

PLANNING FOR THE SEASON

PARENT ORIENTATION MEETING

All Coaches are encouraged to establish effective lines of communication with the team parents early in the season by holding a parent orientation meeting. This may take the form of a casual discussion in your living room, or it could be combined with a team outing or picnic. Whatever the format, the time you invest will pay dividends for all concerned throughout the season. If a meeting is impossible, then the following information could be put in a letter to parents/players. But, a face-to-face meeting is preferred.

Purpose of a Parent Orientation Meeting

- Enables parents to understand the objectives of the team.
- Allows parents to become acquainted with you, the coach.
- Inform parents about the nature (and inherent risks) of the sport.
- Articulate your expectations of them and of their children.
- Enables you to address any parents' concerns.
- Establishes clear lines of communication between you, parents, and players.
- Allows you to obtain parental support (assistant coaches, team parents, etc.).



Things to Consider When Organizing the Meeting

- Hold it early in the season, preferably before the first team practice.
- Having the players present is optional. However, if they are not present then it is advisable to hold a meeting with your players and clearly explain to them what you explained to the parents.
- Be prepared and be organized to conduct the meeting efficiently.
- Prepare any handouts you would like to distribute, for example:
 - Team roster
 - Schedule of practice and games
 - Club rules
 - Team goals/rules
 - Summary or outline of the meeting

Important Points to Cover

Coach introduction

- Introduce yourself and assistant coaches (or ask for volunteers at this time).
- Give background information about yourself (why you are coaching, experience).

Coaching philosophy

- Discuss the value of the sport and the health benefits to the children.
- Discuss the philosophy of age appropriate activities.
- State the importance you assign to having fun and developing technique.
- State how you evaluate player development through skills and not winning.
- Discuss any team rules and guidelines (e.g., must be there 15 min. before kickoff).
- Let them know that all players will receive equal playing time.

Team guidelines

- Specifics of the program (e.g. players must appear with proper shoes/boots and properly inflated ball).
- Practice schedule (How many per week? How long?) Note: The length of your practice should be as long as your game. You should practice twice to every one game.
- Game schedule (How many? When do they begin?).
- Discuss how players must respect opponents, coaches, officials, and the game itself.
- Required equipment (shirts, socks, shorts, shin guards, water bottle).
- Recommended size of ball and soccer shoes/boots.
- Inherent risks (soccer is a contact sport, albeit a relatively safe one).
- Medical insurance (VYSA insurance provides secondary coverage).
- Briefly discuss rules of the game.



Team Management

- Select volunteers as assistant coaches.
- Appoint parents to assist with team duties (snack schedule, help with nets/flags).
- Set up telephone tree and /or car-pooling system.

Coaches' responsibilities

- Demonstrate leadership, good sportsmanship, respect, and coach with humility.
- Treat each player fairly.
- Organize practices and teach the game through age appropriate activities/games.
- Provide a safe environment i.e. Inspect playing surface.
- Arrive at practice on time and remain until a parent picks up every child.
- Contribute positively to the development of each player's self-esteem.
- Give regular feedback to players.
- Distribute a schedule of practices and games in a timely manner.
- Allow each player to play half of every game.
- Respect referees, know the rules, and conduct yourself respectfully on the field.
- Continue to seek coaching education.
- Define player Responsibilities:
 - Attend practices/games regularly, and arrive on time.
 - Bring proper equipment to each practice and game.
 - Clean your soccer shoes/boots & maintain your equipment.

- Have your own ball and make sure that it is properly inflated.
- Inform the coach in advance if it is necessary to miss a practice or game.
- Try your best at each practice.
- Work toward good sportsmanship and teamwork.
- Respect the referees.
- Be supportive of teammates all of the time.
- Answer questions from the parents.

Parent responsibilities

- Do not coach your child during games.
- Transport your child to and from practices and games on time.
- Be supportive of all the players (Criticism does not improve performance).
- Help your child understand that he/she is contributing to a team effort.
- Focus on mastering skills and having fun, not winning.
- Avoid material rewards for your child (The reward is the fun of playing!).
- Attend games and cheer the team.
- Refrain from criticizing the opponents; be positive with all players.
- Respect the referees (They will make mistakes, but they are doing their best).

