



Coach's Handbook
General Section
for
All Divisions

Eden Prairie Soccer Association
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EPSA Soccer Hot Line: 952 294-4645
EPSA Web site: www.edenprairesoccer.org

The Eden Prairie Soccer Association intends:
to equitably teach the fundamentals of soccer
in a non-competitive (intramural) setting;
to work to improve the skills of young players;
to foster a spirit of sportsmanship and fair play;
to stress participation so as to create a lifelong
love of playing;
to encourage parents to become involved in
their children's teams;
and to provide a setting where learning about
the game of soccer is fun and safe.

As a coach for the Eden Prairie Soccer Association, you are now part of an all-volunteer team whose intention is to let their children have fun and learn about soccer in an atmosphere where their participation is valued ahead of skill.

The "job" of coach is not meant to be painful and this handbook will help you through it. If you have any problems or need any advice, contact your age group Commissioner(s) or any other member of the Association board.

This handbook is intended as a guide for the coaches in the EPSA. An addition section, specific for your Division, contains the rules of play, offers hint on making it through a season, and contains suggested practices and ideas to help your team make progress and have some fun.

This guide is not intended as rigid dogma -- you are in charge of the team you volunteered to coach. It is a checklist intended to make sure that nothing is missed along the way. This is also an active document; any ideas that you might have to improve this handbook should be given to the President or another officer of the Association.

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The Division specific sections (for all Divisions) contain the following Appendices:

Appendix B	Player Skill Levels
Appendix C	Player Rotation Form
Appendix D	Practice Suggestions
Appendix E	Program Rules

These sections can be found on-line at www.edenprairiesoccer.org

Code of Conduct

One of the changes that has occurred since the time we played pick-up games in the local park is that adults have imposed order and regimen on sports, organizing teams and scheduling resources with all the vigor that adults bring to any activity. Kids, more than anything, want to have some fun.

As adults, we tend to read success or failure by the final score. Kids, on the other hand, are happy when they play hard and judge success or failure by the snacks at the end of the game.

As a volunteer coach, then, the EPSA asks you to remember that your primary reasons for coaching are to help your children increase their understanding of the game and to help them have some fun. Accordingly, we wish to remind each coach that they are a role model and should always act as an example to the team and for the enjoyment of the game. Please read and sign the following pledge.

A Coach's Pledge

I will remember that the game is played for and by children.

I will remember that winning effort is more important than winning.

I will show respect for the opponents, for without them there would be no game.

I will show respect for the referees and trust in their impartiality.

I will show admiration for good play by both teams.

I will remember that there are as many lessons in winning as in losing.

I will not show favoritism and will use all players equally, regardless of skill.

I will remember that all kids need praise and instruction.

I will ask "Are you having fun?" often.

I will foster an attitude that stresses teamwork, effort and respect for the game.

I will never engage in or allow abusive or harassing sideline behavior toward my team, the opponents or the referee.

I will keep the game free of profanity, put-downs and drugs (including alcohol).

I will have fun, too.

And I will remember that, when the season is over, my players will remember me for the way I treated them and the team.

Signed _____ Dated _____

Welcome To Coaching

You are now an integral part of the EPSA and of the fastest growing youth sport in America. The EPSA, which relies heavily on volunteer help, thanks you for your time. As a coach, you are the lifeblood of the soccer program -- no amount of planning or scheduling can replace the vital function served by the men and women who give up some of their time to coach kids. We hope that you have as much fun coaching soccer as your kids will have while playing it.

How The Teams Were Formed

The Commissioner was given the objective of arriving at as much balance as possible so that most of the games are fun for all teams and all players. This is a challenging task and what may look like a good player distribution before the season seldom results in good balance once the season gets underway. Players are assigned to teams in this approximate order:

- children of the head coach or a group of co-coaches and children of assistant coaches
- children of the team manager
- seasons of experience (some kids may have played before)
- sex (some divisions are coed) and weight and height (large differences can be a factor)
- finally, requests for a player to be on same team as another player

As a coach, your challenge is to work with the talent you were assigned and help them improve as soccer players.

