



**RECREATION SOCCER  
COACHES HANDBOOK**

**2021**

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## Contents

Introduction .....	3
FFC Recreation Soccer Philosophy .....	3
Roles and Expectations.....	4
Team Rosters.....	4
Team Meetings.....	4
Resources for Parents.....	5
Practice Schedules .....	5
Game Schedules .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Player Uniforms .....	5
FFC Staff.....	5
Practices .....	6
Games.....	7
Referees/ Assistant Referees .....	8
FFC Park Rules .....	9
Laws of the Game.....	9
US Soccer Guidelines: Concussion Initiative.....	9
US Soccer Guidelines: Age Appropriate .....	10
US Soccer Guidelines: Build Out Line .....	10
Player Position Numbers.....	10
Revision History.....	13
References and Useful Links .....	14
Notes .....	15

**This handbook provides guidance to FFC Recreation Soccer volunteer coaches.**



## Introduction

Thank you for volunteering to coach FFC Recreation Soccer. We know that it is a significant commitment of your time and energy. By coaching you are helping to provide a wonderful educational, athletic experience for youth in our community. FFC would not be able to do what it does without the help they receive from members of the community like yourself.

Sports participation is important because it teaches children the value of physical fitness, sportsmanship, practice and team work. Our hope is that each player is given the opportunity achieve their personal best while having fun. This manual will hopefully give you some ideas and resources that will prepare you to be able to create a fun, educational sport environment for all players that allow them to achieve their personal best, enjoying what the sport of soccer has to offer.

## FFC Recreation Soccer Philosophy

**FFC Recreation Soccer is an education-first program. Our primary goal is to provide a safe, soccer-based enrichment program and environment to the youth within the local community.**

Another goal of the program is to provide an introduction into soccer for enjoyment and to improve player's skills and touches on the ball.

With an emphasis on team-building, skills and gameplay, game scores will always be last in the list of priorities.

## Roles and Expectations

- To provide each child with a great soccer experience. As a coach you have a big impact. Interact with all players not just your own child.
- Assist or lead in every training session – you are encouraged to help the kids, talk to players individually when needed.
- Be prepared to demonstrate. Keep it simple.
- Interact with parents as often as possible if they have questions, try to help or escalate any items to the appropriate FFC Director.
- Keep a positive image for the program and club. Come to sessions prepared with age-appropriate session plans.
- Wear your FFC shirt to all practices and games. FFC is sponsored by Adidas.
- Be punctual – Preferably, arrive 15-30 minutes prior to start time for field setup and to greet early arrivals. Need to start and finish sessions on time.
- Stay on schedule – Work to create an atmosphere that players want to come in and get right into the session and participate.
- Give appropriate breaks, developing plans to transition between activities.
- Be fully engaged with training – not just a spectator talking. Get involved & demonstrate when needed. Use guided discovery. Look to have huge impacts on the players.
- Be respectful to FFC Park, fields, equipment and other coaches and club members. **Penalty areas of all fields MUST NOT BE USED for practices and game warm up. Limited goalkeeper warmup before games is acceptable.**

## Team Rosters

Rosters will be provided by the FFC Recreation Director. Registrations are carefully evaluated, and rosters are created based upon several factors, including age, skill (if known), requests from parents (if possible), and team balance within the age group.

## Team Meetings

It is recommended that you hold a pre-season meeting with parents, so that you can introduce yourself as their child's coach and provide information regarding your expectations of them during the season. This is also a good opportunity for you to seek assistance from parents to assist with running practices or game day activities.

It is recommended that your parent expectations include **good sportsmanship and positive attitudes and encouragement to all participants** in the FFC Recreation Soccer program – players, coaches, officials and other parents and visitors to FFC Park.

## Resources for Parents

The following resources may be helpful in guiding the coach-parent partnership (courtesy of the Positive Coaching Alliance - <http://devzone.positivecoach.org>)

- **The Coach-Parent Partnership:**  
[http://d3kv8ayplk3lle.cloudfront.net/sites/uploads/files/PCA\\_CoachParentPartnership\\_0.pdf](http://d3kv8ayplk3lle.cloudfront.net/sites/uploads/files/PCA_CoachParentPartnership_0.pdf)
- **Ten Tips for First-Time Sports Parents:**  
[http://d3kv8ayplk3lle.cloudfront.net/sites/uploads/files/PCA\\_TenTips\\_FirstTimeSportsParents.pdf](http://d3kv8ayplk3lle.cloudfront.net/sites/uploads/files/PCA_TenTips_FirstTimeSportsParents.pdf)

## Practice and Game Schedules

- Practice schedules will be determined by agreement with the coach and FFC.
- Practice schedules will be published on the FFC Recreation Soccer website.
- Game schedules will be published on the FFC Recreation Soccer website.
- FFC uses TeamSnap for coach/parent/player communication.

