

Watertown Park & Recreation Department
514 South First Street
Watertown, WI 53094
920-262-8080

WATERTOWN PARK & RECREATION DEPARTMENT SOCCER PARENTS GUIDE

Welcome to Watertown Park & Recreation Department Soccer:

This parents' guide is designed to provide you with much of the important information you and your children will need to have an enjoyable experience. It is intended to answer many of your questions and to give you an insight into who we are and how we operate. We suggest you save this guide and put it in a convenient location for future reference.

The Watertown Park & Recreation Department Soccer program is an all-volunteer organization that depends upon the participation of all parents at all levels. With over 350 players and 30+ teams, we depend on parents just like you to coach our children, referee our games and keep the soccer program running smoothly for the enjoyment of all children. We ask for your support, and we know that if you get involved, you and your children will benefit far beyond your expectations.

Again, welcome and thank you for being part of the Watertown Park & Recreation Department's soccer program!

How to be a Soccer Parent

Relax and Prepare to Have Fun!

- Kids love soccer because it is FUN!
- From an early age, every child loves to play with a ball. Soccer is just playing with the ball, except with others and with a few simple rules. Soccer is having FUN!
- The rules at the basic level are: the ball is shared with your teammates; the ball is kept away from your opponents; everyone has to "play nice," every child gets their time with the ball and everyone has FUN!

Basic Equipment for Soccer Parents

- Comfortable lawn chair – you are going to be spending a lot of time sitting in that chair watching youth soccer players having FUN!
- Comfortable clothing – you will be out in the sun, the rain, the heat and the cold. Dress comfortably so you can sit in that chair and watch youth soccer players having FUN!
- A sense of humor and joy at watching youth soccer players having FUN!

How to be Supportive Soccer Parents

- Give consistent encouragement and support to their children regardless of the degree of success, the level of skill or time on the field.
- Stress the importance of respect of coaches through discussions with your children and highlight the critical nature of contributing to the team and its success.
- Serve as role models, see the "big picture" and support all programs and all players.
- Leave coaching to coaches and do not criticize coaching strategies or team performance.
- Avoid putting pressure on children about playing time and performance.

Four Emotional Needs of Players (*Children have 4 basic needs in organized sports*).

1. To play without unhealthy pressure to win imposed by parents and coaches.
2. To be treated like children, not miniature professionals.
3. Adult role models whose sportsmanlike behavior helps make participation fun.
4. To play without adult-imposed pressure for financial gain inspired by professional or big-time collegiate sports.

Why do Players Play?

- To have fun.
- To be with their friends.
- To make new friends.
- To improve and learn.
- To feel good.
- To wear the stuff.



Six Guidelines for Soccer Parents

- Cheer
- Relax and let them play
- Yelling directions = distractions
- Remember, they are YOUR genes
- Have reasonable expectations
- Meet with the coaches

“Adult spectators, coaches and league administrators are guests at the children’s games. We are guests because if no adult attended, our hosts, the children could still have a game.” - Douglas E. Abrams, University of Missouri-Columbia School of Law.

Four Red Flags for Parents

- Living out dreams – a parent who is continuing to live personal athletic dreams through their child has not released their child to the game.
- Too involved – if a parent tends to share in the credit when the child has done well in sports or has been victorious, the parent is too involved.
- Trying too hard – if a parent is trying to continue to coach their child when the child probably know more about the game than the parent does, they have not released the youth athletic.
- Too serious – a parent should realize that they are taking everything too seriously and have not released the child to the activity when the parent
 - is nervous before his/her child’s game.
 - has a difficult time bouncing back when the players team suffers a defeat.
 - makes mental notes during a game so they can give their child advice at the conclusion of the game.
 - becomes verbally critical of an official.

“Teaching character through sport: developing a positive coaching legacy,” – Bruce Brown.

Being a Good Soccer Parent

- Encourage your child, regardless of their degree of success or level of skill.
- Ensure a balance in your student athlete’s life, encouraging participation in multiple sports and activities while placing academics first.
- Emphasize enjoyment, development of skills and team play as the cornerstones of your child’s early sports experiences.

- Leave coaching to coaches and avoid placing too much pressure on your youngster about playing time and performance.
- Be realistic about your child's future in sports, recognizing that only a select few earn a college scholarship, compete in the Olympics or sign a professional contract.
- Be there when your child looks to the sidelines for a positive role model.

What Can I Expect?

