



WHEELING PARK DISTRICT RECREATIONAL SOCCER LEAGUE



**2026
Youth Soccer League
Manual**

Wheeling Park District

Dear Parents:

Welcome to the Wheeling Park District Recreational Soccer League. This handout includes information you will need before the start of the season regarding volunteers, coaches, policies, and general rules/guidelines.

Thank you for choosing to participate in our youth athletics program. We hope your season is a successful and memorable experience for both you and your child.

Sincerely,

The Wheeling Park District Staff

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THE WHEELING PARK DISTRICT YOUTH ATHLETIC PHILOSOPHY

Wheeling Park District youth athletic programs are designed to provide healthy recreation in an environment where a child can have fun as well as the opportunity to develop physical skills, teamwork, and sportsmanship through working with others. Competitiveness should come from the game itself and not from emphasis on the score.

Volunteers and Parents

The success of the Wheeling Park District Soccer League depends on the volunteer coaches and the community. The best way to ensure this program is a good experience for your child is to cheer them on at their games and practices.

Volunteer coaches are assigned teams on a first come first serve basis. We only assign two volunteers per team. However, when needed, we can authorize more volunteers on a team. Practice location, time, and frequency are assigned based on volunteer availability.

Volunteers are welcome and needed to ensure the league's success. Volunteers will need to submit to a background check, read the volunteer manual, and complete a volunteer application prior to assisting on the team.

Players and Playing Time

Coaches are expected to play team members who are in good standing at least half of the game. If the coach has players who have missed practices or display discipline problems, the coach may play that team member for less than the required time. Decisions to limit playing time are made by the coach and the League Manager.

Rescheduling Policy

1. Whether it is a practice or a game, if the volunteer coach is unavailable on a given day, it is recommended that another parent step in to assist with the team. Wheeling Park District staff may also step in, depending on availability.
2. If games are canceled due to inclement weather, the League Manager will reschedule games based on field availability.
3. If games are suspended due to inclement weather, the game will be completed (depending on when the game was called) at a time scheduled by the Athletics Recreation Services Manager. Rescheduled dates will be communicated via email.
4. Games that are at halftime or past halftime will not be rescheduled.

Help us keep the fun and enjoyment in the youth athletics program at the Wheeling Park District by taking the emphasis out of winning.

Do's and Don'ts for Players and Parents

Players

- Do have fun.
- Do get to your practices and games on time.
- Do call your coach ahead of time if you can't be there for a game or practice.
- Do be fair and generous to your teammates and your opponents.
- Do stay with your teammates on the sidelines so you are ready when it is your turn to play.

Parents

- Do remember that this is a recreational program; relax at the games and watch your child learn, improve, and have fun.

- Do introduce yourself to your child's coach and offer to help in any way you can. Learn with your child by helping with practice sessions.
- Do cheer the players of both teams in a positive way. There is a big difference between yelling to a child and yelling at them. Yelling to them is okay once in a while, but do not expect results; they are trying to concentrate on the ball, their teammates, their opponents, and the game. Trying to listen to someone on the sidelines is very confusing.
- Do bring your lawn chairs and blankets. However, be sure to place them in a safe and appropriate area. There must be a ten-foot area between audience and field of play that referees will encourage to keep clear. Officials will also request the audience to keep the area behind the goals clear.

Players and Parents

- Don't criticize your teammates, opponents, coaches, or referees.
- Don't argue with the official. Do not expect the referee to see the game through your eyes.
- **Keep in mind that officials are human; they occasionally will make mistakes.**

Inclement Weather Procedure/Sports Hotline

If you are unsure if games or practices are being played on a day/evening when it is raining, following significant rainfall, or temperatures are high or low, please call the **Wheeling Park District Sports Hotline (847) 241-4001 ext. 3**. Please be proactive and call the Hotline if you are unsure about the status of the day's game. To sign up to receive text or email alerts, please visit: <https://www.wheelingparkdistrict.com/rainout-line/> or download the Rainout Line App in the app store on a smartphone and search Wheeling Park District.

Earth Networks Lightning/Thunderstorm Prediction and Warning System

Earth Networks measures the amount of electrical charge in the atmosphere and predicts with a high degree of certainty the probability of a lightning strike within a covered area. The system is intended to warn guests and staff of potential lightning hazards in the area to help prevent lightning-related injuries and deaths. When a lightning-strike hazard is present, Earth Networks' horn-and-strobe system will activate.

There are two (2) distinct signals sent out by Earth Networks:

Red Alert: External warning horns blare for 15 seconds, and strobe lights begin to blink. This signifies a lightning hazard in the area. All outdoor recreation activities should be suspended, and guests and staff should seek appropriate shelter, preferably indoors.

All Clear: External warning horns give three (3) consecutive blasts lasting 3 to 5 seconds each. This means the lightning hazard has left the area, and it is safe to resume normal activities.