## Player Uniforms

Details regarding FFC Recreation Soccer uniforms will be emailed to parents before the season. Uniform items can be purchased from [www.soccer.com](http://www.soccer.com).

- 1x Red *Adidas* Jersey
- 1x Black *Adidas* Jersey
- 1x Black Shorts
- 1x Black Soccer Socks



## FFC Staff

- Executive Director – Grover Gibson
- Administrator/Financial Director – Michele Brantley
- Technical Director – Grover Gibson
- Assistant Director of Coaching – Milos Draca
- Goalkeeper Director – Joseph DeMartino
- Recreation Director – Adrian Batchelor
- Academy Director – Joseph DeMartino

## Practices

All practice sessions will be held at FFC Park, unless alternative arrangements have been approved by FFC in advance.

Practice duration should be in line with game duration for the age group. Generally, coaches should consider 60-minute practice sessions.

Coaches should consider the ***Play – Practice – Play*** approach to practice sessions. *(Note that this is also referred to as **Whole – Part – Whole**):*

**The (Initial) PLAY Stage – “Deliberate Play”.** Data has shown that children learn best when they get to experience periods of unstructured play where they can experiment on their own, it promotes enjoyment, inclusion and development. These three factors have been proven to increase motivation to continue playing. The coach’s role during this Play stage is to ensure safety, monitor the games and “take the pulse” of the players. Monitoring the games includes making sure the games are not lopsided and providing adequate stoppages to allow the players to stretch and rehydrate. During the stoppages the coach is encouraged to ask guiding questions to lead the players towards the goal and objectives of the session. “Taking the pulse” refers to checking the players involvement and gauging their emotional state through active or in some cases avoidance of participation. In short showing the players how much you care about them right from the start of a practice.

**The PRACTICE Stage – “Play – Practice”** using activities to create game-like situations that create problems for the players to solve and the coach to assist with the problem-solving process. A simple checklist (provided in the session plans) includes questions such as: Does it look like Soccer? Is it organized? Is it challenging? Are there repetitions? (Of the topic being worked on) and Is there coaching? (Consisting predominantly of positive reinforcement) but should also include the normalizing of errors. (Mistakes are an essential part of the learning process). During this stage coaches are encouraged to set up small group activities that focus on the topic being worked on that day. We have also provided a set of Guided Questions that the coach can refer to throughout the practice session.

**The (Final) PLAY Stage – “Contextual Learning”.** In this stage we are checking to see how much if any of the practice stage has transferred with each player into the game. It is recommended in this stage that the coach sets up 2 teams of equal numbers and that one team is set up as close to the starting lineup for the upcoming game as attendance at the practice permits. In ideal circumstances (which rarely

occurs) the coach should play in the game format 4 v 4, 7 v 7 etc. that the players will experience in the upcoming game. The players should experience extended periods of uninterrupted play with the coach just monitoring the safety of the players and reviewing the checklist and guided questions to empower the players to solve problems on their own.

## PRACTICE PLANNING

It is important to be prepared ahead of time for your practice sessions.

Some tips for session planning include:

- Be prepared. Do not leave your practice planning to the last minute
- Arrive early to your practice sessions
  - Your session/field should be set, ready ahead of your players arrival
- Keep it simple and age-appropriate
- Make it fun! No Lines, Laps or Lectures
- Positive approach
  - Positive coaching
  - Positive reinforcement
  - Encouragement
  - Avoid negativity
- Have an objective for each session
  - Have a backup practice plan on hand
  - Be prepared to adjust your plan. If it doesn't look like it is working, change it!
- Build upon prior sessions
- Plan:
  - **Play:** Warm-up activity
  - **Practice:** Small-sided Activity
  - **Play:** Expanded Activity

## Games

All games will be held at FFC Park. Game lengths will be as follows for regular season play, utilizing a running clock:

- **U6 - U9:** 4 x 10-minute quarters; 5-minute quarter breaks.
- **U9 - U10:** 2 x 25-minute halves; 5-minute half time.
  - *Alternative: 4 x 10-minute quarters with 2-5-minute quarter breaks.*

- **U11 - U12:** 2 x 30-minute halves; 5-minute half time.
- **U13 - U14: 11v11:** 2 x 35-minute halves; 5-minute half time.
  - *Alternative: 8v8:* 2 x 30-minute halves; 5-minute half time.
- **U15 - HS: 11v11:** 2 x 40-minute halves; 5-minute half time.
  - *Alternative: 8v8:* 2 x 35-minute halves; 5-minute half time.