- Children differ greatly due to age, gender and maturity.
- Soccer is "the game for all kids" and that means there will be all types of kids playing together.
- Most volunteer directed programs are conducted by parents and coaches who know they will be involved for only a few years while their own children are involved.
- 85% of volunteer directed youth sports are coached by a parent with a child on the team.
- Women coach only 20% of the 5 to 14 year olds on non-school-affiliated teams.
- Less than 10% of the volunteer coaches in the United States had any type coaching education.

You Will Be Surprised!

- Young players cry immediately when something is hurt. Some cry even when something is not hurt.
- Somebody will come off the field in need of a toilet. Somebody will stay on the field in need of a toilet (U8).
- A model rocket that is launched from a nearby field will get 99% of the player attention.
- Some players will wear their uniform to bed, to school and everywhere else.
- A player will forget to go on the field; another will forget to go off.
- Players will stop and laugh if the referee gets hit in the backside with the ball during the game – they are not competing, they are having fun!
- If you drive someone else's child to a game, they may not remember after the game to look for you to get home.
- Ground squirrels running out of their hole in the middle of the field will stop a game.

"Most children play to have fun and be with their friends. They do not play to entertain the adults, boost the adults' egos or improve the family's social status in the community," – Abrams, 2002

What is a "Practice"? Warm Up

- Enthusiastically sets the tone for fun.
- The warm-up prepares the mind and body for upcoming activities.
- Young players need very little stretching, but it is good habit for them to begin at an early age.
- Warm-ups encourage each player to use a ball and often incorporate games and exercises that emphasize a lot of touches and dribbling.

Individual Activities

- Fun filled activities that emphasize technical development. Remember this is the discovery age; lots of ball contact.
- Activities are appropriate for the skills and ages of the players.
- The coach should be conducting a number of short and different activities.
- Remember a child's attention span is limited.

Group Activities

- Group games are an extension of the individual activity.
- Groups are small to allow for the most ball contact and players are involved in the game as much as possible, so they are not standing around in lines awaiting their turn.

“The Game”

- Designed to familiarize the players with the varying aspects of the game. Kids want to play and have fun. After a brief explanation and/or demonstration quickly get the players playing. Small-sided games (example: 4v4) to help keep everyone involved. Activities are organized to progress into controlled scrimmages and then into an open scrimmage.
- Remember, the kids signed up to play soccer.

Teaching Sportsmanship:

Here are six things you can do to show your child (and other parents) what being “a good sport” means:

1. Cheer for all the children, even those on the other team. What surprising difference it can make on the sidelines and in the stands when parents make an effort to applaud a good effort or a fine play – no matter whom makes it.
2. Talk to parents on the other team; they are not the enemy.
3. Be a parent, not a coach: resist the urge to critique. Children dread their parent going over their performance in detail, pointing out all their mistakes. Sometimes just being there shows your children what being a good parent is all about. Leave the coaching to the coaches: this includes motivating, psyching your child for practice, after game critiquing, setting goals, requiring additional training, etc.
4. Thank the officials – Find a few moments to compliment the officials for their hard work after a game (especially if your child’s team loses) you will be rewarded with the pleasure of seeing a surprise smile in return.
5. Keep soccer in its proper perspective: Soccer should not be larger than life to you. If your child’s performance produces strong emotions in you, suppress them. Remember your relationship will continue with your children long after their youth soccer days are over. Keep your goals and needs separate from your child’s experience.
6. Have fun: That is what the children are trying to do!

✚ *“Other reasons kids love video games so much is that they can each pick their own level of challenge.”*
– Lenny Wiersma, Center for the Advancement of Responsible Youth Sports.

✚ *“Youth sports provide an ideal avenue for early exposure to setback and allows supportive adults to offer guidance with the stakes not nearly as high as they will be sometimes later on in life,”* – Abrams
What is FUN for them is more important than what is FUN for you!

✚ **“SUMMARY OF THE GAME”** *Two opposing teams try to get a ball between the other’s goal post on a rectangular field, players can use any part of their body to propel the ball with the exception of their hands and arms (but the goalkeeper can use their hands). The team with the most goals at the end of a given time period is the winner.*

✚ By not keeping score (U5-U8) we are emphasizing learning team work – developing skills – winning is not the most important thing – having fun.

GAME DAY

Sideline Behavior

- Children want cheerleaders to applaud their success, not adults yelling instructions. Think of the soccer field as a playground and not as a sports venue.
- What is appropriate at a sport stadium with adult athletes is NOT appropriate for young children at play.
- Focus on the process of playing and not the outcome.

“When watching a youth sports game, if you can’t carry on a normal conversation with the person next to you then you’re probably paying too much attention to the game.” Bigelow, Moroney & Hall, 2001.

