

# Getting Started in Under 8 Soccer

## Montclair Soccer Club

# U8 Parents

# Guide

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## About Montclair Soccer Club's U8 Program

The Montclair Soccer Club's Under 8 program is a developmental soccer program, where kids learn by playing on a much smaller field with fewer players than in full-size regulation play. The emphasis of the program is on FUN, and learning the basic skills (dribbling, passing, shooting). To promote the joy of the sport without worry of winning or losing, no scores or team standings are kept.

As members of the Positive Coaching Alliance, we expect all coaches and parents to model behavior consistent with good sportsmanship and help create and promote a positive environment for children to grow as players and individuals. We honor the game, our opponent and each other. For more information about the Montclair Soccer Club (MSC), see [www.montclairsoccer.org](http://www.montclairsoccer.org). See [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org) for information about MSC's parent organization, the Jack London Youth Soccer Sports League.

### Format for U8 Soccer

Under 8 games are played with 7-a-side (with one of those players a goalkeeper) on a small field with small goals. A full size regulation game is 11-a-side, with fields and goals nearly double the size of the U8 format. The essence of playing a modified game at the younger ages is this: fewer players and a smaller field mean more opportunity for the kids to get their foot onto the ball and develop their skills.

Games are 40 minutes long, divided into two halves of 20 minutes. Each half is further divided with a short break between each 10 minute quarter to ease substitution of players. Every player should expect to play at least on half of the game.

### The Golden Rule (the 4 Goal Rule)

In youth recreational soccer, the objective is make sure that teams are challenged *and* having a good competitive experience. We all love to win, but a team that wins all of its games in a season, or conversely loses all of its games, is not having an optimal experience. If a team is winning all of its games, players are likely not challenged enough. If a team is losing all of its games, players are probably feeling at times less like soccer players and feeling more like orange practice cones. The ideal developmental outcome is for a team to win half their games and lose half their games in the season.

We do not formally track statistics fore game results (wins / losses), but coaches are asked to submit information to the Age Coordinators and Match Secretary about the game experience. During the season, the Age Coordinators and Match Secretary work with coaches to try to appropriately match up teams for games.

Good sportsmanship should be exhibited in all games. Coaches are required to follow a 4 Goal Rule (a.k.a. The Golden Rule). Any team leading by 4 or more goals should remove a player for each goal over a 3 goal lead. The key here is to honor the intent, not the exact letter, of this rule: *evening up the match*. For example, removing one of the least skilled players would meet the rule nominally, but certainly would not be considered good sportsmanship. Good sportsmanship would involve taking steps to make the game challenging to **both** teams.

In games where there is a mismatch, the referee should DISCRETELY remind the winning coach to so adjust. The winning team should also make any other adjustments to limit the mismatch. Referees are required to enforce this rule during the game; coaches are expected to honor the intent of the rule.

## Parent Participation on the Team

Every parent is expected to help run their child's team. Being a supportive part of your child's team infrastructure will go a long way towards enriching your child's sports experience. Every coach will have his/her own style of organizing the team, but the things that need to be done for every team are basically the same every season.

Youth soccer is a community program, not a fee-for-service activity. Registration fees go towards uniforms, fields and equipment, but parents do the coaching, refereeing and administration. **Parental participation is required, not optional, for your child to play soccer.** Actively participating in support of your child's team will help your child's coach avoid burn-out. At the end of this Parents Guide is a "**Team Help Wanted List.**" Talk to your child's coach or team manager at the start of the season and sign up to help out.

## Parent Participation in the Club

Parent volunteers run the Montclair Soccer Club. The Club serves over 1,200 kids. Each family is required to fulfill the club Volunteer Requirement. **EVERY FAMILY IS EXPECTED TO FULFILL ONE OF THE VOLUNTEER POSITIONS (6-8 hours) PER SEASON. ANY FAMILY UNABLE TO FULFILL THE VOLUNTEER REQUIREMENT MAY PAY A BUY-OUT FEE OF \$100.**

Head Coaches, ACTIVE Assistant Coaches, team managers, referees, team volunteer coordinators, team PCA coordinators, Board members, and Club Officers are exempt from fulfilling additional volunteer roles. See [www.montclairsoccer.org](http://www.montclairsoccer.org) to see a list of volunteer positions at the Club level. Talk to your coach about ways in which you can volunteer to fulfill your family's Club Volunteer Requirement.