Note: Tournaments or Scrimmagefests or other special events or games may specify other game durations at the discretion of FFC or the sponsoring club.

Coaches **must not run up scores against their opponent.** In the essence of good sportsmanship, coaches will work with one another to ensure that the educational environment for FFC Recreation Soccer is maintained in all games. Thus, if a game has a goal differential of 5 or more goals, coaches should consider adjustments:

- **U6 - U8:** Coaches should avoid where possible lop-sided games.
- **U9 - U12:** Consider adding/removing/trading players.
- **U13 - HS:** Consider reducing number of players on one team.

For all other aspects of games, please refer to the **Fredericksburg FC Recreation Soccer Laws of the Game.**

## 1. Referees/ Assistant Referees

Certified United States Soccer Federation referees are provided for the FFC Recreation Program as follows:

- **U8** – Single Referee (5 v 5)
- **U9-U10** – Single Referee (7 v 7)
- **U11-U12** – Referee and 2 Assistant referees (9 v 9)
- **U14, High School** – Referee and 2 Assistant referees (11 v 11 or 8 v 8)

USSF referees age from 14+ and thus, may also be learning the game and their skill as a referee. **Referee abuse WILL NOT BE TOLERATED from anyone.**

Things to remember:

- Referees are learning too
- Maintain a positive environment and attitude
- As a coach, do YOU know the laws of the game?
- Accept decisions from referees and assistant referees
- Provide positive feedback
- Encourage and educate parents to do the same – parents behavior is the COACHES responsibility



## FFC Park Rules

- **Penalty areas of all fields MUST NOT BE USED for practices and game warm up. Limited goalkeeper warmup before games is acceptable.**
- Use off-field areas for any drills with a repetitive nature; avoid areas close to field markings.
- Be conscious of the field conditions. Consider practicing in different areas of your allotted field space.
- Clean up all trash/water bottles when leaving.
- Warm up in off-field areas.
- Goals **MUST** ALWAYS be suitably anchored (safety first).
- Return any goals to where you found them – particularly if you have:
  - Last practice of the day; or
  - Last game of the day
- Be considerate to coaches that have games/practices before/after you.

## Laws of the Game

- Based on latest rules from IFAB
  - <http://www.theifab.com/laws>
- Adjusted based upon age level
  - E.g. 9v9 for U12, 7v7 for U10, 5v5 for U8
- Further adjusted based upon registrations
  - E.g. U12 may play 7v7; U10 may play 9v9; U14 or HS may play 8v8
- US Soccer Development Initiatives
  - Age appropriate
  - Build out line (used for U9 and U12 only)
  - Heading
    - No heading at U12 and below group levels
  - Heading only permitted for U14 and HS
  - <https://www.ussoccer.com/coaching-education/resources/us-soccer-player-development-initiatives>

## US Soccer Guidelines: Concussion Initiative

- **Safety First**
  - Coaches, Parents, Officials – Safety of all participants is the top priority
- **Heading prohibited for U11**
  - Adjusted laws of the game regarding deliberate & accidental heading.
  - Responsibility of all involved (players, parents, coaches, officials)

- **Concussion/get aHead Training**
  - Online training for safe heading available from [unitedsoccercoaches.org](http://unitedsoccercoaches.org).

## US Soccer Guidelines: Age Appropriate

- **Small-Sided Games: Objectives**
  - Develop improved skills with the ball
    - Improve confidence and comfort
  - Develop intelligence with and without the ball
    - Promote faster decisions and better awareness
  - Develop partnerships within the team
  - Provide an age-appropriate environment
    - Standards align with physiological needs of players based on year of birth
  - Uniformity across the country and across membership
    - Similar to the outcomes listed for birth year registration, having consistent standards allows U.S. Soccer, and the programs of our members, to provide more meaningful messaging and education for parents, players, coaches and referees.

