2026 EMSA U9/Alberta Soccer 7 vs 7 Mini Soccer

A handbook and guide for EMSA Mini Referees

Rule 1—Field Markings & Equipment

Dimensions

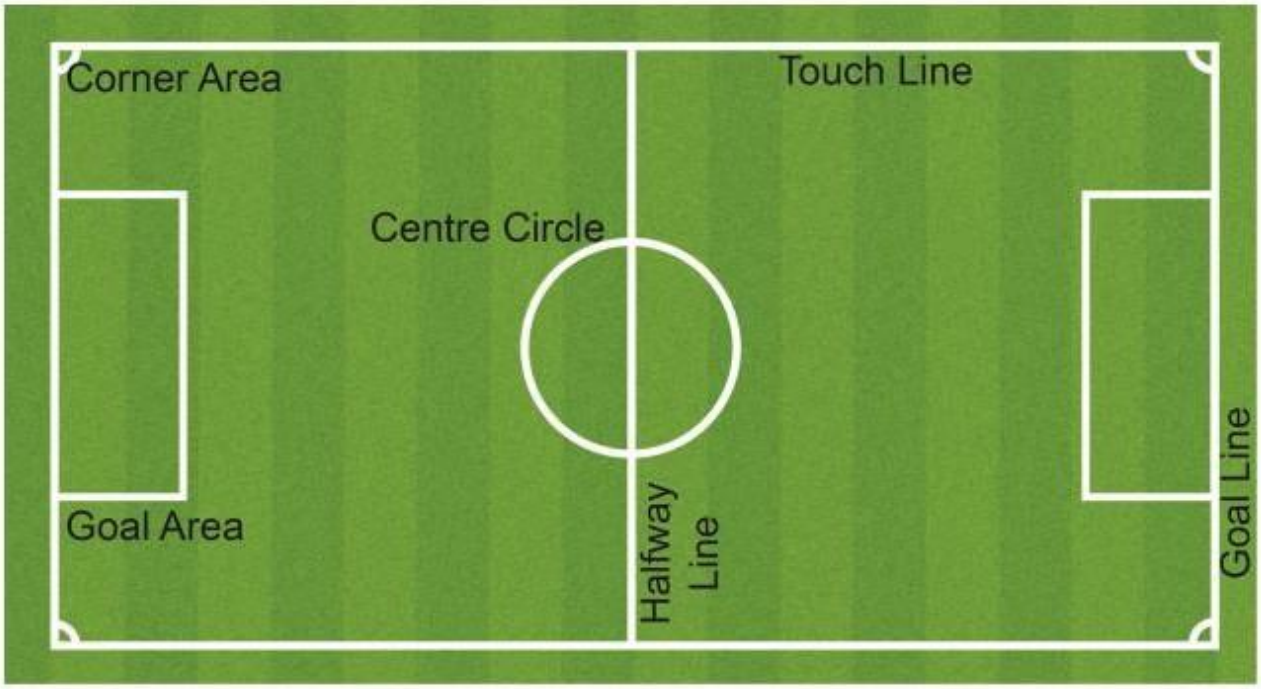
The field of play shall be rectangular, and marked with lines.

The playing area should be 30 meters to 36 meters wide x 40m to 55m long. Games may be played on Mini fields or may be played within or across standard fields.

Markings

Distinctive lines and markings are required:

- The two longer boundary lines are called touchlines, the two shorter boundary lines are called goal lines.
- The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line, which joins the mid-points of the two touchlines. This line is also used as the Retreat Line for some restarts (see Rule 8)
- A centre mark is marked at the mid-point of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of 6 meters is marked around it.
- A corner arc with a 1 meter radius should be indicated at the four corners of the field.
- A goal area should be indicated by either a semi—circle (8 meter radius), or a rectangle 8 meters x 20 meters.
- A flag post, at least 1.5 meters high, with a non-pointed top and a flag must be placed at each corner.



Goals

- The goal should be 1.8 meters high (6 feet) x 4.8 meters wide (16 feet). Note—goal sizes may vary, but they must be the same for both teams.
- Nets may be attached to the goals and the ground behind the goal, provided that they are properly supported and do not interfere with the goalkeeper.
- Goals must be anchored securely to the ground. Portable goals may only be used if they meet this requirement.

Rule 2—The Ball

- The ball will be size 4, spherical, and in suitable condition (not torn or damaged etc.)
- If a ball becomes defective during the game, the game is stopped until a replacement ball is provided. Play is restarted by dropping the replacement ball at the place where the original ball became defective.
- The ball should be inflated to 8lbs—9lbs pressure for Mini soccer.