Club meetings are usually held once a month at Bishop O'Dowd High School. These meetings are the place to get involved, hear what is going on within the Club or League, and ask questions. Check [www.montclairsoccer.org](http://www.montclairsoccer.org) for scheduled meeting dates. You are encouraged to attend, or have a team representative attend these meetings.

## Team and Sideline Ground Rules

Coaches have different coaching styles and methods of organizing teams, but certain things are the same from team to team. Here are important Ground Rules for parents:

### Team Ground Rules

1. **Know your child.** If this team is more for you than your child, maybe you should wait until both of you feel the same way.
2. By joining this team **you are making a commitment to being at games and practices.** We cannot have a team without active participation by parents. So please, don't overbook your child on game day. Most coaches understand schedule conflicts on occasion, but keep in mind you are making a commitment to get your child consistently to the majority of practices and games. If your child cannot make the majority of practices and games, then you need to reconsider your decision to have your child play organized soccer.
3. **If your child is unable to make a practice or game, tell the coach.** To plan practice activities and game line ups, coaches need to know who is going to be there. If a team is missing too many players on game day, that match may have to be forfeited. This is unfair to teammates AND the opposition. It's okay for a coach to be flexible. But if parents take the commitment too casually, then the team won't work.

4. **Players should be on time**, ready to go (with shinguards on and fully covered by soccer socks, in full uniform, shoe laces tied, hair pulled back if it's long) when practice begins. Players should be in full uniform and ready to go at least 15 minutes or more (each coach may set a different time for players to arrive before the game start) before game time.
5. **This is team, not child care**. Please treat it accordingly.
6. At practices and games, **no child is to be left unsupervised**. Children should not be sent to the bathroom alone or anyplace where you can't see them. It's great when parents use the team as a social opportunity. It helps create a team bond. However, when parents would rather visit than supervise, the team has just become child care. All games are in public venues, and parents are expected to take responsibility for caring for their children. At all practices, at least one adult needs to be present (in addition to the coach and assistant coach) to help the coach(es) supervise the players.
7. **Be on time to** drop off and pick u your child. It can be embarrassing for a child to arrive late and sometimes difficult for a child to transition into playing after everyone else has already started playing. Teach your child respect for the coach and teammates by being on time. Many teams have a plan in case a parent doesn't show up, like "the coach will usually wait 15 minutes after practice, then take the child home and parents can pick up there." If there's an organized car pool, let the coach know so that s/he can make sure that the kids leave with the right adult.
8. If a child is having a bad day, the coach will need help from parents to help support this child. If your child is apprehensive about being on the field, an adult responsible for that child must help out. Don't leave your child's coach with the responsibility of dedicating the practice or game to consoling your child. Help get **your child in a coachable mindset to play**.
9. If your child has **special medical needs** (asthma, for example), inform your child's coach, assistant coach *and* team manager in person *and* via email. Make sure a parent or guardian is always present with appropriate medication for the child at all practices and games.
10. If your child has a food allergy, inform your child's coach, assistant coach *and* team manage in person *and* via email. If you want other families on the team to make an accommodation for your child's food allergy, volunteer to bring snack to the **first** game so you can educate parents on what works for your child. Follow up with an email to ALL team families. If that doesn't work out, you should bring a separate snack for your child each week.

## Sideline Rules

11. **Criticizing the referee is NEVER allowed**. We – players, coaches, referees – are all students of the game. Referees are human and make mistakes. Especially at the U8 level, referees are learning on the job. If you as a parent have a concern about the way the game is being handled, talk to your coach. Only a coach may approach the referee, and typically that is done only at quarters and halftime breaks. During the match parents should NEVER call out to the referee. ***We maintain a zero tolerance policy towards dissent with the referee.***
12. **Parents are expected to model behavior consistent with good sportsmanship**. Cheer for ALL players, including the opponent. Parents that yell excessively, or are abusive, will be asked to leave the field. Parents that disrespect the official, opponent, coach, players of either team, or parents of either team will be asked to leave the field. Parents that consistently demonstrate these behaviors will not only be asked to leave the game, they will be asked to leave the team. If a situation arises that merits reporting, parents or coaches may submit a Serious Problem Report. See [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org) for more information.

