

4-5s Guidelines

In the 4-5s, the most important rules are to honor Christ, be safe, and have fun. As this is most families' first experience with our program, their experience in this league will often determine whether or not they come back. While we want them to learn the game of soccer and develop their skills, this league is not about following strict rules, but pointing them to Christ and letting them learn and enjoy the game. Because of this, the referee is not so much a rules-enforcer as a game-facilitator. It is the ref's responsibility to make sure that the game starts on time and is played safely.

The first 15 minutes of each game's time slot is for practice. Coaches will organize drills and activities for their teams, with refs providing support if necessary. During this time, player participation is key. Try to avoid drills with long lines and only one or two players participating at a time. Get the players as involved as possible so that they keep interest.

After 15 minutes, the referee should call the teams together for a pre-game. This time should start with prayer from as many players as want to pray. Then briefly go over the basic rules: no hand balls, no pushing, be safe, and most importantly, have fun! Also remind players and coaches that forwards and defenders should stay in their half of the field (more on that below). The pre-game should be over and the teams ready to start by 20 minutes after the game slot has begun. If one team doesn't have enough players and the other team has extras, even out the teams.

Each team will play with five players. Two are designated as defenders and should not cross midfield, and the other three are forwards and can play on either side (see the diagram on the next page). Coaches and refs should use verbal commands to encourage the defenders to stay on their side. 4- and 5-year-olds will naturally go to the ball, so encourage them as much as possible to spread out.

During the game, the coaches should be the primary instructors of the game on the field. They may assist with calling out of bounds, etc. The goal should be to keep the game flowing, so if the ball does not go too far out, try to keep the game going. The referee should primarily be looking out for player safety. If a player falls over near the ball or is in an unsafe situation, stop the game. Use verbal commands to control the play of the game, with the whistle stopping play when necessary. On hot days, emphasis should be put on hydration, with water breaks if necessary.

Most importantly, grace needs to abound. Kids are going to touch the ball with their hands, throw the ball incorrectly, etc. The referee's job is not to penalize every little infraction. As long as the game is still safe, play should go on.

A Goal

A Defender

A Defender

A Forward

A Forward

A Forward

Defenders do not cross midfield

B Forward

B Forward

B Forward

B Defender

B Defender

B Goal