A large program might form several "flights" of teams to help equitably balance teams. For example, a coed program usually gets more boys than girls. We might choose to separate a boys-only flight from a coed flight.

The Schedule

All Divisions play twice a week for eight weeks. (We lose at least one day in the holiday weekend. Consequently, all divisions have fourteen or fifteen events in the season.) The first four nights are generally reserved for practices and games usually start the third week. The EPSA encourages a high game-to-practice ratio, but some practices may be scheduled during the season.

Each Division meets for the same length of time for both games and practices. (Specific information on program duration is in Appendix A.) On game nights, the time before the game should be used for warm-ups and a few team drills. Except at the end of the Fall season (when darkness comes early) allow 25-30 minutes before a game for these activities.

The Equipment

Each team gets a coaches' bag and the teams' jerseys and socks at the coaches' meeting. The contents of the bag include manuals, practice equipment, a game ball, and a FIFA rule book. Contact your program Commissioner or the Equipment Director for missing equipment.

Coaches' Meeting

This meeting, held before the season, covers information important to the Division. You get:

- to meet your fellow coaches and get information on the coaches' clinics
- a preliminary team roster, schedule and a field map
- the team's equipment bag and their jerseys and socks
- first night instructions
- this Coach's Handbook which includes suggested practices and the Rules

You will be asked to contact the players on your team seven to ten days before the season starts and to tell them their team name and field number for the first night. You will also get:
the plan for handling drop-outs or adding players or teams
the plan for when and how the coach will receive the final roster and schedules
information on how rain-outs are announced and when they will be made up.
If you discover that a player no longer wants to play, contact the Commissioner immediately.

New Coaches Clinics

If you have never coached soccer before, we recommend that you attend the New Coaches Clinic. The EPSA usually runs one or two of these three-hour clinics about a week or two before the season begins. We cover the philosophy of the game, the intention of the Association, the attitude that we would like the coach to bring to the game and some hints on coaching. We also cover the rules. You will get a Coaches' Manual. (You need only attend this course once.)

“Feet-on” Clinics

The EPSA sponsors “feet-on” clinics before each season that demonstrate skills that players should work on. At these three-hour sessions, you will learn how to teach the proper techniques and how to plan a practice. Bring a ball and a good pair of tennis shoes. If the MYSA teaches this clinic, you will be awarded a “G” license. The sessions tend to be tailored to the group that shows up, so each of them is different. You may attend as many of these clinics as you wish.

Team Manager

Each team has a Team Manager who takes care of the administrative duties for the team. (This is supposed to be someone other than another member of the coach's family.) Team Managers set up the phone tree and treat schedule, co-ordinate Picture Day and hand out messages from you or the EPSA to the team.

The First Night

Any last-minute information or changes, including final rosters and schedules, should be available from the Commissioners. Send the Team Manager to get it. If you have handouts for your team (rosters, schedules, etc.), give them to the Team Manager to give to the parents. Be prepared for last-minute changes.

Before you leave the fields, be sure that none of the kids from your team are waiting for their parents to pick them up. We occasionally have problems with parents who have to get from one field location to another in too short a time. Do not leave children alone on the fields; find a Commissioner, a Board member or designate a Team Manager to help with the problem.

Jerseys and Socks

Each player gets a jersey and soccer socks. The jerseys come in about sixteen different colors but there may be games where you play a team with the same (or nearly the same) color. The visiting team should put practice jerseys over their regular jerseys for the game. The socks are worn over the shin guards. Shin guards with a built-in sock are allowed without our sock.

You will get several different size jerseys. Do not rely on the height and weight information found on the Registration form; instead assign the jerseys on the first night by sizing up your players.

