



**Ontario Soccer
Grassroots
Recommended
Standards
(U4-U12)**



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OBJECTIVES



About



In 2005, Federal, Provincial and Territorial Sport Ministers accepted “*Long-Term Athlete Development*” as Canada’s development framework and committed to full provincial and territorial implementation in 2007. Since then, these concepts have been embedded in major national, provincial and territorial agencies for over a decade. As a leading organization, Ontario Soccer is committed remove barriers to participation and performance, and help make our systems more effective for players.

Those players could be recreation or development players, both groups need to establish a solid grounding and developmental base to play and enjoy soccer for life or progress through the talented pathways and higher. What is critical as parents, coaches, administrators is that we understand the philosophical shift of what is a quality soccer programs and why, this will help us all with the culture change required.

Please note that all of the information contained within this document is in alignment with framework provided by Canada Soccer Grassroots Standards and the Long-Term Development in Sport and Physical Activity proposed by Sport for Life. These best practices have been refined to better suit our Ontario Soccer environments.

The Ontario Soccer Grassroots Standards

The Ontario Soccer Grassroots Standards were designed in order to provide every player the best opportunity to play soccer and remain active for life.

Grassroots Soccer is the most important part of the player pathway. This is where we give children their first experience in soccer. Ensuring this first experience is fun and enjoyable and revolves around child- friendly soccer is essential.

Over 70% of The Ontario Soccer membership are in these development stages and ensuring players come back, with a smile the following season should be the goal for every coach and organization. The majority of organizations in our membership all play a pivotal role across these very important development stages.



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APPLICATION



Application



Grassroots Soccer refers to all soccer played in Ontario between the ages of Under-4 to Under-12.

All Grassroots Soccer shall be organized and played in accordance with these Ontario Soccer Grassroots Standards. This document replaces all previous versions of the “Ontario Soccer Player Matrix”.

No standings shall be recorded for any grassroots games.

The Ontario Soccer Grassroots Standards is developed and maintained by Ontario Soccer’s Player Development Department.





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ACTIVE START



Active Start – U6 and younger

Objective: Master basic human movement and develop habits of physical activity.

Tips: Make activities FUN and part of the child’s daily routine.

Examples: [Grassroots Practices for Active Start](#)

| Age Group | U6 and younger |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Game Format | No formal games |
| Coaching Qualifications | Active Start + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Maximum Game Duration | Informal play |
| Maximum Game Time per Player per Day | N/A |
| Minimum rest time between games | N/A |
| Maximum Goal Size | Pop-up goals 3ft (0.91m) x 5ft (1.52m) |
| Field Size | N/A |
| Ball size | 3 |
| Number of memorable events | N/A |
| Referee/Game Leader | N/A |
| Restarts from Sidelines | N/A |
| Offside | N/A |
| Retreat Line | N/A |
| Substitutions | N/A |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | Within organization |
| Playing Time | Players all play |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 4:1 / Maximum: 8:1 |
| Training to game ratio | N/A |
| Structured Training Duration | 30 – 45 Minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | N/A |
| Game Day Format | N/A |
| Number of game days per week | N/A |



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FUNDAMENTALS



Fundamentals - U7

Objective: Develop fundamental movement skills and enjoying being physically active.

Tip: Skill development at this stage should be well structured, positive and FUN and should concentrate on developing the ABC's of Agility, Balance and Coordination plus speed. Encourage your players to take part in unstructured play, every day, with their friends.

Examples: [Grassroots Practices for Fundamentals](#)

| Age Group | U7 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Game Format | 3v3 (No GK) |
| Coaching Qualifications | Fundamentals + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Maximum Game Duration | 30 min |
| Maximum Game Time per Player per Day | Max 60 minutes |
| Minimum rest time between games | Duration of one (1) game |
| Maximum Goal Size | Pop-up goals 3ft (0.91m) x 5ft (1.52m) |
| Field Size | Width: 18-22m Length: 25-30m |
| Ball size | 3 |
| Number of memorable events | n / a |
| Referee/Game Leader | Game Leader (can be the two coaches) |
| Restarts from Sidelines | Pass in or dribble in |
| Offside | No |
| Retreat Line | 1/3 |
| Substitutions | Unlimited (any stoppage or on the fly) |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | 60 minutes each way |
| Playing Time | Fair time in all positions |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 6:1 / Maximum: 8:1 |
| Training to game ratio | 1:1 to 2:1 |
| Structured Training Duration | 30 – 45 minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | Ideal 6 / Max 9 |
| Game Day Format | Festival Format |
| Number of game days per week | 1 |

Fundamentals – U8-U9

Objective: Develop fundamental movement skills and enjoying being physically active.

