

Virginia Soccer Association Laws of the Game

Except where noted below, all Virginia Soccer Association Recreational League games will abide by USSE Laws of the Game. SFL standards are provided for guidance only and if there is a conflict, rules promulgated directly by SFL shall be enforced.

These laws were approved by the VSA Board of Directors in August 2015 and updated prior to the Spring 2017 season, unless modified by the Board, shall be in force beginning with the Fall 2015 season.

Law 1 – The Field of Play

All matches are played at James Long Park in Haymarket, VA. U12 and below games are played on age appropriate field sizes.

Both teams and coaches will be on one side of the field with parents and other bystanders on the other side of the field. One team shall be on either side of midfield and their parents shall be on the opposite side of the field on the same side of the midfield line. Team officials such as the team manager or designated snack provider may also be on the side of the field with the team if they are fulfilling their official duties. A team may have no more than 2 assistant coaches for each game.

For each game, a home team shall be designated on the schedule. The home team of the first and last game of the day on each field, is responsible for placing and returning corner flags for their field as appropriate. Corner flags are kept in the shed behind the permanent restroom for grass fields and in the storage pod for turf fields.

The referee shall ensure that all goals are securely anchored. The referee will not allow play to begin if a goal is not securely anchored or any other unsafe condition exists.

Law 2 – The Ball

The home team is responsible for providing the game ball.

Age Group	Ball Size
U8 and below	3
U10/U12	4
U13 and above	5

Law 3 – The Number of Players

Age	# of players	Goalies	Coaches allowed on Field
U5/U6	4	No	1
U8	5	No	No
U10	7	Yes	No
U12	8	Yes	No
U13 and Up	11	Yes	No

All age groups use unlimited substitutions with substitutions allowed at any stoppage in play; however, the referee may disallow a substitution if he feels it is being done for unsporting reasons.

The recommended minimum number of players to begin a game is 4 for U8/6/5 and 5 for U10/U12. A coach may elect to play with less than the recommended minimum number of players but shall not be forced to do so. If a team has less than the maximum (as adjusted due to any misconduct) number of players at any point during or prior to the match, the opposing coach may elect to 'loan' a player or players to the undermanned team. All team officials are to bear in mind that the goals of the recreational program are developmental, and all decisions should be based on what best supports these goals for the players of both teams.

For U8 and below, an offensive style of play is strongly encouraged and in normal circumstances, defensive players shall push up the field as appropriate when their team is in possession of the ball. At these age levels, goalkeepers are not used. No defensive player should 'camp out' in front of the goal if he or she is not defending an opposition player or 'set piece.'

One coach is allowed on the field during play for U5 and U6 age groups. Neither coach shall enter the penalty area while the ball is in play.

Law 4 – The Player's Equipment

VSA will abide by the rules of all sanctioning bodies governing acceptable player equipment. For clarification's sake, the following guidelines have been provided. Specific policies are available from the Director of Recreation.

Religious jewelry or other adornments may only be worn if required by their religion and determined to be safe by the match referee. If the player uses the item in an unsafe manor, the player may be asked to remove the item, leave the field until the issue is corrected or ejected from the match as appropriate. The same rules shall be followed for medical alert jewelry. Jewelry worn under this policy must be secured to the body with tape or another means. Unless deemed to be unsafe by the referee, headscarves and religiously required turbans are specifically allowed.

Under no circumstance shall a player be permitted to play while wearing earrings. Per medical guidance, there is no danger in the piercing 'closing' over the course of a game. Because of this, the risks inherent to allowing hard/metal objects in a sporting environment outweigh the benefits of allowing them to be worn.

A player may not remain on the field with an open wound or bodily fluids evident on their uniform. Any player who leaves the field for this reason may reenter the field once the wound has been closed and/or the uniform has been sanitized. Prior to reentering the field, the player must gain permission from the referee who shall verify that the issue has been resolved.