Names on Jerseys

Some teams like to put the players' names on the jerseys. The usually costs \$2.00 to \$4.00 per shirt. The Team Manager will be given information on stores and businesses in the area that can do this. Wait until your roster is final before having the Team Manager put names on the jerseys as players may be added or dropped up until the start of the season.

You should be aware that some parents will find putting names on jerseys objectionable because it makes it easy for a stranger to address the child by their name.

Team Conduct

The players and parents may need to be made aware of the rules and the philosophy of the Association. If you wish, you can make a handout of the following.

Player Rules and Conduct:

During games, the jerseys must be worn over all other clothing, including jackets.
Shin guards must be worn and socks must cover the shin guards (games and practices).
No jewelry may be worn during games or practices. This includes:
 earrings, watches, rings, necklaces or bracelets
 hard plastic barrettes or head bands
 metal hair clips, combs or head bands with teeth
 friendship bands or leather straps.

Sliding tackles are not allowed.

Know the rules, play by them and play the game for the fun of it.

Never engage in an activity that might hurt another player.

Remember, without the other team there would be no game. Respect your opponents.

After each game, shake hands with your opponents and thank them for a good game.

Parent Conduct:

Display enthusiasm and good sportsmanship, even if no one else does.

Remember that the parents often get more excited than the players.

Avoid yelling at the players or coaching from the sidelines.

Never ridicule opponents, referees, coaches or teammates.

Set a good example. Respect your opponents and cheer for good play on both sides.

Learn the rules so that you can encourage your child to play within them.

The game is played for and by the children and they only want to have some fun.

Provide support, both emotional and logistical, that allows your child to enjoy sports.

To win the game is great

To play the game is greater

But to love to play the game is the greatest of all

Referees

The programs may use certified referees, who are paid. Most of our referees are young and inexperienced and will make bad calls or misinterpret the rules. You are not allowed to openly question the calls of the referee nor should you allow parents and players on the sideline to be openly critical of the referee. After the game is over, you may quietly ask the referee or the referee supervisor for clarification of the calls.

Please report all problems to the Commissioner, to the Referee Director, or to the President.

Player Skill Development

During the season, you should be able to see a player's skill improve. Appendix B (in the Division-specific section) contains a checklist of skills that the average player should become capable of achieving during the season. Please watch for the demonstration of these skills and work on them in practice if the players are not achieving them.

You may want to photocopy the checklist and give it to the parents at the beginning of the season so that they will know what is expected of their children. In this way, the parents can help you with some of the skills by working on them at home.

Player Positions

All players must be given equal playing time and, furthermore, all players must be given equal time at all positions. Exceptions are allowed for injured players or for disciplinary reasons. In the course of a single game, player rotation may not be equitable; you should attempt to average this out over several games. A player substitution form is included in Appendix C (in the Division specific section).

Picture Day

One week to ten days before Picture Day, the Picture Director will hand out the schedule to the Team Manager. If it rains, the photographers may choose to shoot indoors. If we shoot indoors, players must wear tennis shoes and not soccer cleats. Three to four weeks after the pictures are taken, the Picture Director will give the photo packages to the Team Managers.

Player Participation Award

Near the end of the season, the EPSA will pass out a participation award (a medallion) for each player to the Team Manager. You should save these for the end of the season and hand them out at the last meeting of the team.

It is the hope of the EPSA that soccer will continue to be an affordable sport for all Eden Prairie families. The medallions should eliminate the need to collect money for other end-of-the-season awards (like trophies) that may place a financial burden on some families and should ensure that all soccer players from the same family receive a comparable award.

Player Evaluation Forms

Near the end of the season, the Commissioners may give an Evaluation Form to your Team Manager. We ask you to return the Evaluation Form with the coaches' bag. The Association uses these evaluations in an attempt to equitably distribute players in subsequent seasons.

Returning The Equipment Bags

On the last night of the season, get the coaches' bag back to the Commissioner or to the shed at Flying Cloud Fields. You should go through the bag to remove items that belong to you or the team and to make sure that nothing is missing. A list of what is in the coach's bag can be found under **Equipment**, in Appendix A.