Tip: skill development at this stage should be well structured, positive and FUN and should concentrate on developing the ABC's of Agility, Balance and Coordination plus speed. Encourage your players to take part in unstructured play, every day, with their friends.

Examples: [Grassroots Practices for Fundamentals](#)

| Age Group | U8-U9 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Game Format | 4v4 (no GK) 5v5 (including GK) |
| Coaching Qualifications | Fundamentals + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Maximum Game Duration | 40 min |
| Maximum Game Time per Player per Day | Max 60 minutes |
| Minimum rest time between games | Duration of one (1) game |
| Maximum Goal Size | 5f/1.52mx8f/2.44m |
| Field Size | Width: 25-30m Length: 30-36m |
| Ball size | 3 (or 4 super light*) |
| Number of memorable events | 2 within Ontario |
| Referee/Game Leader | Game Leader (can be the two coaches) |
| Restarts from Sidelines | Pass in or dribble in |
| Offside | No |
| Retreat Line | 1/3 |
| Substitutions | Unlimited (any stoppage or on the fly) |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | 60 minutes each way |
| Playing Time | Fair time in all positions |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 8:1 / Maximum: 10:1 |
| Training to game ratio | 1:1 to 2:1 |
| Structured Training Duration | 45 – 60 minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | Ideal 8 / Max 10 |
| Game Day Format | Festival Format |
| Number of game days per week | 1 |



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LEARN TO TRAIN



Learn to Train - U10-U11



Objective: Learn a wide range of foundation skills.

Tip: Ensure environment promotes and supports fun and friendship. Take into account individuals' variations in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and moral development. Introduce ancillary capacities: warm up/cool down, nutrition, hydration, and recovery including sleep and mental preparation such as anxiety control.

Examples: [Grassroots Practices for Learn to Train](#)

| Age Group | U10-U11 |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Game Format | 7v7 (including GK) |
| Coaching Qualifications | Learn to Train + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Maximum Game Duration | 50 min |
| Maximum Game Time per Player per Day | Max 80 minutes |
| Minimum rest time between games | Duration of one (1) game |
| Maximum Goal Size | 6ft (1.83m) x 16ft (4.88m) |
| Field Size | Width: 30-36m Length: 40-55m |
| Ball size | 4 (or 5 light*) |
| Number of memorable events | 2 (1 within Ontario + 1 within North America) |
| Referee/Game Leader | Referee |
| Restarts from Sidelines | Pass in or dribble in |
| Offside | No |
| Retreat Line | 1/3 |
| Substitutions | Unlimited (any stoppage) |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | 60 minutes each way |
| Playing Time | Fair time in all positions |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 10:1 / Maximum: 12:1 |
| Training to game ratio | 2:1 to 3:1 |
| Structured Training Duration | 60 – 75 minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | Ideal 10 / Max 12 |
| Game Day Format | Festival Format |
| Number of game days per week | 1 |



Learn to Train - U12



Objective: Learn a wide range of foundation skills.

Tip: Ensure environment promotes and supports fun and friendship. Take into account individuals' variations in physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and moral development. Introduce ancillary capacities: warm up/cool down, nutrition, hydration, and recovery including sleep and mental preparation such as anxiety control.

Examples: [Grassroots Practices for Learn to Train](#)

| Age Group | U12 |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Game Format | 9v9 (including GK) |
| Coaching Qualifications | Learn to Train + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Maximum Game Duration | 70 min |
| Maximum Game Time per Player per Day | Max 100 minutes |
| Minimum rest time between games | Duration of one (1) game |
| Maximum Goal Size | 6f /1.83m x18f /5.49m |
| Field Size | Width: 42-55m Length: 60-75m |
| Ball size | 4 (or 5 light*) |
| Number of memorable events | 4 (2 within Ontario + 2 within North America, 1 may be overseas) |
| Referee/Game Leader | Referee |
| Restarts from Sidelines | Throw-in |
| Offside | Yes |
| Retreat Line | 1/3 |
| Substitutions | Unlimited (any stoppage) |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | 60 minutes each way |
| Playing Time | Fair time in all positions |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 12:1 / Maximum: 16:1 |
| Training to game ratio | 2:1 to 3:1 |
| Structured Training Duration | 60 – 75 minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | Ideal 14 / Max 16 |
| Game Day Format | Festival Format |
| Number of game days per week | 1 |





