OCPRD requires every coach (head or assistant) complete the following requirements:
 - Register as a coach on [Community Pass](#) – this will be the same process as signing up your child for soccer. There is no cost involved with registering to coach.
 - Fill out and complete the [Online Background Screening](#). All coaches must complete the background check before stepping on the field with their team.
 - National Youth Sports Coaches Association (NYSCA) training – NYSCA is offered twice a season. You must renew this certification every 12 months.
 - Renewal Options:
 - Attend the NYSCA training offered by OCPRD
 - Attend Pre-Season Soccer Coaching Clinic
 - HEADS UP online concussion training by the CDC. This certification only needs to be completed once in your OCPRD coaching career.
 - [CDC Concussion Training](#)
- **Understand the value of an assistant.** Assistant coaches not only help run practice, but they can also serve as a sounding board for you and for the players as well. Be sure to maintain an open line of communication between you and your assistant.
- **Have a parent from the team volunteer to be the team parent.** Designating someone for this position lets them feel like they're a greater part of the team. The team parent takes on the duties of organizing who will provide snack for each game, plan end of season parties and so forth. Having another parent focus on these things will allow you to concentrate on coaching.
- **Hold a team meeting at/before the very first practice.** Use this time to introduce yourself and your assistant. It is also the perfect time for parents of the team to meet and get to know each other. During this meeting you should make the parents aware of the league rules and policies so they will understand your coaching philosophy. At this time, you should also let them know your expectations of the players and the parents. Be sure to explain the importance of players and parents exhibiting good sportsmanship. Make sure to find out from parents if their child has any medical conditions you should be aware of in the event of an emergency during a practice or game. Address any potential scheduling conflicts. Do this by finding out what other activities the players are involved in and find out from parents ahead of time what days could potentially be problematic for them regarding practices or games. Make it known to parents it is expected for all players to attend all practices and games, and if they are unable to, you should be notified in advance.

- **Build a solid rapport with each player.** This is easily accomplished by getting to know everyone's name as quickly as possible. During practice spend a few minutes with each child, address them by their name and compliment them when they do something well. Name tags for players during the first few practices can help everyone get acquainted more easily if they are not familiar with one another.
- **Coach by walking around.** This provides a greater opportunity to bond with each player; the more you do it, they will begin to feel more comfortable. In doing this, you are more likely to better understand the differences between each child and find specific ways to motivate them.
- **Recommended (Not Required) Coach Course:**
 - US Soccer Introduction to Grassroots Coaching – free online course which takes up to 30 minutes of your time. <https://learning.ussoccer.com/coach>
 - Additional online trainings are available in the following categories:
 - 4v4 (U6 and U8)
 - 7v7 (U10)
 - 9v9 (U12 and U15)

Oconee County Parks and Recreation Coaches' Code of Ethics

I hereby pledge to live up to my certification as a NYSCA Coach by following the NYSCA Coaches' Code of Ethics:

- I will place the emotional and physical well-being of my players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development for the same age group.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for my players.
- I promise to review and practice basic first aid principles needed to treat injuries of my players.
- I will do my best to organize practices that are fun and challenging for all my players.
- I will lead by example in demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship to all my players.
- I will provide a sports environment for my team that is free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- I will be knowledgeable in the rules of each sport that I coach, and I will teach these rules to my players.
- I will use those coaching techniques appropriate for all of the skills that I teach.
- I will remember that I am a youth sports coach, and that the game is for children and not adults.

Inclement Weather

- Cancellations due to weather on weeknights will generally not be made until 4 pm on weeknights and 8 am on Saturdays.
 - Sometimes weather rolls in after those times, we do our best to have a decision made as soon as possible!
- We will make every reasonable effort to contact coaches/team managers with cancellation information as soon as a decision is made and coaches/team managers will contact parents/players.
- Please give your parents the Inclement Weather Hotline number: 706-769-2965
- For mobile alerts: Text OCPD to 84483
- **My game has already started, but inclement weather pulled us off. What do I do?**
 - OCPD Staff will make an announcement when lightning is seen within 10 miles of the park and will assist the public in exiting the fields.
 - Every player, coach, and parent will be required to exit the fields and seek shelter.
 - OCPD recommends finding shelter in personal vehicles.
 - Patrons cannot be on grass.
 - Play will be suspended for 30 minutes after each lightning strike. The 30 minute timer will reset after each new lightning strike.
 - The remainder the game will be cancelled if lightning persists for 30 minutes.
 - If a game is called after one half of play, the game will be considered official.
 - The rescheduled makeup game will begin at the time and place the current game is forced to end.
 - The score will also be carried over to the rescheduled game.

My player is injured – What do I do?

Soccer is a contact sport – players will get injured. It is inevitable, but what do I do when that happens?

1st – Assess the situation. Most injuries are minor and can be treated by a short period of rest, ice, and elevation. If player is able, have the player walk off the field. Do not put the player back in the game or practice until he/she is comfortable.