Soccer Hot Line and Soccer Web Site

If you have problems, report them to your Commissioner, to the Association President (or to any member of the EPSA Board) or leave a message on the Soccer Hot Line at 294-4645. You can also report problems to the Association President (or to any member of the EPSA Board) by sending a message through our web site: www.edenpraireisoccer.org.



Appendix A

Association Information

and

Division Information

Eden Prairie Soccer Association

The Eden Prairie Soccer Association (EPSA) is an all-volunteer, non-profit organization that administers the non-competitive (intramural) soccer program for children who live or go to school in Eden Prairie. A Board of Directors sets the policies and directs the program, and is comprised of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Division Commissioners and the Directors (Audit, Accounting, Clothing, Coaching, Computer, Equipment, Fields, Pictures, Purchasing, Referee, Registration and Scholarship).

The Association Board meets the first Tuesday of every month. (There are exceptions; see the calendar for the exact time and place.) Board meetings are open to everyone. Usually, the Officers, Directors and Commissioners (or a representative for each division) attend.

The City of Eden Prairie provides and maintains the soccer fields for our use. Most of our games are played at the Flying Cloud Fields sports complex but some games may have to be scheduled at other fields scattered throughout the city.

The City maintains the large goal frames that some programs use. The Association provides and maintains all other equipment including the nets and the small goal frames. (See **Field Size**, Appendix A.)

All Board members are unpaid volunteers. We are the parents of the kids who play soccer and we operate under the motto "Volunteers meet the nicest people." If we don't get enough volunteer help for any of our programs we may have to cancel programs. Fortunately, it has been a long time since we have had to do that.

Our website is: edenprairiesoccer.org

Eden Prairie Soccer Club

The Eden Prairie Soccer Club (EPSC) administers the competitive (travel) soccer program. The EPSA and the EPSC work together to provide a wide range of soccer experiences for our kids. One reason our older programs are smaller than our younger programs is because many kids decide that they want to play a more intense brand of soccer. We like to feel that the volunteer coaches in the Association give young players the confidence they need to play for the Club by teaching them fundamental skills and instilling in them a love of the game.

Their website is: epsoccerclub.com

MYSA

The Minnesota Youth Soccer Association (MYSA) oversees youth competitive soccer in the state and has expanded to include those youth recreational programs who choose to be affiliated with them. The EPSA was part of the recreational program from 1993 to 1999 and rejoined MYSA between 2003 and 2005. This year, we are not affiliated with the MYSA.

The Association reviews our affiliation with MYSA annually or biannually by forming a committee to review the benefits and weigh the costs of our participation in the MYSA.

Their website is: minnesotayouthsoccer.org

Soccer Season

Registration is announced in the Community Calendar, ads are run in the local newspapers, and flyers are passed out to Eden Prairie schools. Spring Registration takes place on-line in February. Fall Registration occurs in early.

The Association runs two eight-week seasons. The Spring season begins about May 1 and runs through late June. The Fall season begins in the middle of August and runs through the middle of October. We anticipate that each season will provide an opportunity for nearly 1,750 Eden Prairie kids to play soccer.

The Club runs a Spring/Summer season that stretches from late Spring into July or August. About 900 kids sign up for EPSC soccer and some of them may play EPSA Fall soccer. The Club sometimes runs a Fall season and Winter training programs for their players as well.

Player Fees

Each player is charged \$50 per season to play Association soccer. A late fee is added if they register late. Per player, the program fees player cover:

	A-C Divisions	D-G Divisions
Jersey and socks	\$9.25	\$11.00
Pictures	\$7.25	\$7.25
Paid referees	\$6.50	\$6.50
Coaches (shirts, books, fees and gift)	\$6.00	\$5.50
Insurance and background check fees	\$5.50	\$5.00
Equipment repair, field repair and storage	\$4.50	\$4.00
Electronic registration fee	\$3.75	\$3.75
End-of-season award	\$3.25	\$3.25
Board expenses (clinics, licenses, misc.)	\$2.25	\$2.00
Advertising, copies and miscellaneous	\$1.75	\$1.75

All expenses are estimates. Actual costs vary with the number of participants in each of the programs and with the requirements of the specific divisions.