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SUMMARY



| Grassroots Standards | Active Start | Fundamentals | Fundamentals | Learn to Train | Learn to Train |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|--|
| Age Group | U6 and younger | U7 | U8 -U9 | U10-U11 | U12 |
| Game Format | No formal games | 3v3 (No GK) | 4v4 (no GK) 5v5 (including GK) | 7v7 (including GK) | 9v9 (including GK) |
| Coaching Qualifications | Active Start + MED + RiS + Making Headway | Fundamentals + MED + RiS + Making Headway | Fundamentals + MED + RiS + Making Headway | Learn to Train + MED + RiS + Making Headway | Learn to Train + MED + RiS + Making Headway |
| Max. Game Duration | Informal play | 30 min | 40 min | 50 min | 70 min |
| Max. Game Time per Player per Day | N/A | Max 60 minutes | Max 60 minutes | Max 80 minutes | Max 100 minutes |
| Min. rest time between games | N/A | Duration of one (1) game | Duration of one (1) game | Duration of one (1) game | Duration of one (1) game |
| Max. Goal Size | Pop-up goals 3ft (0.91m) x 5ft (1.52m) | Pop-up goals 3ft (0.91m) x 5ft (1.52m) | 5f/1.52mx8f/2.44m | 6ft (1.83m) x 16ft (4.88m) | 6f /1.83m x18f /5.49m |
| Field Size | N/A | Width: 18-22m Length: 25-30m | Width: 25-30m Length: 30-36m | Width: 30-36m Length: 40-55m | Width: 42-55m Length: 60-75m |
| Ball size | 3 | 3 | 3 (or 4 super light*) | 4 (or 5 light*) | 4 (or 5 light*) |
| Number of memorable events | N/A | n / a | 2 within Ontario | 2 (1 within Ontario + 1 within North America) | 4 (2 within Ontario + 2 within North America, 1 may be overseas) |
| Referee/Game Leader | N/A | Game Leader (can be the two coaches) | Game Leader (can be the two coaches) | Referee | Referee |
| Restarts from Sidelines | N/A | Pass in or dribble in | Pass in or dribble in | Pass in or dribble in | Throw-in |
| Offside | N/A | No | No | No | Yes |
| Retreat Line | N/A | 1/3 | 1/3 | 1/3 | 1/3 |
| Substitutions | N/A | Unlimited (any stoppage or on the fly) | Unlimited (any stoppage or on the fly) | Unlimited (any stoppage) | Unlimited (any stoppage) |
| Season Length | 10- 22 weeks | 10- 22 weeks | 10- 22 weeks | 10- 22 weeks | 10- 22 weeks |
| Team Travel Time | Within organization | 60 minutes each way | 60 minutes each way | 60 minutes each way | 60 minutes each way |
| Playing Time | Players all play | Fair time in all positions | Fair time in all positions | Fair time in all positions | Fair time in all positions |
| Player to coach ratio | Ideal: 4:1 / Maximum: 8:1 | Ideal: 6:1 / Maximum: 8:1 | Ideal: 8:1 / Maximum: 10:1 (5v5) | Ideal: 10:1 / Maximum: 12:1 | Ideal: 12:1 / Maximum: 16:1 |
| Training to game ratio | N/A | 1:1 to 2:1 | 1:1 to 2:1 | 2:1 to 3:1 | 2:1 to 3:1 |
| Structured Training Duration | 30 – 45 Minutes | 30 – 45 minutes | 45 – 60 minutes | 60 – 75 minutes | 60 – 75 minutes |
| Game Day Roster Size (Game day only) | N/A | Ideal 6 / Max 9 | Ideal 8 / Max 10 | Ideal 10 / Max 12 | Ideal 14 / Max 16 |
| Game Day Format | N/A | Festival Format | Festival Format | Festival Format | Festival Format |
| Number of game days per week | N/A | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |





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For questions, please reach us at
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