Kids Don’t Care Who Wins

“Asked what embarrasses them most, every single child surveyed listed parents yelling plays or instructions from the sideline or stands.” - Momsteam.com

NOT Winning or Losing

- Don’t keep score; the kids don’t regard it as that important.
- Don’t care who wins or loses, they are having fun and that is the objective.

What about Referees?

- Everyone sees the play differently.
- The main goal of the referee is to make the game safe and FUN for the children.
- Being a referee is not as easy as it appears.

There is Another Coach on the Field for Small-Sided Games

- Remember, many referees are brothers and sisters of soccer players or soccer players themselves. Others are fellow parents trying to just help youth soccer players have FUN!
- Recognize that the referee is doing their best. It may not be what you saw, but the goal is to let the game be played so that children can have FUN!
- Referees deserve respect and support too!
- Helping the referee to call the trip or foul only confuses children.
- Disagreeing hurts your child’s respect for the referee, and may hurt the view of the referee towards your child’s team.
- Criticism causes referees to quit rather than become better. Many referees quit due to being yelled at by parents.
- As you cheer for the players, cheer for the referee, also.

“Parents and coaches need to remember that if officials can hear profanity and other verbal abuse directed at them when a call goes against the team, the children on the field can also hear it,” – Abrams, 2002.

Learn the Game Together:

Be as helpful, understanding and patient as you are when your child is learning other skills in life. You are your child’s first and most influential teacher/coach. At the field-when the coach arrives and takes charge, assume the role of spectator and...

Remain Behind the Spectator Line: (unless otherwise requested by the coach or manager).

Let Coaches Coach and Referees Ref:

Sideline instruction may conflict with what the coach has taught and may confuse the players. Your child mirrors your actions and reactions, so set a good example. If you want to raise a good sport, be a good sport. If you feel you cannot be an exemplary spectator, consider not attending.

After the Game: Have your child remain with the coach and the team for any post-game routines.

Remember that body language and voice inflection can send both positive and negative messages. Help your child realize that the importance of playing soccer is **participation, learning, developing and having FUN!**

The Ride Home

- Never reward what YOU perceive as success.
- Never punish what YOU perceive as failure.
- Don't evaluate your child's performance; they are playing to have fun, not to earn a grade! If they had fun, the day was a success.
- Meet your child's needs: remember the questions you asked and the answers you got as to why your child is playing soccer.

"The youngsters are a captive audience in the back seat on the way home, but they deserve to ride in peace without being unwilling victims of their parents' station wagon syndrome," – Abrams, 2002.

Good Questions on the Way Home

"Parents need to understand that the period following practice and competition is a crucial time for a young athlete. It's important they be given the freedom to process in on their own," – Siby, 2002.

- Did you have fun today?
- What did you think you did well today?
- Did you learn any new moves? If you are greeted with the sound of silence, give off the gentle sounds of approval, be sure they know you are there for them.

"If parents receive one-word answers or silence, they can be sure that their child feels trapped with no way out," – Silby, 2002.

DO:

- Adopt an attitude of support and caring.
- Be positive and calm.
- Point out areas of improvement.
- Let the child lead the conversation.
- Stress effort made rather than results.



DON'T

- Be disappointed if your child does not want to talk about the game.
- Be negative.
- Brag.
- Be critical.
- Make up excuses.



Simplified Rules of Soccer

We encourage our members to become familiar with the rules of soccer. The following is intended to be only a summary of the more important points. Many of these rules do not apply in the U6/U8 Division, which have a special set of rules and procedures.

Goalkeeper: Wears a different colored jersey than teammates. The goalkeeper is the only player who may play the ball with the hands, but only inside their own penalty area. The goalkeeper may not take more than 6 seconds to release the ball after they have taken control of the ball.

Ball Out of Play: All of the ball must go COMPLETELY past the OUTSIDE EDGE of the touch line (sideline) or the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, to be out of play.

Scoring a Goal: The entire ball must go completely past all of the goal line into the goal.

Throw In: When the entire ball crosses over the outside of the touch line play stops and a Throw In is awarded to the opposing team at the spot the ball went out. The player taking the Throw In must have both feet on the ground BEHIND or ON TOP OF the touch line and deliver the ball from behind the head with both hands. In U6/U8 the players kick the ball to resume play, instead of throwing the ball in.

Corner Kick: When the entire ball crosses over the end line without scoring a goal and is last touched by a defending player, play is restarted by an attacking player taking a kick from the corner area nearest where the ball went over the end line.

Goal Kick: When the entire ball crosses over the end line without scoring a goal and is last touched by an attacking player, play is restarted by a defending player taking a kick from anywhere inside the defending goal area.