Player Uniform

1. Attire

A. What to wear?

- It is important to dress your child properly for soccer while keeping weather conditions in mind. Loose-fitting clothing is recommended to facilitate running. If the weather is hot, don't overdress your child. On cool days, don't forget to send along a jacket and/or sweatshirt/sweatpants.

B. Game Jerseys/Shorts/Socks/Athletic pants

- Kindergarten through 6th grade
 - Two jerseys—yellow and blue—are available for purchase at the Community Recreation Center. All children at these levels are **required to have the league jersey**.
 - Spring weather is inconsistent, so you may consider buying a jersey a size up to wear over a sweatshirt, jacket, etc.

C. Shin guards

- All participants must purchase shin guards to wear at practices and games. Shin guards are worn underneath the tall socks, and their use is **mandatory**. Referees may not allow participants to play without them.

2. Shoes

- It is recommended that participants purchase a pair of soccer cleats; however, gym shoes are acceptable. If practices are inside, gym shoes must be worn.

3. Water bottle

- It is important to send your child with a water bottle, clearly marked with his/her name, to each practice and game.

4. Ball

- Please send your child with his/her own ball, clearly marked with his/her name, to each practice. The correct size balls for each age level are listed below:
 - Kindergarten & 1st/2nd grade – Size 3
 - 3rd/4th and 5th/6th grade – Size 4

5. Smile!

- Send your child with a smile and a “ready to learn” attitude! We hope to create an environment where fun and learning coexist effortlessly.

**WHEELING PARK DISTRICT
YOUTH SOCCER RULES SUMMARY
House League Divisions**

Forfeit Game Policy

If a team cannot field enough players to start a game, the opposing team is expected to share some players to start. If no participants are shared, the game will be forfeited and not rescheduled. All games begin at the scheduled start time.

Sportsmanship Rule

The Sportsmanship Rule dictates that if a team is winning by three (3) goals, the coach in the lead should begin to pull back their players. When up by four (4) goals, the losing team must add a player, and when up by six (6) goals, the winning team must remove a player. Coaches are not allowed to remove the goalie from the field. Referees will be responsible for ensuring that the proper steps are taken in a slaughter situation. This is not optional for either the winning or losing coach.

Head Ban

Grades K through 6th cannot make intentional head contact with the ball. If this occurs, an indirect free kick ensues against the team whose player performed a header. If a goal is scored from a header, the goal is not valid, and a goal kick ensues.

Parent's Sideline Etiquette

1. Avoid 'coaching' from the sideline while watching your child's game.
2. Do not criticize the referee.
3. Focus on the benefits of the game rather than the score.
4. Think when interacting with opposing fans.
5. Don't stress out over the game
6. Save issues and private conversations with the coach for the next day or reach out to the League Manager.

KINDERGARTEN & DIVISION I RULES

K - 2nd grade (4-v-4 or 5v5)

- Duration of the game consists of four (4) 8-minute quarters. Each quarter will be separated by a break. Two-minute breaks between quarters. Each quarter starts with a kickoff, alternating between teams.
- Number of Players on the field – The maximum number of players at any one time is five, and the minimum is three.
- **THERE ARE NO GOALKEEPERS.**
- Playing time – Each player will play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. As long as they maintain good attendance at the season's practices.
- A kick-off may be taken in any direction.
- Ball size – 3.
- Jerseys must be worn during games. (Must purchase at the Community Recreation Center)
- Shin guards are **MANDATORY**.
- Footwear – Gym shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes are acceptable. **No metal spikes.**
- Ball in and out of Play – **The ball must completely cross the line to be out of play.**
- Substitutions – Officials will stop the play for substitutions midway through each quarter.

- No off-sides. Yet “cherry picking” will be discouraged.
- No penalty kicks.
- Throw-ins – Throw-ins are taken from the point where the ball left the field and are completed by the team that did **not** kick the ball out.
- Corner Kicks – To be performed when the ball crosses the goal line.
- Goal Kick – The goal kick will be taken anywhere on the 6-yard line inside the goal box. The opposing team must be behind the midfield line before the goal kick is taken.

