

South Portland Parks & Recreation

Coaches Meeting

2026 Fall Soccer League

Program Objectives



Safe & Fun Experience

To provide a safe, positive, and fun soccer experience for all participating children.



Pressure-Free Play

Allowing players to participate in an environment without unnecessary pressure from parents or coaches.



Skill & Character

Designed to build essential soccer skills while fostering strong, positive sportsmanship among players.

Cancellation Procedure



Game Authority

No Coach Authority: Coaches DO NOT have the authority to cancel games – this is left up to Community Programs or the host site.

Friday Decisions: Decision may be made late Friday afternoon. All participants will receive an email, but follow up with your team.



Grades 5/6 Division

Away Games: Canceling in South Portland does not mean your AWAY game is canceled. Hosting communities will contact the coordinator.

Home Games: If canceled, our department calls the away team. Coaches do not have to make that call.



Weekday Practices

Coach's Decision: Coaches decide to cancel practice if fields are too wet or the forecast predicts unsafe playing conditions.

Field Closures: If closed by the department, coaches notified by 2:00 p.m. Coach must notify all players.

League Guidelines & Information



Divisions & Fields

Div I & II (Grades 1-4): Games on Saturdays at Wainwright. Div I is coach-officiated; coaches allowed on field.

Div III (Grades 5-6): Home at Wainwright, away at surrounding towns. Referees officiate (coaches on sidelines).

Format: Gender & grade-based. Teams switch goals at half.



Equipment & Safety

Required Gear: Shin-guards and water are mandatory for games and practices. Cleats must be rubber or sneakers (no metal cleats).

Safety Limits: No jewelry allowed (medical medals must be taped). Players in hard casts cannot participate.

Weather: Cancelled for heavy rain or unsafe field conditions.



Coaching & Conduct

Fair Play: All active players must play at least 50% of the game. Unsportsmanlike conduct results in immediate removal.

Compliance: Coaches must pass background checks and be registered. Roster edits are only processed by the Recreation Dept.

Officials: Coaches must not question officials during the game. No playoffs are held.

League Rules: Division I & II



Format & Playtime

Match Structure: Played in 2x 20-minute running halves with a 5-minute break.

Division I (Grades 1/2): 6v6 format on smaller fields. Goalies are not used (coaches discouraged from placing defenders in goal).

Division II (Grades 3/4): 7v7 with goalie. Flexible adjustments allowed if short.



Gameplay & Flow

Substitutions: Allowed on throw-ins (either team), after goals, timeouts, or mid-half.

Timeouts & Clock: 1 timeout per team/half (called out-of-play). Clock stops only for injuries.

Restrictions: Heading is prohibited. Offsides are not called (cherry picking discouraged). No penalty kicks.



Restarts & Kicks

Throw-ins: Infractions result in instruction and a retake. Div I emphasizes teaching.

Indirect Kicks: All infractions result in an indirect kick. Opponents must stand 7 yards back.

Goal Kicks: Opponents must drop back to their own half of the field.

Goalkeeper (Div II): Cannot handle backpasses from defenders (results in indirect kick).

League Rules: Division III (Grades 5/6)



Format & Playtime

Match Structure: Played 9v9 (including goalie) with 2× 25-minute running halves and a 5-minute break.

Fair Play: Each player must play a minimum of 25 minutes per game.

Field & Goals: Played on youth-sized fields (40-50 yds wide, 70-80 yds long) with goals max 7'H x 21'W.



Gameplay & Cards

Substitutions: Allowed during dead balls (out of bounds/goals). The clock does not stop.

Offsides & Safety: Offsides will be called. Slide tackling and heading are strictly prohibited.

Conduct Cards: Yellow card requires brief exit. Red card requires permanent exit, short-handed team play, and next-game suspension.



Restarts & Kicks

Indirect Kicks: All infractions result in an indirect kick. There are no direct kicks allowed during games.

Goal Kicks: Opposing players must drop back to the Half Field line.

Goalie Gear: Goalies are required to wear a shirt or pinnie that is a different color from teammates.

Tips for Parents of Athletes



Positive Support

Support Everyone: Applaud good plays by your team and by members of the opposing team.

Stay Positive: Keep the overall energy constructive. Always focus on positive reinforcement.



Sportsmanship

Gracious Winners: Encourage your child to be gracious in victory. Over-celebrating can be seen as unsportsmanlike.

Learn from Defeat: Help your child turn defeat into victory by working toward personal improvement.



Fun & Growth

Prioritize Play: Focus entirely on fun and participation rather than stressing over winning or losing.

Ask the Question: Always ask your child if they had fun as the very first question after their games.

Spectator & Coach Conduct



Respectful Conduct

Zero Tolerance: No personal, non-performance related comments are tolerated toward anyone.

Youth Officials: Respect official decisions. Remember, many of them are kids themselves!

Removal: Violators will be removed from the field immediately if necessary.



No Side-Coaching

Refrain: Do not give instructions from the sidelines during games or practices.

Confusion: It is confusing for players to hear anyone other than their coach yelling instruction.

Volunteer: If you want to direct players, please volunteer to coach next season!



Set the Example

Kids are Watching: The players are constantly observing the actions and behaviors of parents and coaches.

Sportsmanship: Demonstrate and encourage good sportsmanship, positive behavior, and respect.