Offside Penalty: A player is in an OFFSIDE POSITION (but not necessarily guilty of an offside offense) if

1. They are ahead of the ball, and
2. They are in the opponent's half of the field, and
3. There are fewer than two opponents ahead of them.

There is an offside offence only if, in the opinion of the Referee, a player in an offside position participates in the play, interferes with an opponent, or otherwise tries to take advantage of their offside position. The foul is judged at the time the ball is kicked, not when received. An indirect free kick is awarded to the other team when an offside offense occurs. This is probably the most frequently misunderstood rule in youth soccer – for more clarity, come to the Referee Certification Course!

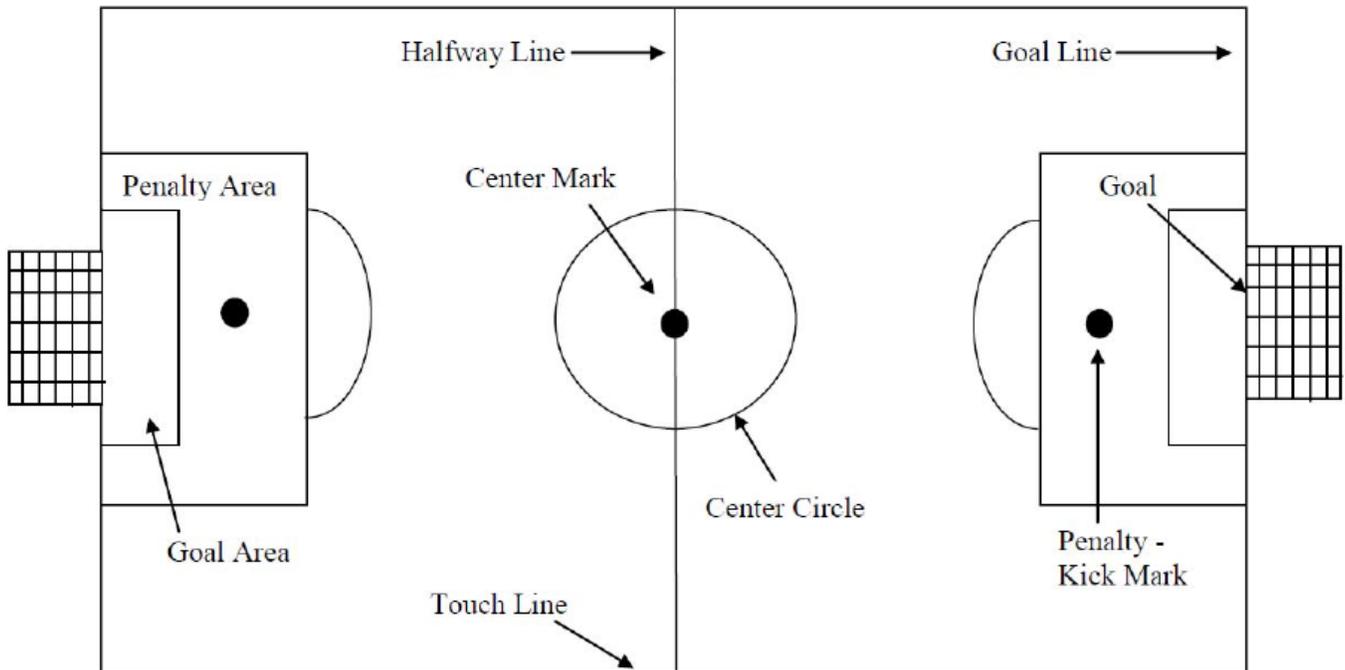
Indirect Free Kick: An indirect Free Kick, from which a goal may not be directly scored, is awarded to the opposing team for the following non-penal fouls;

- Playing in a dangerous way or putting oneself into a dangerous position.
- Impeding the progress of an opponent trying to get to the ball.
- Preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball into play.
- Goalkeeper delaying the game.

JEWELRY, WATCHES, CASTS, KNIT BRACELETS, EARRINGS, ETC.

For safety reasons, these and other adornments deemed unsafe by the Referee are not allowed during games.

FIELD AREA AND MARKINGS



Why Small Sided Game?

What does “small sided games” mean? These are soccer game with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that involve the players more because fewer players are sharing one ball. All ages can play “small sided games,” but it has a definite developmental impact on our younger soccer players.