## US Soccer Guidelines: Build Out Line

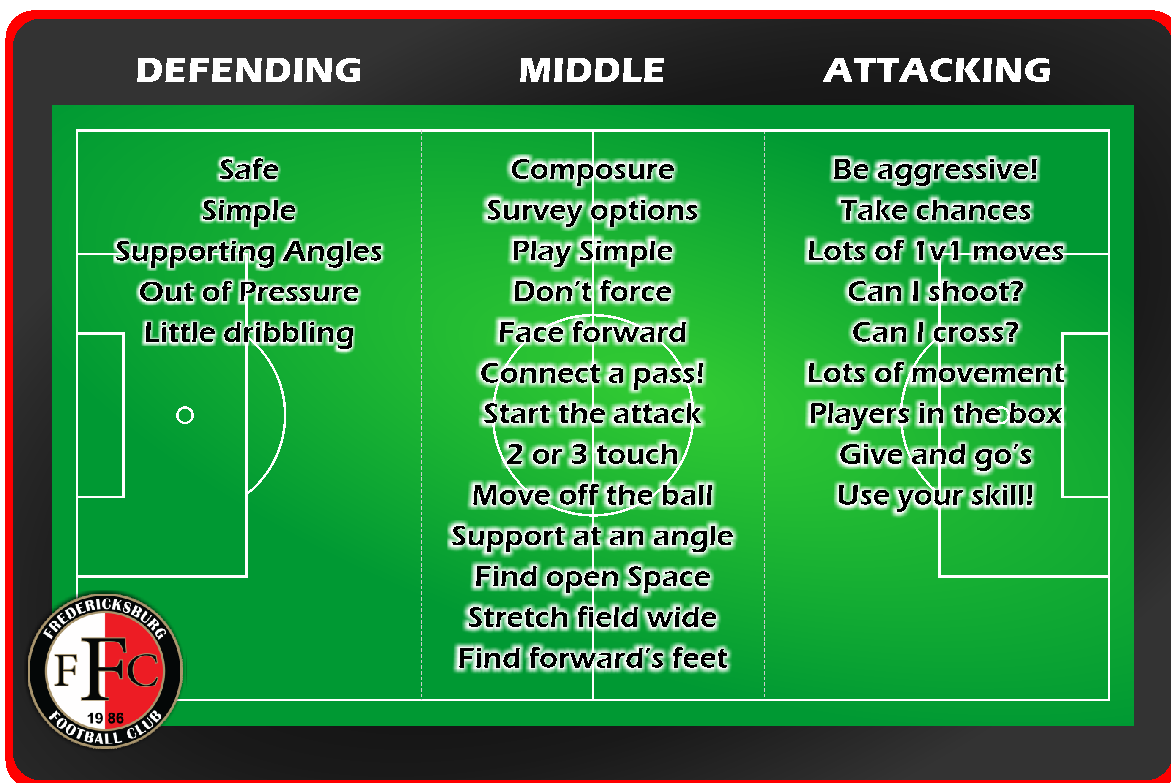
- **Build out line**
  - No punting/drop kicks.
  - Play out from back approach for goalkeepers
  - For 7v7 and 9v9, use build out line only as a retreat line for ball distribution by goalkeepers
  - For 7v7, also use build out line as the point at which offside can be called.
- **Adjusted laws of the game for infractions**
  - Use common sense / 'spirit of the game'.