Late fees, which increase as the start of the season approaches, are viewed as necessary because of the additional administrative headaches caused by attempting to add players to programs already underway. However, they are not meant to be a penalty for those players who had legitimate reasons for not being able to get to Registration and may be waived by any member of the Board of Directors, including the Commissioners.

The late fees pay for a few additional expenses such as board shirts and the distinctive windbreakers used to identify board members on the fields.

Divisions

The EPSA segregates programs by age (grade is only a guide) and, for all but the "A" and "G" programs, by sex. This allows us to tailor each of the divisions to the differing needs of each age. Below are the highlights of the program differences:

Division	Spring Grade	Fall Grade	Age Range	Programs	Team Size	Players /Side	Ball Size	Total Time per Night
"A"	Pre-K	K	1 year	Coed	7 or 8	5	#3	75 minutes
"B"	K	1	1 year	Boys & Girls	7 or 8	5	#3	80 minutes
"C"	1, 2	2, 3	2 years	Boys & Girls	9 or 10	7	#3	90 minutes
"D"	3, 4	4, 5	2 years	Boys & Girls	Up to 13	9	#4	90 minutes
"E"	5, 6	6, 7	2 years	Boys & Girls	Up to 13	8	#4	100 minutes
"F"	7, 8	8, 9	2 years	Boys & Girls	Up to 11	8	#5	110 minutes
"G"	9-12	10-12	3-4 yrs	Coed	Up to 18	11	#5	110 minutes

If a child has been held back a year in school, we may request they be placed in the next older division. Note that a player will stay in the same division for both the Spring and the Fall seasons because they will graduate to the next higher grade between our seasons.

Each division plays under slightly different game rules; the major differences are:

Division	Field Size	Periods	Time/Period	Goal-keeper	Offside	Paid Referee	Standings Kept?
"A"	30x50 yards	Quarters	6 minutes	No	No	Some	No
"B"	30x50 yards	Quarters	8 minutes	No	No	Yes	No
"C"	30x50 yards	Quarters	10 minutes	Yes	Flagrant	Yes	No
"D"	50x70 yards	Halves	25 minutes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
"E"	50x70 yards	Halves	30 minutes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
"F"	50x70 yards	Halves	35 minutes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
"G"	70x90 yards	Halves	40 minutes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No

Equipment

Each player must have their own ball, must wear shin guards at all practices and games, and should bring a waterbottle every night. If they wear shorts, the Association prefers black shorts so that the team presents a "uniform" appearance. Each player will be supplied with a jersey in a distinctive color and with socks that must cover the shin guards. In addition, each division uses different equipment. The coaches' bag for each color program contains:

Division	Game Ball	Vests	Cones	Pump	Clip-board	Whistle & Cord	Goalie Gloves	Goalie Shirt	Soccer Manual	Rule Book
"A"	#3	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
"B"	#3	4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
"C"	#3	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
"D"	#4	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
"E"	#4	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
"F"	#5	7	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
"G"	#5	-	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

The Commissioner carries a bright red bag that contains a first-aid kit, cold packs, bandages, antiseptic swipes, scissors, a big air pump and a pressure gauge.

Note: Additional first-aid material (cold packs and bandages) can be found in the shed. The emergency phone is located on the side of the shed that faces the road.

Safety

The safety of the player is of prime importance. Accordingly, shin guards must be worn and must be covered by socks. Players may not wear jewelry, watches, bracelets, wrist bands, rings, necklaces, hard barrettes, hard head bands or earrings during practices or games.