Rule 3—The Number of Players

- Each team will consist of 7 players, one of whom must be a goalkeeper.
- Substitutions may be made at any stoppage, with the referee's permission, and shall be unlimited.
- The minimum number of players is 5 for a game to start or continue.

Rule 4—The Players' Equipment

Players shall not wear anything that is dangerous to themselves or other players.

The basic compulsory equipment shall consist of:

- A jersey or shirt with sleeves.
- Shorts.
- Socks.
- Shin guards.
- Appropriate footwear.
- Jewellery is not permitted and cannot be taped. Medic Alert bracelets and necklaces are the exception provided that they are fastened securely so as not to be dangerous to any other player. The referee should be aware of any player that is wearing one of these.

Shin Guards

- Must be completely covered by the socks.
- Are to be made of rubber, plastic or similar suitable material.
- Must provide a reasonable degree of protection.

Colours

- The two teams must wear colours that distinguish them from each other and also the referee.
- Each goalkeeper must wear colours which are distinguishable from all outfield players and the referee. Pinnies / bibs are recommended to save jersey switching.
- Non-uniform clothing is allowed based on weather conditions, but uniforms must still distinguish teams.
- A player who is asked to leave the field of play because of defective or dangerous equipment may not re-enter the field of play until the referee is satisfied that the equipment is permissible. The equipment may only be inspected during a stoppage in play
- Any hair apparel must be of soft fabric, no plastic or metal items are to be worn.
- Sports hijabs / headscarves are permitted.
- Referees have the final say on the safety of equipment.

Rule 5—The Referee

The authority of the referee:
Each game is controlled by an ASA accredited referee who has full authority to enforce the Rules of Mini Soccer. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether or not a goal is scored and the result of the game, is final.

Powers and Duties:
The referee:

- Enforces the Rules of the Mini Soccer.
- Ensures that the ball meets the requirements of Rule 2.
- Ensures that the players equipment meets the requirements of Rule 4.
- Acts as a timekeeper and keeps a record of the game.
- Stops, suspends or terminates the game, at his discretion, for any infringements of the Rules.
- Stops, suspends or terminates the game, because of outside interference of any kind (lightning etc.)
- Stops the game if a player is injured, and ensures that the player is attended to.
- Ensures that any player that is bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play. The player may only return once the referee is satisfied that the bleeding has stopped.
- Ensures no unauthorized persons enter the field of play
- Indicates the restart of the game after it has been stopped.
- Takes action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surroundings.
- When the Retreat Line Rule under Rule 8 is in effect the referee must indicate both visually and verbally a count of 5 seconds

Rule 6— Assistant Referees—there are no assistant referees in 7 v 7

Rule 7— Duration of Game

Periods of Play

- The game lasts for two equal periods of *30 minutes (EMSA Modification), unless mutually agreed between the referee and the two participating teams, or as stated in competition rules.

Halftime

- Players are entitled to a halftime interval of between 5 and 10 minutes.
- There is no allowance in either period for extra or added time.
- *EMSA Modification: Unlimited substitutions (number of players)at any stoppage of play, at the discretion of the referee. Note: Please remember this is considered Mini-Soccer so we should allow teams to substitute the entire lineup if they wish.

Rule 8—The Start and Restart of Play

Definition of Kick-Off

A kick-off is a way of starting or restarting play:

- at the start of a game.
- after a goal has been scored . (The kick off will be taken by the team who conceded the goal.)
- at the start of the second half .

- A goal may not be scored directly from a kick-off.

Procedure

Before the kickoff at the start of the game

- a coin toss is held by the referee, between the captains of each team.
- the team that wins the toss decides which goal it will attack in the first half.
- the other team takes the kick-off to start the game.
- the team that wins the toss takes the kick-off to start the second half of the game.
- in the second half of the game, the teams change ends and attack the opposite goals.

Kick-off

- after a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team.
- all players, **except the player taking the kick off** must be in their own half of the field.
- the opponents of the team taking the kickoff must be 6 meters away from the ball until it is in play.
- the ball must be stationary on the centre mark.
- the referee gives a signal.
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves in any direction.
- the kicker must not touch the ball again until it is touched by another player.

Infringements and Sanctions

- For any infringements of the kick-off procedure, the kick-off is retaken.

Definition of dropped ball

- A dropped ball is a method of restarting play when, while the ball is still in play, the referee is required to stop play temporarily for any reason not mentioned elsewhere in the Rules of Mini Soccer. Some examples of this are an injury or interference by an outside agent.

