



Organizing Mixed-Age Group Play for Youth Soccer

1. Purpose

This document outlines the procedures and safety protocols for organizing soccer play involving youth from different age groups. The aim is to create an inclusive, developmentally appropriate environment while complying with BC Soccer's "Playing Up and Down" policy and safeguarding player well-being.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all youth players participating in training sessions, scrimmages, or informal games involving multiple age groups.

3. Definitions

- Playing Up: A player participating in an older age group than their designated age category.
- Playing Down: A player participating in a younger age group, typically due to developmental or medical reasons, and subject to BC Soccer approval.
- Age Group: Based on birth year, per BC Soccer and Canada Soccer regulations (e.g., U14 = players born in 2011).

4. Key Principles

- Safety First: Physical, emotional, and psychological safety is the top priority.
- Skill Compatibility: Mixed-age grouping is permitted where skill levels and maturity are compatible.
- Equity & Inclusion: All players should have equal access to opportunities regardless of age or gender.

5. Procedure for Organizing Mixed-Age Sessions

Step 1: Planning the Session

- Assess expected players' age range.
- Limit age gap to no more than 1 birth year where possible.
- Pre-screen for significant differences in physical development.

Step 2: Player Assessment

- Coaches assess players for:
 - Physical size and strength
 - Technical skills
 - Game awareness and maturity

- Avoid placing younger players with significantly older or more physical players unless matched in skill and maturity.

Step 3: Group Formation

- Create teams with a balance of age and ability.
- Avoid isolating younger players.
- Consider same-gender matchups when necessary, especially in co-ed environments.

Step 4: Safety Briefing

- Hold a short meeting before play:
 - Emphasize respect, sportsmanship, and safe play.
 - Reinforce rules about physical contact and aggressive behavior.
 - Appoint coaches or staff to supervise for signs of discomfort or injury.

Step 5: Monitoring and Adjustment

- Coaches observe interactions continuously.
- Make real-time adjustments to teams or remove players from matchups that seem unsafe.
- Solicit feedback from players post-session.

Step 6: Options for players unable to compete

- Any players who are unable to compete in mixed age categories due to safety or developmental discrepancy can find other options:
 - Within KSYSA - switch to rec or dev depending on current placement and appropriateness
 - External to KSYSA
 - Nelson Soccer
 - West Kootenay Soccer
 - Adult Soccer
 - Municipal Recreation Soccer

6. Risk Management Measures

- Coaches must be Respect In Sport certified.
- Maintain a minimum supervision ratio (e.g., 1 adult per 10 players).
- Document all incidents or injuries.
- Ensure all players are registered and insured under BC Soccer.

7. Parental/Guardian Communication

- Inform parents in advance if their child will play in a mixed-age session.
- Provide rationale and safety measures.

8. Evaluation & Continuous Improvement

- Conduct post-session debriefs with staff and volunteers.
 - Survey players and parents periodically.
 - Update processes annually or as BC Soccer policies evolve.
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