13. **Parents cheer; coaches coach.** If you want to coach from the sideline, sign up to be an assistant coach or head coach. If you are not prepared to come to every practice and help out as a coach, you should NOT be coaching from the sidelines during games.

Coaches and referees should actively discourage parents from coaching from the sideline. It's confusing for the players to receive coaching direction from multiple sideline sources. At games, parents should NOT call out instructions to players from the sideline.

If you want to be an assistant coach, you must first obtain permission from the head coach AND you must register as an assistant coach. Every coach, be it head coach or assistant coach, must register by filling out a SAY Soccer volunteer form.

14. **During games parents are not allowed on the field.** Parents should stay on the sidelines during the game. If during a game your child is injured, ask the referee if you may enter the field and assist your child. If you see your child hurt, it's natural to want to rush onto the field. But, it is very important to first let the referee stop game play and get the referee's permission before entering the field. Just like rubber necking in traffic at the scene of an accident, it is dangerous during a game when some players continue to play while others are stopped, focused on an injured player.

If your child is injured and the referee has not noticed, ask the coach to get the referee's attention. It is customary for coaches to teach players to "take a knee" after a referee has stopped a game for an injury.

Parents and coaches are not allowed behind the goals during the game.

15. **Give the kids and the referee room on the sideline.** During games, team families and coaches are expected to stand 3 feet from the sideline. The referee needs enough room to see the sideline to know if the ball has gone out of bounds. The kids need room on the sideline to take throw ins. Parents and coaches need to stand well back from the sideline, showing the kids that the touchline is an important line for out of bounds.
16. **Coaches are responsible for ALL the sideline behavior on their side of the field.** Either the coach or referee may require offending spectators to leave the field. If a spectator(s) fails to respond to a team official's request to cease and desist from improper behavior, the referee is empowered to terminate the match.
17. **Cheer, but don't criticize.** Know the difference between cheering ("nice pass," "good run," "way to go") and criticizing ("run faster," "kick harder," "what are you doing?"). Kids are positively motivated by cheering, but few children are well motivated by criticism during a game. Practices, not games, are the best time for constructive feedback.
18. **No dogs are allowed at any time at practices or games.** If you bring a dog, you'll be asked to leave with your dog or put your dog in the car. Bringing a dog onto a field can result in revocation of our field permit. Don't make your child's coach be the dog police. We love family dogs, but for soccer practices and games you must leave your dog at home.
19. **Parents are responsible for the guests they bring and/or invite to the games.** This includes the dogs of any guests as well. No dogs are allowed at any fields.
20. **Pick up all litter** after games and practices. After every practice and every game, leave the field **cleaner** than how you found it.
21. **No alcohol** is allowed on the field. Alcoholic beverages (before, during, after) at the field for practices, games or tournaments is prohibited.

## **Forming Up the Teams**

The Age Coordinators do their best in forming up the teams. The only way to ensure that your child secures a placement on a specific team is to coach that team yourself, or volunteer to become a licensed referee. We often hear from parents: "I know the team is full, but can't you just make an exception this one time and add my child?" If a team is full, it is simply unfair to over-pack the roster. Players cannot develop if their game time is limited because the team has too many players.

## **Preparing Your Child to Play Soccer**

Every year children arrive at the first soccer practice of their lives. But, that first soccer practice should NOT be the first time a child has worn his/her soccer shoes and gear or kicked a ball. If you want your child to have a fun experience playing soccer, help get them prepared by playing with them BEFORE the season starts.

One of the best ways to get a child interested in soccer is to play "soccer catch" with them: kick the ball back and forth with your child. If your child has trouble connecting with the ball, move in close and kick the ball short distances back and forth. If your child has trouble kicking the ball forcefully, try playing soccer catch on a smooth surface like an outdoor basketball court. Above all, make it fun. The aim isn't perfect technique at this point. The goal is to get your child comfortable in his/her soccer shoes and kicking the ball with enjoyment before the season starts.

