2026 EMSA U8/U9
7 vs 7 Mini Soccer
A Handbook and guide for EMSA Mini Referees

Rule 1- Field of Play

Dimensions

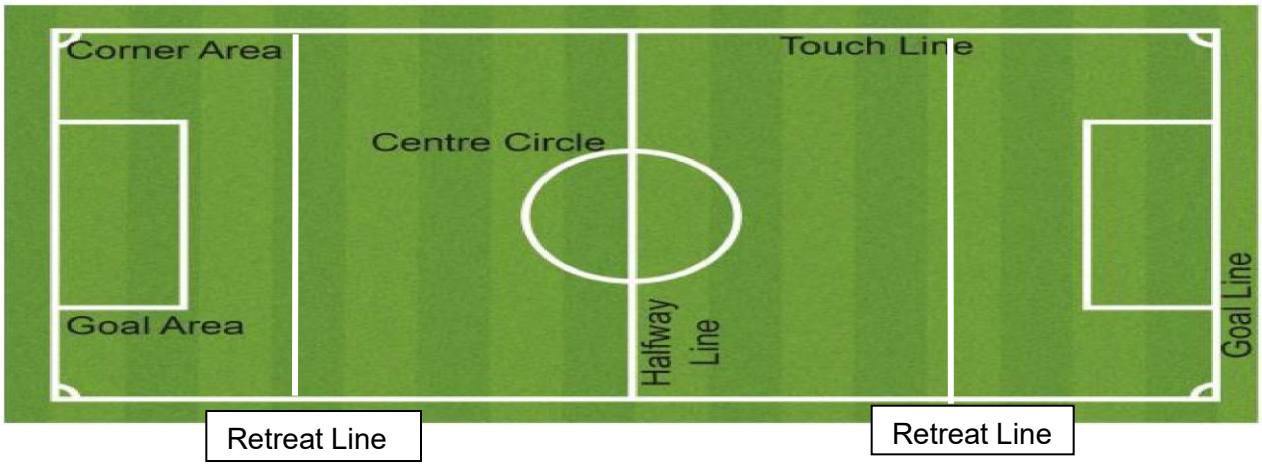
The field of play shall be rectangular, and marked with lines.

The playing area should be 30 35 meters wide x 5 5 - 60m long. Games may be played on Mini field or may be played on a regular field with the similar dimensions and Goals

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 Law 8)
- A centre mark is marked by the mid-point of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of ,6 meters is marked around it.
- A retreat line should be marked 1/3rd of the way down from the goal line parallel to the halfway line. If there is not a line on the field cones can be used 1 yard off the touch line.
- A corner arc 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.



- The goal should be 6 feet high 16 feet across** Note-goal sizes may vary, but they must be the same for both teams.
- Nets may be on 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 is provided by the home team. The ball size will be as follows:
  - U8 club size 3
  - U9 club/community size 4
- The ball should be spherical, and in suitable condition (not dangerous or damaged)
- If a ball becom4s defective during the game, the game is stopped until a replacement ball is provided.
- The ball should not be over inflated or too hard.

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 players equipment shall consist of:

  - Jersey with sleeves (or pinnies) Numbers are not required at this level.
  - Shorts.
  - Socks.
  - Shin guards
  - Appropriate footwear. Cleats, turf or running shoes.
- Jewelry is not permitted and cannot be taped. Medic Alert bracelets are allowed 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 in case of emergency.

Shin guards

- Must be completely covered by the socks.
- 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. Pinnie's / bibs are recommended to save jersey switching.
- Other forms of clothing (sweatpants, sweatshirt is allowed based on weather conditions, but the 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 / head scarves are permitted.
- Referees have the final say on the safety of equipment.

Rule 5-The Referee

The authority of the referee:

Each game is assigned a referee who has full authority to enforce the Rules of **Mini-**Soccer. The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play, including whether a goal is scored and the result of the game, is final as well as keeping time. Coaches or a technical team member are able to also facilitate the game. It is recommended that the coaches agree on who will officiate the game.