Procedure

- The referee drops the ball at the place where it was located when play was stopped, unless play was stopped inside the penalty area, in which case the referee drops the ball on the penalty area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when play was stopped.
- Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.

–The ball is dropped again:

- If it is touched by a player before it makes contact with the ground
- If the ball leaves the field of play, after it makes contact with the ground, without touching another player.

- If the ball enters the goal

- If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick is awarded.
- If a dropped ball is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick is awarded.

Retreat Line

The Retreat Line will come into effect in the following 3 situations:

- a goal kick
- a free kick to the defending team within their own penalty area (goal area in U9 outdoor games)
- the goalkeeper makes a save and has possession of the ball in their hands

At these 3 restarts the opposing team is required to move beyond the Retreat Line, which is the following:

- On U9 games a line that is one third of the way down from the goal line. If there is no line, cones off the field can be used.

On a goal kick or free kick the ball is in play when the first of the following occurs:

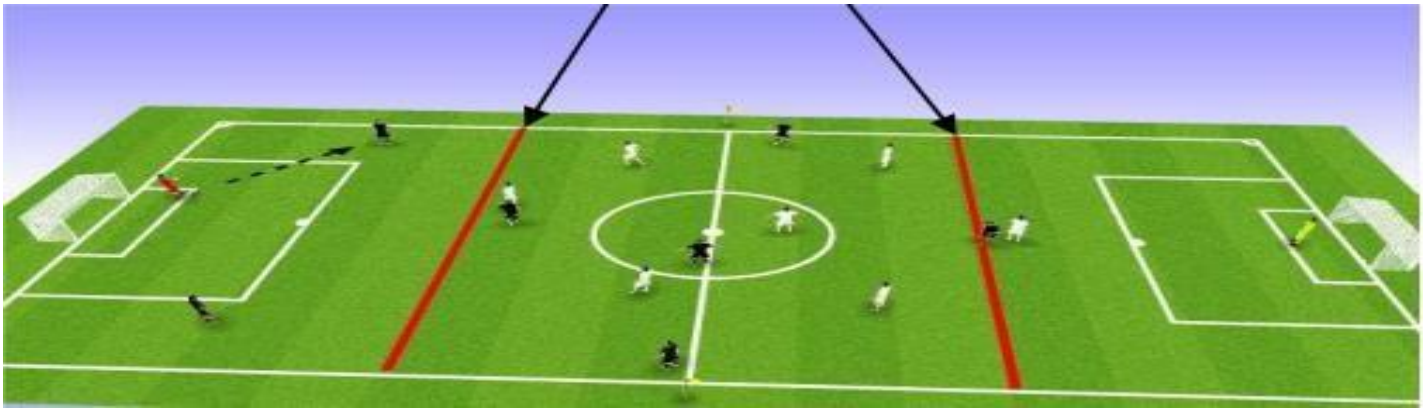
- The ball touches another player from the team taking the restart, apart from the player taking the goal kick or free kick
- The ball stops and has left the penalty area/goal area (U9 outdoor games) from a goal kick or free kick
- The ball crosses the Retreat Line
- The ball goes out of play

On a goalkeeper save the ball is in play when the first of the following occurs:

- The goalkeeper, after making a save, kicks or throws the ball beyond the Retreat Line
- The goalkeeper, after making a save, releases the ball and it touches another player from the same team
- The goalkeeper, after making a save, puts the ball on the ground and more than 5 seconds has passed after putting the ball down on the ground
- The goalkeeper, after making a save, puts the ball on the ground and dribbles the ball beyond the penalty area
- The ball goes out of play

If an opposing player comes in from the Retreat Line AND interferes with play, the game will be stopped, and the restart will be a free kick to the opposing team from where the player crossed the Retreat Line.

For any infraction by the team taking the goal kick, free kick or a goalkeeper save when the Retreat Line Rule is in effect, the restart will be a free kick at the centre of the closest Retreat Line.