CODES OF CONDUCT

Coaches, Players, Parents/Spectators, and Referees

It is a privilege to be a part of the United States Soccer Federation, United States Youth Soccer Association, and Virginia Youth Soccer Association. Your actions as a coach shall always reflect upon our organization and its affiliates.



Coaches:

Coaches and assistant coaches are expected to maintain a higher level of sportsmanship, professionalism, and integrity both off and on the field. A coach's primary responsibility is for his/her players to have fun, to develop soccer players, and to instill a passion for the game. The performance of coaches is not measured in wins and losses, but rather in what is taught to players in terms of technique, sportsmanship, and fair play. Coaches must maintain respect for the game as well as the referees. Coaches are charged with the responsibility of controlling their players and parents at all times during a match. Coaches lead and teach by example; players will be a reflection upon each individual coach.

Coaches and assistant coaches are expected to:

- Have a basic knowledge of the game and to pursue coaching education allowing you to better develop your players.
- Use positive reinforcement when dealing with players, never use foul or abusive language, and never abuse a player mentally, verbally, or physically.
- Have respect for the authority of the referee and his/her assistants. You should not harass, abuse, or berate the referee during or after the match. You should not enter the field of play without the referee's permission.
- Exhibit good sportsmanship both off and on the field. You should teach your players the rules of the game, fair play, and proper game behavior.

Players:

Children play soccer to have fun, to learn and develop a passion for the game as well as to improve their skills. Players have a responsibility to their team, coach, and soccer organization. They are representatives of the club as well as the team, coach, parents, and the community. Players must maintain a high level of sportsmanship and fair play.

Players should:

- Play within the laws of the game and spirit of the game.
- Be on time and prepared for matches and training sessions.
- Display self-control in all situations and should not use foul or abusive language at any time - before, during, or after a game, or training session.
- Train and play to the best of their ability, have a positive attitude, and encourage others to do the same.
- Show respect towards the referee and his/her assistants as well as toward the opponents.
- Not harass, abuse, or berate a referee for any reason.

Parents/Spectators:

Parents/Spectators must set the example for the children by exemplifying the highest standards of sportsmanship. Parents/Spectators participate in a game by watching, cheering, and supporting the efforts of all participants of the game. Soccer must be fun! The game is for the children. Their participation and enjoyment of the game is the most important element.

Parents have responsibilities to the coach, team, and soccer organization they are a part of. Parents/Spectators should have respect for their coach, all children on the team, and the authority of the referee and his/her assistants.

Parents/Spectators are expected to:

- Have respect for the authority of the referee and his/her assistants. They should not harass, abuse, or berate the referee during or after the game. They should not enter the field of play.
- Have respect for the coach and his/her assistants; they should never criticize a coach in a public manner. Do not coach from the sideline; let the coach do his/her job no matter how much you may disagree. If there is a problem, talk to the coach or the Coaching Director of your organization at a later point in time.
- Have respect for all players. Cheer in a positive manner, not negative. Encourage your team and don't berate the other team. Cheer in a way to reward the good play of both teams and promote fair play.
- Not to use foul or abusive language toward any one for any reason.
- Have a responsibility to learn the rules of the game and the spirit of the game.
- Get involved with the organization and promote the game in a positive way.
- Demonstrate the utmost in sportsmanship and integrity; they are the role models for their children.

Referees

Referees (including Assistant Referees) are responsible for the safety of the players and coaches during a match. Referees must know the laws of the game and enforce them fairly. They have the responsibility for upholding the laws and spirit of the game. Referees should show respect for the players, coaches, spectators, and the game itself.

Referees are expected to:

- Always maintain the utmost respect for the game.
- Conduct themselves honorably at all times and maintain the dignity of his/her position.
- Always honor an assignment or any other contractual obligation.