Each team will have a first aid kit in the team's equipment bag. A majority of injuries will be able to be taken care of by the contents of the first aid kit. OCPD staff has a more extensive first aid kit, and they will be there to help.

OCPD staff is first aid certified, they can help, but they cannot diagnose any injury. However, if OCPD staff is suspecting a concussion, they reserve the right to hold a player out of the game until they are cleared by a medical professional.

Team Management

Discipline

- It's not necessary to have an extensive set of rules for the team; instead, have a few rules stand out that you will emphasize throughout the course of the season. Examples:
 - Having players show up at a specified time before practices and games.
 - Letting you know ahead of time if a player won't be able to make a practice/game.
 - Players and parents are expected to exhibit sportsmanlike behavior at all times.

The Ball-Hog

- If you have a player on your team who likes to control the ball and take all the shots, rather than calling them out during practice or games, pull them aside and explain to them the importance of working with their teammates. Feel free to acknowledge what they do well, but also challenge and encourage them to be just as good at finding and passing to an open teammate.

Running Up the Score

- There are times when games can become one-sided and one team scores a much more significant amount of goals than the other. In this instance, do not allow your team to continue to run up the score. Instead, tell your team to pass the ball at least 5 or 6 times before a shot is taken. In doing this, you are getting your team to work on their passing and ball movement skills, thus making them better all-around players.

Parents

- As a coach, you will have to deal with various issues and concerns from parents, ranging from playing time to game strategies. How you handle these things as they come up can affect the course of the season. During your first team meeting, let it be known to the parents the best times to approach you. When they do come to you with a concern, let them state their concern – uninterrupted – and let them know you'll take their suggestions into consideration and work on a way to best address their concerns. Always respond in a positive, non-confrontational manner and make sure everyone keeps a positive attitude.

Losing Games

- Enduring a losing season is one of the greater challenges a coach can face. Rather than dwell on the negativity associated with losing, it is your job as the coach to remain upbeat and positive. Find things the team did well and focus on those items. Praise them for the effort they put forth in spite of the loss.

Running an Efficient Practice

An organized and efficiently run practice allows you to get more accomplished than expected. Some tips for running an efficient practice are below:

- Be organized and have a plan.
 - Have a back-up plan just in case some drills are not being picked up as easily by the players.
 - The back-up plan also can take number of players in attendance into consideration.
- Break down the practice hour into 15- or 20-minute blocks.
 - Start and stop each block with a quick whistle.
 - Include water and bathroom breaks.
- Keep things moving so the players are engaged and on the go.
 - Lessen the number of drills involving players just standing around in a line. This decreases the likelihood of players getting bored and losing focus.
- If you have to stop practice to teach a fundamental or demonstrate a play, put yourself on the clock.
 - Make your point, keep it short, and keep the action moving.
- Keep practice interesting, and most importantly, fun.
- Know the Program Coordinator is there to help if you ever need any extra advice or tips.

Play-practice-play structure

- US Soccer has implemented a play-practice-play structure as their recommendation on how to run a training session. Follow the link below for a detailed description and outline of US Soccer's play-practice-play structure:
 - [US Soccer Coaching Education: Play-Practice-Play Overview](#)

Games and Practices – Weekly Schedule

- Week of 8/16 – Practices Begin
 - Saturday, 8/21 – Saturday Practices

- Week of 8/23 – Practice
 - Saturday, 8/28 – Saturday Practices

- Week of 8/30 – Practice
 - Saturday, 9/4 – Optional Saturday Practices
 - Labor Day Weekend

- Week of 9/6 – Game #1
 - Monday, 9/6 – No Scheduled Activity (Labor Day)
 - **Friday, 9/10 – Make up games for Monday teams**
 - Friday, 9/10 – Youth Soccer Picture night #1
 - **Saturday, 9/11 – Saturday Games for all teams (Game #2)**

- Week of 9/13 – Game #3
 - Friday, 9/17 – Youth Soccer Picture night #2
 - Saturday, 9/18 – Saturday Practices

- Week of 9/20 – Game #4
 - Friday, 9/24 – Youth Soccer Picture night #3 (Final Opportunity)
 - **Saturday, 9/25 – Saturday Games for all teams (Game #5)**

- Week of 9/27 – Game #6
 - Saturday, 10/2 – Saturday Practices

- Week of 10/4 – Game #7
 - Saturday, 10/9 – Saturday Practices/Make Up Game Date

- Week of 10/11 – Game #8 – Final Regular Season Games
 - Saturday 10/16 – Saturday Practices for U10-U15 Teams/Make Up Game Date

- Week of 10/19 – Post Season Games Begin
 - Saturday, 10/24 – Saturday Practices for Post Season teams
 - Post Season Games if Necessary

- Week of 10/26 – Final Youth Soccer Tournament Games
 - Tuesday, 10/27 – Youth Soccer Championships

****All Dates are subject to change**