Law 5 – The Referee

All VSA referees must be certified and current in order to be paid for their services. If no referee is present for a recreational game and both coaches agree that an individual is otherwise qualified, a non-certified or non-current referee may fulfill the duties of the referee on a volunteer basis.

The referee shall ensure that all goals are securely anchored. The referee will not allow play to begin if a goal is not securely anchored or any other unsafe condition exists.

All officials are expected to wear a USSF approved uniform including the current year's patch for all matches with the following exceptions. Referees are expected to follow the same guidelines as players regarding the wearing of jewelry and other adornments (e.g., earrings are prohibited).

- For all matches, a referee may wear a solid black baseball style hat with no more than a white manufacturer's logo.
- Experienced referees are expected to have a full uniform available for every game; however, that is not a realistic expectation for a brand new referee. To that end, newer referees shall at a minimum wear an approved shirt, black shorts, black socks (pulled all the way up) and primarily black shoes.
- In the event that a game is played in colder temperatures, a referee may wear a light jacket in a color that matches any official referee jersey color. They may also wear long black athletic pants and black gloves if necessary.

With the following modifications the duties and responsibilities of the referee are as assigned in the FIFA Laws of the Game:

For U8 and below games, in lieu of issuing a card, the referee should ask for a player to be substituted so that the coach may take corrective action. Except in the rare circumstance of repeated play that is likely to injure another player or blatantly violent conduct, a player substituted for this reason shall be allowed to reenter the match.

Referees are not required to blow the whistle for each stoppage of play; however, they must clearly indicate the reason for stoppage and the restart to players and coaches. This can be done through a combination of whistling, verbal and visual cues. It should be noted that most players at younger levels will not be familiar with most hand signals so it is important to use additional means of communication.

At no time shall a referee alter these Laws for 'training' purposes. The referee may however offer limited advice on an instructional basis.

In addition to the standing requirement to conduct pre-game, halftime, and post-game conferences, the center referee shall provide developmental guidance to assistant referees as appropriate.

Referees shall complete game reports within 24 hours of the conclusion of a match. For matches where score is not officially kept, a score of 1:1 may be recorded. Contact the Director of Referees or Referee Assignor for guidance on completing game reports. Game reports shall include relevant details on all conduct or disciplinary actions taken by the official before, during or after the match.

Since no score is kept, the decision of the referee is final and protests are not allowed. However, after the match, constructive feedback related to officiating is encouraged. Compliments or complaints regarding VSA recreational officiating should be directed to referees@vsaonline.org

Referees are responsible to be aware of and enforce all VSA policies with special emphasis on those regarding safety such as (but not limited to) those regarding the playing of games in severe weather conditions.

If a referee is unable to fulfill his assigned duties or feels that doing so will put him at significant risk of injury, he shall notify the referee assignor immediately. If he is unable to contact the referee assignor, he shall contact a VSA board/staff member if available. If he is unable to contact any of the available personnel, he shall make an effort to ensure that his duties are fulfilled by another qualified referee and notify the Referee Assignor and Director of Referees as soon as possible. Any voice mail or email left more than 12 hours prior to game time shall be considered sufficient notification. Within 12 hours of game time, a phone call should be made to the assignor and leaving a voicemail is satisfactory. Within one hour of the game, if you are unable to contact the assignor directly, please call the Director of Referees whose number will be disseminated directly to referees.

Law 6 – The Assistant Referee

Where applicable, a senior official fulfilling the role of Assistant Referee shall provide guidance to a junior referee as appropriate.

Law 7

The following table lists the length of each half for each age group. Games shall consist of two equal halves with a five minute halftime. With the exception of SFL tournament games, there is no overtime. See SFL Tournament rules for specifics on overtime.

U5: 15 minute halves	U12: 25 minute halves
U6: 18 minute halves	U13 SFL: 35 minute halves
U8: 20 minute halves	U14 SFL: 35 minute halves
U10: 24 minute halves	U16 & U19 SFL: 40 minute halves

If a game is delayed more than 15 minutes, the referee shall notify the referee assignor who shall coordinate any schedule adjustments with the VSA registrar. In the absence of further guidance, split remaining time into two equal halves and make every effort to end the match on time.