Powers and duties:

The referee

- Enforces the Rules of **Mini** Soccer.
- Ensures that the ball meets the required specs Law 2.
- Ensures that the players equipment meets the requirements of Law 4.
- Acts as a time keeper and keeps a record of the game
- Stops, suspends or terminates the game at his/her discretion
- 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, at his/her discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surroundings.

Rule 6 - Assistant Referees-there are no assistant referees in U8 or U9 Soccer

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.

Half Time

- Players are entitled to a halftime interval of 5 minutes (may be adjusted if running late)
- There is no allowance in either period for extra or added tim, except if a game is suspended for lightning.
- *EMSA Modifications unlimited substitutions (number of players) at any stoppage of play at the discretion of the referee. Complete line changes are also allowed (including the goalkeeper)

Rule 8- The start and restart of play

Definition of a kick off

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

- at the start of the game
- after a goal has been scored. (The kick-off will be taken by the team that 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

- The home team decides which goal it will attack in the first half
- The visiting team takes the kick-off to start the match
- The home team takes the kick-off to start the second half og the match
- In the second half of the match, the teams change ends and attack the opposire goall.

Kickoff:

- After a team scores a goal, the kick-off is taken by the other team
- All players except the player taking the kick, must be in their own half of the field .
- The opponents of the team taking the kickoff must be 6 metres away from the ball until it is in play.
- The ball must be stationary on the centre mark.
- The referee gives a signal to start.
- The ball is in play when it is kicked or dribbled and moves in any direction.

Definition of dropped ball

- A drop ball is a method of restarting play when, while the ball is 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 or the ball hits the referee and disrupts play.

Procedure

- The referee drops the ball to the player of the team that last touched or played the ball when play was stopped, unless the ball was in the goal area or the last touch of the ball was in the goal area, in which case the ball will be dropped to the goalkeeper.
- All other p[layers must be a minimum of 6 metres from the ball until it is in play
- The ball is in play when it hits the ground
- For a goal to be scored it much touch 2 players.

Kick In or Dribble-In

For any restart the ball can be kicked or dribbled in. For a goal to be scored, the ball must touch two players. The procedure is as follows:

- the ball must be stationary
- the ball is positioned as per the procedure under the relevant rule number
- the ball is in play when it moves
- all opponents must be a minimum of 6 metres from the ball except when the Retreat Line Rule is in effect.

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
- 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 a line across the field that is one third of the way down from the goal line. If there is no line, cones 1 yard off the touch line 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 goalkick or free kick
- The ball stops and has left the penalty area from a goal kick or free kick
- The ball crosses the Retreat Line
- The ball goes out of play
- The player (including the goalkeeper) begins to dribble the ball
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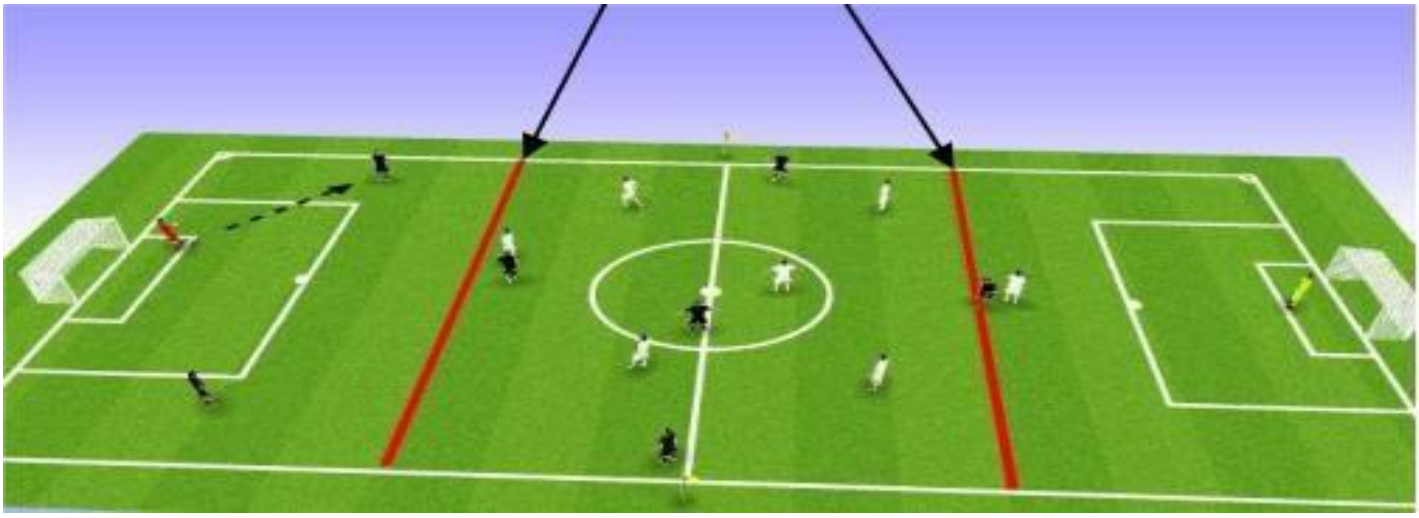
On a goalkeeper save the ball is in play when the first of the following occurs:

- 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 begins to dribble the ball
- The goalkeeper, after making a save, puts the ball on the ground and more than 5 seconds has passed. If the ball is played during those 5 seconds all other conditions of this rule apply
- The ball stops after it has been kicked or thrown
- The ball goes out of play

If the goalkeeper does not put the ball back into play within 8 seconds (which will be indicated by the referee with a visual 5 second countdown) a corner kick will be given to the opposing team. This 8 second count will not start until all of the opposing team is behind the Retreat Line.

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 non-offending 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 corner kick/dribble (e.g. waited longer than 8 seconds to move the ball)

The Retreat Line Rule is negated if the goal kick, free kick is played quickly (before the opposing team is behind the Retreat Line) or the goalkeeper on a save, plays the balls quickly.



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 hits the referee and alters the game. The drop ball will be given to the team as per the conditions in Rule 8.

Ball in play

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

- it rebounds off the goal post, crossbar, corner flag post and remains in the field of play
- It touches a match official but does not change direction or possession.

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 goal posts 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 1(2), meters.

Rule 11- 0ffside-there are no offsides 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
attempts to strikes 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 occurred
- If the defending team commits an offence within their own goal area, a corner kick will be awarded to the opposing team

Referees should not issue cautions or red cards to players in Mini soccer. If a player is playing rough, 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 strikes or is unable to control themselves will sit for the remainder of the game.

Goalkeepers:

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

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 and they pick it up again.

- For these two offences by the Goalkeeper a corner kick will be awarded to the non-offending team.

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 moves unless the Retreat Line Rule is in effect
- If a free kick is kicked directly into the opponent's goal, a goal kick will be awarded.
- If a free kick is kicked directly into the team's own goal, a corner kcik will be awarded.
- All opponents must remain at least 6 metres from the ball, unless the Retreat Line Rule is in effect.
- If a player takes too long to take the free kick, the free kick will be given to the non offending team. If it was in the goal area it will be a corner kick to the non-offending team.

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

- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line (see Law 8 – The Start and 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- The ball Out of Play: Touch Line

A kick in or dribble-in as described in Rule 8 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 or on the ground.

The kick in or dribble-in

- Is taken at the point where the ball crossed the touch line and left the field of play
- can be taken quickly provided the requirements of Rule 8 are met.

Rule 16- Goal Kick

- A goal kick is awarded when the ball fully crosses the goal line and was last touched by a member of the attacking team.
- The kick may be taken anywhere in the goal area.
- The ball is in play as per Rule 8 (Retreat Line Rule)
- All opponents must be beyond the Retreat Line until the ball is in play as per Rule 8- The Retreat Line.
- A goal may not be scored directly from a goal kick or dribble-in

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.
- A corner kick will also be awarded if the goalkeeper does not release the ball within 8 seconds from their hands, after making a save
- The kick may be taken from any point in the corner arc, or within 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 moves.
- 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.