Here are some reasons why we believe, as soccer coaches, administrators and parents we must guarantee our young soccer players play small sided games:

1. Because we want our young soccer players to touch the soccer ball more often and become more skillful with it (individual technical development).
2. Because we want our young soccer player to make more, less complicated decisions during the game! (Tactical development).
3. Because we want our young soccer player to be more physically efficient in the field space they are playing in. (Reduced field size).
4. Because we want our young soccer players to have more individual teaching time with the coach! Fewer players on the field and fewer players on the team will guarantee this. (Need to feel important).
5. Because we want our young soccer players to have more, involved playing time in the game. (More opportunity to solve problems that only the game presents).
6. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunity to play on both sides of the ball. (More exposure to attacking and defending situations).
7. Because we want our young soccer players to have more opportunities to score goals. (Pure excitement)!

These are the reasons why we adults must foster “Small Sided Games” in our youth soccer programs. The small sided environment is a developmentally appropriate environment for our young soccer players. It’s a FUN environment that focuses on the young soccer player. IT JUST MAKES SENSE, DOESN’T IT?

Glossary

Carry – To dribble the ball down the field, maintaining possession while avoiding opposing players.

Center Circle – A circle in the center of the field, 10 yards in radius; at the kick off, the defensive team must be positioned outside of this circle.

Center the Ball – To pass the ball from a wide position into the penalty area, in hope of setting up a shot on goal.

Cross the Ball – To pass the ball across the face of the opponent's goal.

Far Post/Back Post – The goal post that is farthest from where the ball is being played.

Feint – A deceptive movement applied with or without the ball.

Goal – The goal is a vertical rectangle 8 feet high and 8 yards wide, as defined by the two upright posts and the crossbar. A ball that completely crosses the goal line between the posts and below the crossbar is a goal, or point.

Goal Area – The small box 6 yards out from the goal line. Goal kicks are taken from within this box.

Goal Line – The lines marking the ends of the field. If the ball crosses this line, one of three things results: 1. If the ball is in the net, a goal is scored; 2. If the ball is kicked or headed out of play over a goal line by an offensive player, a goal kick is taken by the defensive team; 3. If the ball is kicked or headed over the goal line by a defensive player, a corner kick is taken by the offensive team.

Goal Side – A defender's position in which they are in between the ball and the goal; if a defender is not goal side of the approaching attacker, the attacker has an open shot on the goal.

Halfway Line – The line at midfield is used to line up the teams for the kick off, and also indicates when a player may be in an offside position (a player cannot be offside on their side the field).

Mark – A defensive player marks an opposing player by staying close to the other player to stop them from getting the ball. This is done by staying on the goal side (i.e. between the opposing player and the goal being defended).

Move to Open Space – Move away from all other players to an open space so that you might receive a pass. The player without the ball creates the opportunity for a teammate to pass the ball.

Near Post/Front Post – The goal post that is nearer to where the ball is being played. The goalkeeper often places a defender at the near post for a corner kick.

Overlap – To run past a player on their "outside" shoulder so that you might receive a pass in the open space. A halfback might overlap the wing (forward), and continue on the attack after receiving a pass.

Penalty Area – The penalty area is an area at each end of the field measuring 44 yards wide and 18 yards deep. It is centered on the goal, such that the distance from each goal post to outer edge of the penalty area 18 yards. Goalkeepers may use their hands while within the penalty area. A penalty foul (direct free kick) committed within the penalty area allows the fouled team to attempt a penalty kick.

Screen – Maintain possession and protect the ball by keeping the body between the ball and an opponent.

Settle the Ball – To receive and control a ball that is bouncing, and settle it to the ground in order to pass, dribble or shoot. Various traps are used to settle the ball.

Show Yourself – If there is a defender between you and your teammate with the ball, you should move to one side or the other to show yourself, to let your teammate see you so that the ball can be clearly passed to you. This is important to help your goalkeeper clear the ball from the goal area and to give your fullback a target when a goal kick is being taken.

Square It or Square Ball – To play the ball to one side rather than up the field. A center halfback might square the ball to one of the outside halfbacks.

Switch – To take the ball that is played on one side of the field and switch it over to the other side. This is often done by goalkeepers, after they save a shot from one side. Other players will find themselves in a position to switch the ball as well. The idea is to move the ball away from concentrated defenders.

Through Ball – To play the ball up the middle of the field for a fast offensive player who has a chance to beat the defense one-on-one. (The start of a break away).

Time – When a coach or teammate tells the player with the ball "time," it means that the player does not have to make a quick play, but has time to settle the ball, and to look around for another teammate.

Touch Line – The lines on each side of the field. If the ball goes out of play completely over the touch line, it is returned to play by a throw in. A player may cross the touch line to play a ball that has not yet completely crossed the line.

Credit:

Terrell Soccer Parents Guide (http://assets.ngin.com/attachments/document/0012/7323/parents_guide.pdf)