- Attend training sessions, meetings, and clinics so as to know the Laws of the Game, their proper interpretation, and their application.
- Strive to achieve maximum teamwork with fellow officials.
- Show respect for other referees, coaches, and players and never promote criticism of them.
- Be in good physical shape.
- Control players, coaches and Parents/Spectators effectively by being courteous and considerate without sacrificing fairness.
- Do their utmost to assist fellow officials to better themselves and their work.
- Not make statements about any game except to clarify an interpretation of the rules.
- Not discriminate.

COACHES' EQUIPMENT

Equipment Bag: Coaches should prepare a large BAG for all of the items listed below!

Players' MEDICAL RELEASE FORMS! - You must have these with you at all practices and games; verify that the emergency information is there.

MEDICAL KITS - A simple kit for games and practices is a good idea for every coach. A kit should include, but not limited to:

Ice (and `zip-lock' bags)	Band aids	Vaseline
Sterile pads	Adhesive tape	Elastic wraps
Antibiotic ointment	Bee sting relief ointment	

PUMP and inflating needle: Sometimes the game ball is over inflated or too soft and may need adjusting. The same goes for the balls players bring to practice.

SHIN GUARDS: a spare pair of old ones will cover for a forgetful player!

SPARE SHIRTS: (2) for your goalkeepers - Having two extra shirts of different colors (each contrasting with your team shirts) insures that you will always have a goalkeeper's shirt that contrasts with the opposition colors.

GOALKEEPER'S GLOVES: An inexpensive pair is a useful addition to your game bag.

BALLS: If possible, have a good quality ball available for the games. This can be used as a game ball if none is provided. The leather or synthetic leather stitched soccer balls are best; avoid the hard plastic-skinned balls, which are unpleasant to kick or head. Each player should have his/her own ball and bring it to practice. However, bring any spares you may have to practice because someone is likely to forget one.

CONES or PYLONS (about a dozen): Use these to set up small areas for practice activities, or to mark boundaries for a game field. Cones of a different color or size will make a distinctive goal.

BIBS/ PENNIES/VESTS: These are used to divide up teams for activities and games.

CLIPBOARD or NOTEPAD: Some coaches prefer these for practice plans, medical release forms, substitution schedules, etc.

WATER: A coach should have water available during practice and at the game. Have the players bring their own water bottles (but keep an extra bottle in your bag or cooler for the occasional forgetful player). Alternatively, have your team parent organize a schedule among the parents to provide water and cups.

The team parent should organize a simple SNACK schedule for game days. Discourage turning snacks into a financial hardship for some parents. Orange or apple slices, or seedless grapes are good choices. Make sure that all orange peels, apple cores, and grape stems are picked up and placed in an appropriate receptacle.

PLAYER'S EQUIPMENT

BALL: Encourage each player to have his or her own ball and to use it often, not just during team practice. Players will not derive maximum benefit from practice unless they each have their own ball for warm-ups and individual exercises. The ball should be properly inflated.



Soccer balls come in a variety of sizes, each designated by a number:

- Size #3 - smallest standard size, for the youngest players (e.g. U-6 to U-8).
- Size #4 - intermediate size, appropriate for U-9 through U-12.
- Size #5 - largest standard size, for U-13 to adult.

SHIN GUARDS: Shin guards are an absolute requirement for games and practices (the pull-on "legging" type with foam padding that protects the front of the leg from ankle to shin is an excellent shin guard). Shin guards with plastic inserts offer additional protection, especially for the older player.

SOCCER SHOES/BOOTS: Soccer shoes/boots are recommended, but not required by most clubs. Baseball or football type shoes with square or rectangular cleats are not allowed for soccer. Soccer cleats for most recreational play must be rubber or molded plastic (no metal cleats), and no less than 3/8 inch in diameter.

WATER BOTTLE (with player's name on it): Fresh water should be available to your players at each practice and game. It is easier for the coach if each player provides his or her own water bottle.

SHIRTS, SOCKS, SHORTS: One or more of these items may be provided for each player by your local club. Be sure that you are aware of your club's policies with respect to uniforms and inform your players and parents of any requirements.