Law 8

At age group divisions U12 and younger, whenever the ball strikes a player in the head, play is stopped. The proper restart depends upon whether the player deliberately played the ball with his or

her head. If deliberate, the proper restart is an indirect free kick to the opposing team. If this occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. If the play by the head is deemed inadvertent, then the proper restart is a dropped ball. Note that VSA applies this rule to recreational matches at the U12 level and below. Travel leagues in general apply the rule to U11 and below.

Since VSA does not record scores for recreational matches and safety is the primary concern, it is critical that the referee stop play immediately upon contact between the players head and the ball. FOR ALL VSA RECREATIONAL MATCHES, PLAY MUST BE STOPPED IMMEDIATELY. THE REFEREE SHALL NOT APPLY ADVANTAGE.

This is considered an administrative violation and not a foul, so persistent infringement and denial of a goal scoring opportunity are not a factor. However, if a player consistently violates the rule and intentionally heads the ball, the referee should include it in their game report.

Laws 9-10

Except where stated otherwise, FIFA Laws of the Game shall be used as written.

Referees shall use their best judgment when deciding whether or not a restart has been infringed upon; and the age and level of play shall be considered.

For a kick-in, the ball shall be judged to be in play when the ball has been legally kicked and the whole ball has crossed over the touchline.

Law 11 - Offside

Offside shall only apply to age levels U10 and above.

Law 12 – Fouls and Misconduct

For U8 and below, there will be no penalty kicks. For any infringement that would normally result in a penalty kick, the team that did not commit the infraction shall be awarded a direct free kick that shall be taken from any point on the edge of the penalty area closest to the mid-field line.

Slide tackling is prohibited for U8 and below age levels, and the restart is a direct free kick.

Law 13 – Free Kicks

For all games played on a small sided field, the minimum distance from a free kick (or other non-throw in restart), shall be shortened to four yards.

For U8 and below, all free kicks are direct.

Law 14 – The Penalty Kick

As previously mentioned, there are no penalty kicks for U8 and below games.

For all other games, the referee shall check the penalty spot prior to the match. In general, any penalty kick shall be taken from the spot as marked. There are two exceptions:

- If there is no penalty spot marked or the mark is severely misplaced, the referee shall notify both coaches prior to the start of play and if a penalty is awarded, it shall be taken from a distance midway between the edge of the goal box and the penalty area directly in front of the middle of the goal.
- If the penalty spots are marked at unequal distances from the goal, the referee shall notify both coaches and ensure that any penalty kicks are taken from approximately the same distance from goal.

Law 15 – The Throw-In

U10 and above will use USSF laws of the game for throw-ins.

U8 and below shall use a kick/dribble-in in lieu of a throw-in.

- The ball shall be placed on or behind the touchline within one yard of where it crossed the touchline.
- The player taking the restart may either kick or dribble the ball into play.
- No goal may be scored until the ball has been touched by any player after it has been legally put into play. If, after being legally put into play, the ball crosses the goal line and no goal is scored, a goal kick or corner kick shall be awarded based on who last touched the ball.
- If any player other than the kicker touches the ball prior to it being in play, the restart shall be retaken unless the referee judges the infraction to be trifling.

Law 16 – The Goal Kick

For U8 and below, on a goal kick, all players on the non-kicking team must be on their own defensive half until the ball has been kicked. They may cross midfield after the ball has been kicked but shall not touch the ball until it is outside of the penalty area.

Particularly for U5/U6 matches, referees shall use their judgment as to whether or not to require a re-kick for balls that are touched by the kicking team prior to leaving the box. All players regardless of ability are encouraged to be allowed to take goal kicks, and the referee should not interrupt game flow for trifling infractions of this law.

Law 17 – The Corner Kick

No changes unless otherwise listed elsewhere in this document.