



U12 Rules of the Game

Central WV Soccer Association (CWVSA) - 9v9

Quick U12 Standards

- **Ball:** Size 4. Home team provides game balls.
- **Players:** 9v9 - eight field players and one goalkeeper. A match should not start or continue with fewer than six players on a team.
- **Game length:** Two 30-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime. No added time unless CWVSA specifically announces otherwise.
- **Field:** Approximately 70-80 yards long by 45-55 yards wide.
- **Goals:** 6.5 ft high x 18.5 ft wide is recommended; goals may be no larger than 7 ft high x 21 ft wide.
- **Playing time:** Every player should play at least 50% of the game.
- **Offside:** Enforced under Law 11.

Equipment

Shin guards are **MANDATORY** and must be completely covered by socks. Soccer cleats or athletic shoes may be worn. No baseball or football cleats with a front toe cleat. Jewelry and metal hair clips are not permitted, except medical-alert items that are safely secured. The referee has final authority on whether equipment is safe.

Field

The U12 field should be approximately 70-80 yards long and 45-55 yards wide. The penalty area, goal area, halfway line, center circle, penalty mark and corner areas should be marked for 9v9 play.

There is no build-out line at U12.

Sidelines

Players, team equipment and spectators must remain at least 3 yards from the touchline when space allows. Spectators are not permitted behind either goal. Team players and coaches should remain on one side of the field, with spectators on the opposite side.

Coaches

Coaches are responsible for completing required league training, knowing and enforcing these rules, communicating with families, and maintaining a safe and positive environment. Coaches are also responsible for the behavior of assistant coaches, players and spectators.

Referee Crew

A center referee and two assistant referees may be assigned when staffing allows. The referee is the authority on the field, may inspect player equipment before the match, and has final authority on decisions involving play, safety and misconduct.

Substitutions

Substitutions are unlimited and may occur at **any stoppage of play** with the referee's permission. Substitutes should enter from the halfway line after the player being replaced has left the field, unless the referee directs otherwise.

Goalkeeper

- The goalkeeper must wear a jersey color that distinguishes them from both teams.
- When the goalkeeper controls the ball with the hands/arms, opponents may not challenge for it.
- If the goalkeeper controls the ball with the hands/arms for more than **8 seconds**, a corner kick is awarded to the opposing team. The referee visually counts down the final five seconds.
- The goalkeeper may not handle a ball deliberately kicked to them by a teammate or a ball received directly from a teammate's throw-in.
- **Punts and drop kicks are permitted at U12.**

Kick-Off

A kick-off starts each half and restarts play after a goal. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does **not** have to move forward. All players except the kicker must be in their own half, and opponents must remain outside the center circle until the ball is in play. The kicker may not touch the ball again until another player has touched it. A goal may be scored directly from a kick-off.

Throw-Ins

A throw-in is awarded when the whole ball crosses a touchline. The player must face the field, have part of each foot on or outside the touchline, and throw the ball with both hands from behind and over the head. CWVSA may allow one instructional re-try for an improperly taken throw-in before awarding possession to the opponent. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

Goal Kicks

A goal kick is awarded when the whole ball crosses the goal line, was last touched by an attacker, and no goal was scored. The ball may be placed anywhere within the goal area. Opponents must remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves; it does not have to leave the penalty area. A teammate may receive the ball inside the penalty area. A goal may be scored directly from a goal kick against the opposing team.

Offside

Offside IS enforced at U12. Standard Law 11 applies. A player is not in an offside position if they are in their own half. There is no offside offense directly from a goal kick, throw-in or corner kick. The referee/assistant referee determines whether a player in an offside position becomes involved in active play.

Out of Play

The ball is out of play only when the whole ball completely crosses the goal line or touchline, on the ground or in the air, or when the referee stops play.



U12 Rules of the Game

Central WV Soccer Association (CWVSA) - 9v9

Corner Kicks

A corner kick is awarded when the whole ball crosses the goal line, was last touched by a defender, and no goal was scored. The kick is taken from the corner area nearest where the ball crossed the line. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick against the opposing team.

Free Kicks

Direct and indirect free kicks follow the Laws of the Game, subject to CWVSA local modifications. Direct-free-kick fouls include offenses such as kicking or tripping, pushing, holding, striking, jumping at, or illegally charging an opponent. Indirect-free-kick offenses include dangerous play, preventing the goalkeeper from releasing the ball, and certain goalkeeper handling violations. **Opponents should be at least 10 yards from the ball** unless they are on their own goal line between the goalposts.

Penalty Kicks

A penalty kick is awarded when a defender commits a direct-free-kick offense inside their own penalty area. The penalty mark is approximately 10 yards from the goal line for the standard 9v9 field. All players other than the kicker and goalkeeper must remain outside the penalty area, behind the penalty mark, and at least 10 yards from the mark until the ball is kicked. The goalkeeper must remain on the goal line, facing the kicker, with at least part of one foot touching, in line with, or behind the goal line when the kick is taken.

Slide Tackling

Slide tackling is permitted at U12, but it must be performed safely and within the Laws of the Game. A careless tackle is a foul; a reckless tackle may result in a yellow card; and a tackle using excessive force or endangering the safety of an opponent may result in a red card and ejection.

Defensive Positioning - CWVSA Emphasis

Coaches should discourage a defender from remaining withdrawn near the goal for the entire game. Players should be encouraged to move with play and learn both attacking and defending responsibilities.

Heading the Ball

For **U12**, heading is permitted during games. In organized team practices, heading practice is limited to **no more than 30 minutes per week and no more than 15-20 headers per player per week**. Players who are 10 years old or younger may not head the ball in practice or games.

Method of Scoring

A goal is scored when the whole ball completely crosses the goal line between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided no offense has been committed by the team scoring the goal.

Sportsmanship

Coaches are responsible for the conduct of their team area and spectators. No coach, player or spectator may verbally abuse or aggressively confront referees, opponents or spectators. Coaches and spectators should remain in their proper areas and should not run the touchline. At the end of the match, teams should demonstrate good sportsmanship.

Head Injuries / Concussion Safety

If a player is suspected of having a head injury, play should be stopped so the player can be evaluated. A player who leaves for evaluation should not return unless cleared in accordance with applicable league, state-association and U.S. Soccer concussion procedures.

Proof of Age

Players must satisfy CWVSA/WVSA registration and age-verification requirements before participating.

Pre-Game Warmups

Only normal warmups should be conducted immediately before a scheduled match, such as dribbling, passing and stretching. Full training sessions should not delay the scheduled kickoff.

Rule Priority / Local Modifications

These CWVSA U12 rules combine current U.S. Soccer 9v9 development standards, current Laws of the Game, and CWVSA local recreational modifications. If CWVSA publishes a season-specific rule or field instruction, that local instruction controls for CWVSA league play.