An injury on the field is cause for immediate stoppage of play by the referee.

Lightning, with or without rain, is sufficient cause to cancel at any point in the game.

Rain-outs And Cancellations

Except for severe weather, soccer is played in all conditions. We play in the cold and the wet (and, on rare occasions, in the snow). The kids seldom notice the weather because they are running around. The parents are the ones who are most inconvenienced by rain and cold.

Still, soccer is an outdoor sport and is subject to cancellation and one or more nights will be lost. In bad weather, the President will make a decision about one hour before games are scheduled to start. If he decides to cancel, he will call the Commissioners who will call your Team Manager who should contact the players no later than thirty minutes before start time.

The President may try to leave a message on the EPSA Soccer Hot Line (294-4645) about 45 minutes before the scheduled start time. If the President decides to play, there will not be a phone call; show up on the fields if you have not received a phone call.

Once the President's deadline has passed, it may still be necessary to cancel "on-the-field". This decision is the Commissioner's responsibility until after the start time. After the start time, you or any member of the Board of Directors can order players off the field.

Rescheduled Games

We sometimes lose a game because a team has a conflict with play on a particular night. To reschedule, the two coaches should agree on a day and time and confirm, with the President or the Field Director, that a field is available.

Late Parents

Sometimes, a child is not picked up by a parent when practice is over. The coach and the Team Manager are not baby-sitters nor does the Association have the resources to stay late.

Do not leave a child alone at the fields. Contact the Commissioner or a Board Member if you have a forgotten child. You can use the phone at the shed to notify the police that there is a forgotten child and wait for the police to arrive.

More often, children are temporarily "lost" because an early end to the night or a sudden weather change has left them separated from their ride who may be on another field. Have these kids wait with at a safe place (like in or near the shed).

Recurring problems should be reported to the Commissioner who may take the children to the Office of Public Safety (Police Station) near the City Offices on Mitchell Road.

Names On Jerseys

Some teams elect to put their players' names on the back of their jerseys. The Association does not pay for these letters; it is up to the Team Manager to determine if the team wants it, to collect the money from the parents, and to get the lettering.

Most, but not all, sporting goods stores will heat-press letters into jerseys. With the large turnover in sporting goods stores recently, it may take a few phone calls to find the places that still do it. Information on where to go to get lettering will be available at the board meetings.

You should be aware that some parents will find putting names on jerseys objectionable because it makes it easy for a stranger to address the child by their name.

The Shed At Flying Cloud Fields

The EPSA and the baseball and football associations store equipment in the shed at Flying Cloud Fields. We keep first aid materials (bandages and cold packs), spare nets and net repair hardware in our area. We also keep referee equipment (such as game cards, linesmen flags and corner flags) in the shed and it serves as our Lost-and-Found.

Sometimes a non-profit organization will open the snack shack to sell drinks and candy. Any organization that might be interested should contact the President.

Emergency Phone

A phone on the side of the shed that faces the road can be used for emergencies. 911 can be called without a quarter.

Awards and Trophies

The Association gives each player a participation award at the end of the season. The EPSA does not provide (and strongly discourages) team or skill trophies.

We want to ensure that, whatever is given, every player gets an equal award. We stress participation and the players should be rewarded simply for being there, not for how well or how poorly they played. The Association also prefers that any extra awards be given to the players away from the field in consideration of those teams who do not give out other awards.

Lost And Found

As you might expect, a lot of "things" get left on the fields. At year-end, any unclaimed clothing is donated to a local charity (like P.R.O.P.), the plastic waterbottles go to Hennepin County Recycling and any other unclaimed items are donated to programs that have a need for them. Bring anything you find to the shed.

Problems

During the course of the season, you may hear a few complaints or run into a few problems. You don't have to face any problems on your own. The Association has years of experience that can be used to address any issues that come up. In all cases, any concern that you have should be brought to the attention of the Commissioner or the President.