Rule 9—Ball In and Out of Play

Ball not in play
The ball is not in-play when:

- it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air
- play has been stopped by the referee

Ball in play
The ball is in play at other times, including when:

- it rebounds off the goalpost, crossbar, or corner flag post and remains in the field of play
- it rebounds off the referee

Rule 10—The Method of Scoring

- A goal is scored when the whole of the ball has crossed over the goal line between the goal posts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the Rules of Mini Soccer has been previously committed by the team scoring the goal.
- When goalposts are not available and cones are used instead, a goal is scored when, if in the opinion of the referee, the whole of the ball crosses over the goal line between or above the cones, below two (2) meters, as shown on the picture below:

Rule 11—Offside—there is no offside in 7v7 Mini Soccer

Rule 12—Fouls and Misconduct

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences:

kicks or attempts to kick an opponent	jumps at an opponent
trips or attempts to trip an opponent	charges an opponent
strikes or attempts to strike an opponent	pushes an opponent
tackles an opponent from behind to gain possession of the ball	holds an opponent
makes contact with an opponent before touching the ball	spits at an opponent
handles the ball deliberately (except for a goalkeeper, within their own goal area)	

- The indirect free kick is taken from where the offence occurs.
- If the defending team commits an offence inside their own penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken on the goal area line closest to where the offence occurs.
- Referees should not issue cautions or red cards to players in Mini soccer. If a player is playing roughly, the referee should request that the coach substitute the player, and the coach should advise the player to play in a fair manner. Any player who spits at or strikes an opponent should take no further part in the game.

Goalkeepers:
Goalkeepers are allowed to handle the ball inside their own goal area.

- Goalkeepers have Five(5) seconds to release the ball from their hands.

Goalkeepers may not touch the ball with their hands if:

- It has been deliberately kicked to them by a team mate.
- They have released the ball from their hands and it has not been touched by an opponent.

- For any of these three offences, an indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team on the goal area line closest to where the offence occurs.

Rule 13—Free Kick

- All free kicks are indirect. A goal may not be scored directly from a free kick.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.
- If a free kick is kicked directly into the opponents' goal, a goal kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- If a free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- A player may not touch the ball a second time on a free kick, until it has been touched by another player from either team. If this happens, an indirect free kick will be awarded to the opposing team.
- All opponents must remain at least 6m from the free kick, until the ball is in play.

Free Kicks taken from inside a team's own Goal Area:

- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line until the ball **has left the Goal Area** (See Rule 8—The Start & Restart of Play, Retreat Line).

Rule 14—Penalty Kick

There are no penalty kicks in Mini soccer during games.

Competition rules may allow for penalty kicks to be taken to decide the result of a game, if required.

Rule 15— Throw In

A throw in will be awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball, when the whole of the ball crosses the touchline in the air on the ground.

The thrower—

- Faces the field, with part of each foot either on the touch line, or on the ground outside the touchline.
- Uses both hands, and delivers the ball from behind and over the head.
- Throws the ball from the point where it left the field of play.
- The thrower cannot touch the ball a second time until is has been touched by another player.
- Referees are asked to not be overly strict on throw ins at this age group. As long as the throw is basically correct, play should continue.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a throw in.

Rule 16—Goal Kick

- A goal kick will be awarded to the defending team, when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, in the air on the ground, when last touched by a player on the attacking team.
- The kick may be taken from any point in the goal area.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked directly out of the goal area.
- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line until the ball has **left the goal area** (See Rule 8—The Start & Re-start of Play, Retreat Line).
- The kicker may not touch the ball a second time, until it has been touched by another player.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick

Rule 17— Corner Kick

- A corner kick will be awarded to the attacking team, when the whole of the ball crosses the goal line, in the air or on the ground, when last touched by a player on the defending team.
- The kick may be taken from any point in the corner arc, or within 1m of the corner of the field, if no arc is marked.
- The flag post must not be moved.
- All opponents must be at least 6m from the ball until it is in play.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves.
- The kicker may not touch the ball a second time, until it has been touched by another player.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a corner kick.

Team Official Misconduct - EMSA Modification

Team Officials can receive yellow and red cards as per regular game and discipline rules.

Advice to Referees

The game at this age is developmental, and referees are requested to offer simple explanations to players regarding why calls were made, if it is not obvious. This does not give players (or coaches) the right to question the referee's calls, but is designed to help the players learn the rules.

If coaches or parents question the referee's calls, the referee should politely but firmly state that this will not be permitted. If the questioning continues, the person should be asked to leave. If the person refuses to leave, the game should be terminated, and the referee should inform the referee assignor or coordinator as soon as possible, reporting the appropriate individuals.

If the referee has any questions or concerns, regarding rules or any aspect of their games, they should contact their referee assignor or coordinator.

Please remember, as a Mini Referee you are qualified to referee 7v7 Mini Soccer only. You should not accept games as a referee, for players older than U9 and you should also not accept games as an assistant referee, unless you have taken the 'Mini Plus AR' training or EMSA Mini or AR training.