## Player Position Numbers

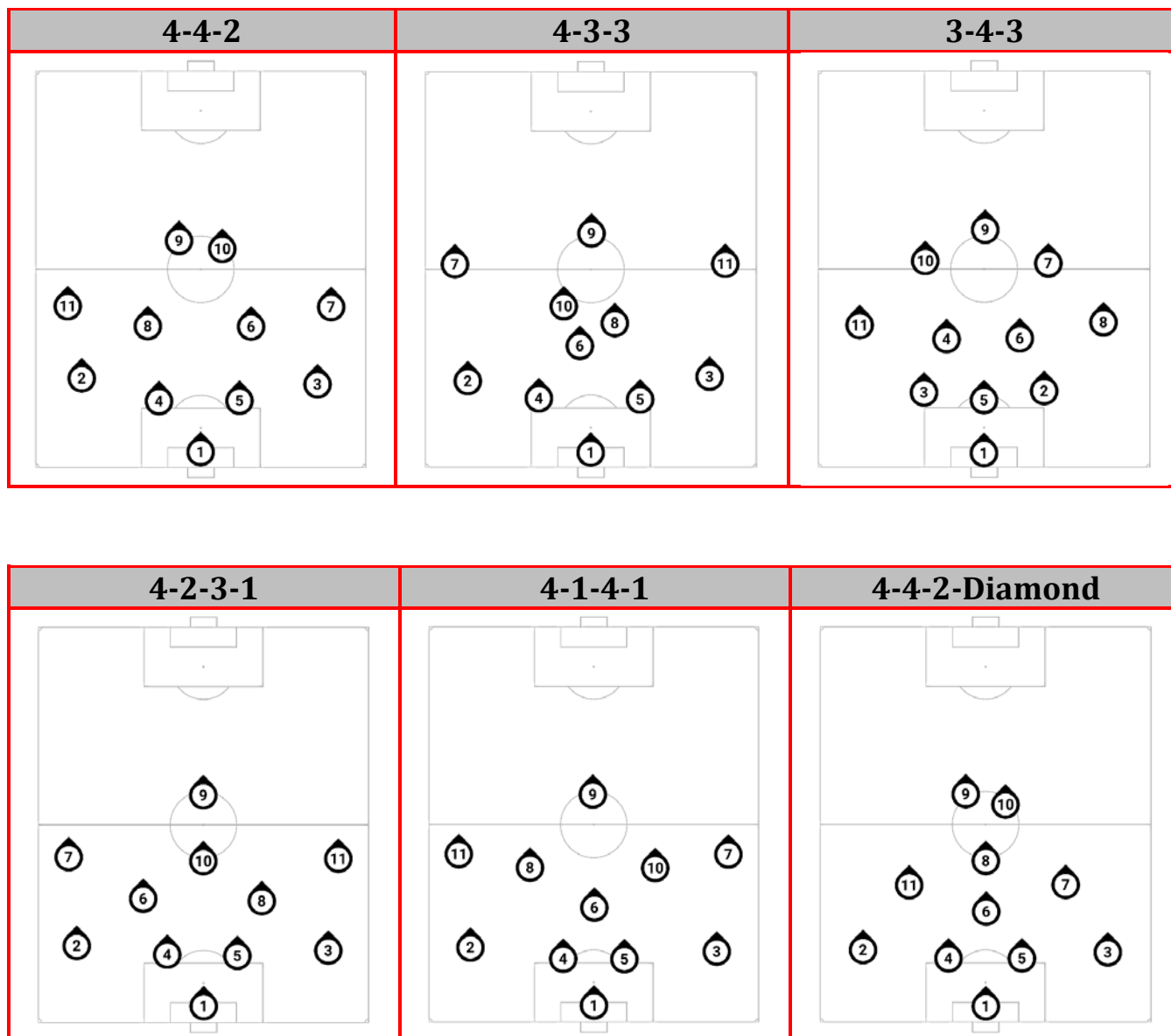
The FFC Recreation program introduces players to position numbers used widely in soccer. Coaches are expected to use player numbers and positions throughout the season to educate and prepare players for future soccer involvement.

For team sizes not included, utilize position names/numbers to fit your formation.





## Alternate 11v11 Formations



## Revision History

- 08/24/2021 – Updated list of directors. Minor updates around game format/numbers of players; other minor updates and corrections
- 03/25/2021 – Updated list of directors. Updated office address. Minor updates and adjustments
- 03/14/2019 – Updated list of directors. Updated office address
- 08/12/2018 – Updated to include U8. Emphasis throughout regarding sportsmanship and field usage.
- 02/26/2018 – Initial version of this document.

## References and Useful Links

### **Fredericksburg FC**

PO Box 3895

Fredericksburg, Virginia 22402.

Phone: 540-760-6409

[www.fredericksburgfc.org](http://www.fredericksburgfc.org)

### **FFC Park**

[1898 Mills Drive, Fredericksburg, VA 22408](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1898+Mills+Drive,+Fredericksburg,+VA+22408)

### **FFC Documents**

[FFC Policy and Procedures Handbook](#)

*FFC Website > Our Club > Club Policies and Documents > Policies and Procedures*

[FFC Recreation Soccer Rules](#)

*FFC Website > Recreation > Useful Links > FFC Recreation Soccer Rules*

### **IFAB Laws of the Game**

<http://www.theifab.com/laws>

### **US Soccer**

<https://www.ussoccer.com>

### **US Soccer Player Development Initiatives**

<https://www.ussoccer.com/coaching-education/resources/us-soccer-player-development-initiatives>

### **Writing/Planning Training Sessions**

[http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/15/How to Write a Training Session Plan 2015.pdf](http://www.usyouthsoccer.org/assets/1/15/How%20to%20Write%20a%20Training%20Session%20Plan%202015.pdf)

### **US Soccer Coaching Education**

<https://www.ussoccer.com/coaching-education>

### **United Soccer Coaches (formerly NSCAA)**

<https://unitedsoccercoaches.org>