## **Equipment Your Child Will Need and Where to Find It**

The Club provides every player with a uniform jersey (top), shorts, and socks. The shorts and socks are for your child to keep. The jersey should be returned to the Club after your child has outgrown it.

Parents need to outfit their child with:

- soccer shoes (soccer cleats or turf shoes – not baseball cleats)
- shin guards
- water bottle
- size 3 soccer ball

Soccer balls come in 3 sizes -- 3, 4, 5 -- with size 3 the smallest. Your child will need a size 3 ball. Size 4 or 5 balls are simply too large for a player at this young age.

The Club provides the coach with balls for use at practices, but every parent should buy their child a soccer ball. Children should bring a soccer ball to practice that they can share. If your child has trouble sharing a special ball, get him/her a ball and designate it specifically as a practice ball to share.

Why should your child bring a ball to practices when the coach has a whole bag of them? First and most importantly, you want to get your child into the habit of warming up independently with a ball. Second, it helps to have extra balls for practice. Third, in the infrequent event that your coach is running late, you can help your child's team get going on practicing if the players have brought their own balls.

Your best bet for soccer equipment is a soccer specialty store like Soccer Post (510-523-5700) in Alameda, SoccerPro in Pleasant Hill (925-685-0440), and the Sunset Soccer Stores in San Francisco & San Rafael. Local sports store like Montclair Sports, Sports Authority, or Big 5 carry soccer equipment, but selection may be limited.

One of our veteran coaches recommends that players wear turf shoes all year round. Turf shoes tend to be more comfortable and offer more stability for knees and ankles than traditional cleats. But turf

shoes in kids' sizes are hard to come by. One of our coaches has found turf shoes online at: <http://www.pittsburghsoccer.com/youthturfs.htm>.

When fitting your child with shoes, buy them to fit **this** season. If soccer shoes are too big or too small, they'll hurt. If a shoe is too wide or too narrow, try a different brand. Baseball cleats are NOT allowed.

### **Positive Coaching Alliance Participation**

In 2002 the Jack London Youth Soccer Sports League formed a partnership with the Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the sports experience for children by helping youth sports organizations like ours build a culture of positive coaching. For more information about Positive Coaching, see [www.positivecoach.org](http://www.positivecoach.org) and the Positive Coaching section of [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org).

The mission of Jack London's PCA partnership is to build and maintain a positive competitive environment for its youth soccer programs. Ed Shriger, former Jack London Coaching Director, described it best: "We want to weave the positive coaching model into the social fabric of Jack London youth soccer." The Jack London Youth Soccer Sports League believes kids playing soccer can best have fun, build character and develop athletic skills in a positive coaching environment. As of November 2004, over 2,600 parents and coaches in our League have participated in Positive coaching (PCA) workshops.

**Participation in a Positive Coaching (PCA) workshop is required for all new parents & coaches.** Participating in a Positive Coaching (PCA) workshop once as a parent or coach is like buying your child a soccer ball: it's simply something that you need to do for your child to play. Attendance at a Positive Coaching (PCA) workshop earns coaches and parents "PCA Certification" for life – you never lose this certification. There are three ways that parents can help implement 'positive coaching':

- 1) Redefining "Winner,"
- 2) Filling the Emotional Tank, and
- 3) Honoring the Game.

#### **Redefining "Winner"**

In youth sports our goal is to produce young people who will be **winners in life** as well as on the field. To help our children get the most out of competitive sports, we need to redefine what it means to be a "Winner." We believe that winners:

- Make maximum effort.
- Continue to learn and improve.
- Refuse to let mistakes (or fear of making mistakes) stop them.

#### **Filling the "Emotional Tank"**

Research shows that the home team wins about 60% of the time because of the emotional support a team receives when it plays in front of its fans. We want our players to have a **portable home team advantage**. The portable advantage is our kids "Emotional Tank," which we can fill with a positive atmosphere and appropriate praise, and which we can drain with criticism and negativity.