DIVISION 2 RULES

3rd and 4th grade (7-v-7)

- Duration of the game consists of four 8 – minute quarters. Two-minute breaks between quarters. Each quarter will start with a kick-off, alternating with each team.
- Number of Players on the field – The maximum number of players at any one time is 7, and the minimum is 5, with the goalie being one of them.
- **There ARE goalkeepers.**
- Playing time – Each player will play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. As long as they maintain good attendance at the season’s practices.
- Ball size – 4.
- Jerseys must be worn during games. (Must purchase at the Community Recreation Center)
- Shin guards are **MANDATORY**.
- Footwear – Gym shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes are acceptable. **No metal spikes.**
- Ball in and out of Play – **The ball must completely cross the line to be out of play.**
- Substitutions – The official will stop the play for substitutions midway through the half. Substitutions can also be made at any other game stoppage. The game clock does not stop for substitutions.
- Penalty kicks will be called at the discretion of the referee.
- Throw-ins – Throw-ins are taken from the point where the ball left the field and are completed by the team that did **not** kick the ball out.
- Corner Kicks – To be performed when the ball crosses the goal line.
- Goal Kick – The goal kick will be taken anywhere on the top line of the goal box. The opposing team must be behind the midfield line before the goal kick is taken.

Division 3 Rules

5th and 6th grade (7v7 or 8v8)

- Duration of the game consists of two 20 – minute halves.
- 5 -minute break between halves. Each half will start with a kick-off, alternating between teams.
- Number of Players on the field – The maximum number of players at any one time is 9, and the minimum is 7, with the goalie being one of them.
- **There ARE goalkeepers.**
- Playing time – Each player will play a minimum of 50% of the total playing time. As long as they maintain good attendance at the season’s practices.
- Ball size – 4.
- Jerseys must be worn during games. (Must purchase at the Community Recreation Center)
- Shin guards are **MANDATORY**.
- Footwear – Gym shoes or soft-cleated soccer shoes are acceptable. **No metal spikes.**
- Ball in and out of Play – **The ball must completely cross the line to be out of play.**

- Substitutions – The official will stop the play for substitutions midway through the half. Substitutions can also be made at any other game stoppage. The game clock does not stop for substitutions.
- Penalty kicks will be called at the discretion of the referee.
- Throw-ins – Throw-ins are taken from the point where the ball left the field and are completed by the team that did **not** kick the ball out.
- Corner Kicks – To be performed when the ball is last touched going out of bounds off the defending team.
- Goal Kick – The goal kick will be taken anywhere on the 6-yard line inside the goal box. The opposing team must be behind the midfield line before the goal kick is taken.

**WHEELING PARK DISTRICT
YOUTH SOCCER
PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

I hereby pledge to provide positive support, care, and encouragement for my child and all children participating in youth sports by adhering to the Parent Code of Conduct in the following ways:

A. I will lead by example through:

Encouraging good sportsmanship and positive support for all coaches, players, opponents, opposing fans, and officials at every game, practice, or other youth sporting event. I understand the importance of setting a good example for my child, as children are influenced by those surrounding them.

B. I will act responsibly and do my best to ensure that:

1. My child gets to practice and games on time. I understand that my child needs to be on time to assure adequate warm-up and preparation. I will assure my child is picked up from all games and practices on time. By doing this, I send a message to my child that he/she is my top priority as showing respect for the coach.
2. I place the emotional and physical well-being of my child ahead of a win at all cost attitude.
3. I will help create an environment that builds a culture where winning is not defined by outcome of competition, but by the individual needs of the children.
4. I understand that children are born with different abilities, and that it is not important how my child compares to others, but that he/she is given the opportunity to display his/her personal best.
5. My child has a positive and fun youth sport experience. I understand that less than 1% of all youth sports participants receive college scholarships and that the number one reason children play sports is to have fun. I understand and will remember that the game is for the players, not the adults, and will keep that in perspective.
6. I will demand a sports environment that is free from tobacco and refrain from its use at all youth sporting events. I understand that every child deserves to play in a healthy and safe environment.

C. I will display appropriate behavior by:

1. Treating each coach, player, opponent, opposing fan, official, or administrator with respect and dignity, and refrain from making negative comments, using profanity, intimidation tactics, and/or inappropriate language toward all in the presence of children. I understand that by voicing negative comments, I can poorly impact my child's motivation and overall experience.

D. Terminal Behavior

1. I understand that violation of the following codes will result in immediate termination of my privilege to coach youth sports and/or continue to attend games and practices.

The Wheeling Park District reserves the right to take appropriate disciplinary action involving any parent/guardian in violation of the code of conduct.

Name: _____ Signed: _____ Date: _____
(Please Print)

**WHEELING PARK DISTRICT
PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT
RESULTS OF VIOLATIONS**

Violations of the **Parent Code of Conduct** will result in written documentation, advisory consultation and possible disciplinary action. The following outlines the disciplinary procedures of the Wheeling Park District:

- **Conduct Codes A and B**

1. Any violation under Codes A and/or B will result in verbal consultation by Park District Staff.
2. Additional violations under Codes A and/or B will result in a formal meeting between Park District Staff and the parent.

- **Conduct Code C**

1. Any violation under Code C will result in a formal meeting between Park District Staff and the parent. Suspension from attending youth sports will accompany.
2. A second violation under Code C will result in termination of that parent's privilege to attend youth sporting activities.