#### **Honoring the Game**

Sportsmanship may seem an out-of-date concept when professionals and their fans act in ways we would not want our children to imitate. We intend to reverse this trend in our league by "Honoring the Game."

Honoring the Game gets to the ROOTS of the matter, where ROOTS stands for **respect** for

- **R**ules: We don't bend the rules to win. We respect the letter and spirit of the rules.
- **O**pponents: A worthy opponent is a gift that helps us to play to our highest potential.
- **O**fficials: We treat officials with respect even when we disagree.
- **T**eammates: We never do anything that would embarrass our team.
- **S**elf: We try to live up to our own standards regardless of what others do.

At the end of this Guide are two copies of a Parent Agreement that outlines some of these important concepts. One is for you to keep, and the other is for you to sign and turn into your child's coach.

### **Game & Practice Locations**

Coaches will be notified of where U8 games and practices will be held about 2 weeks prior to the start of the season, once permits for fields have been issued. Directions to all fields can be found at [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org) or [www.montclairsoccer.org](http://www.montclairsoccer.org). Here are directions to fields we've used in the past for games and practices for our younger age divisions:

**Shepherd Canyon Park:** From Hwy 13 south, take the Park Blvd exit. Turn left onto Park Blvd and go about .1 mile. Make a left onto Mountain Blvd. Make a right onto Snake Road. Follow Snake about 1/3 mile. Keep right at the intersection, and the road then becomes Shepherd Canyon. The fields are on the right side just past the fire station. Parking is at the far end of the grassy area.

**Montera Middle School (5555 Ascot Drive, Oakland):** From Hwy 13 south, take the Park Blvd exit. Turn left onto Park Blvd and go about .1 mile. Make a right onto Mountain Blvd and go .3 miles. Continue on Mountain and it becomes Ascot Drive. Montera is on the left at 5555 Ascot Drive. The fields are in back of the school. To get to the fields, take a left from Ascot onto Scout. From Scout make a left into the back of the school. You'll see a large parking lot. Go through the gate and past the first parking lot. The fields are on the right near the second parking lot.

**Kings Estates:** Take I-580 to the Keller Ave. exit. Exit toward Mountain Blvd.; stay straight to go on to Fontaine St. In approx. one mile, take slight right to go onto Golf Links Rd. Turn right onto El Monte Ave., and then right onto Aster Ave.

**Merritt College:** Take I-580 to the 35th Avenue exit. Proceed east on 35th Avenue towards the hills. At the Warren Freeway (Highway 13) 35th Avenue becomes Redwood Road. Continue on Redwood Road up the hill and turn right at the second stoplight onto Campus Drive. After about a quarter mile, turn left onto the College grounds. Take the second left to enter a series of parking lots. On weekends, you may use any of the white painted spaces not reserved for special use. Bring two quarters to buy a parking permit, which must be placed on your dashboard (not required on Sunday). Walk across the basketball courts and up the ramp to the soccer fields or use the stairs from the innermost lot. The Deputy Sheriff will ticket improperly parked cars. **ABSOLUTELY NO DOGS ALLOWED!** Field #1 is the U14-and-up field located on the first level. It is adjacent to the tennis courts. Field #2 is the U14-and-up field to the right, closest to the football field. Field #3 is the U10 field closest to the stairs from the parking lot. Keep adults and children away from the discus/hammer throw cage.

### **What Happens If..**

Most of the time things go smoothly during the season. But, there may be times when you have concerns. For example, what should you do if a disagreement between two kids at school gets carried over to the practice field, or hurtful teasing or taunting occurs on the field between children?

If there is a problem within your team, we encourage you to first try to deal with it directly. Most conflicts are often best handled by the people directly involved in person or by phone. Perhaps one of the least effective ways to resolve conflict is through email, where there is potential for tone to be misread and flame wars to erupt.

Direct communication is best, and the hope is that the coach and parents would be able work out resolution of conflict within the team. If possible, plan for a conversation outside of the hectic space of soccer practice or games. The idea is to aim for communication, not confrontation.

The youth sports experience is important, and our Club and League have made a serious commitment to creating a culture of positive coaching in alliance with the PCA. There may be times, however, when

you have exhausted all the means you know of to solve a problem within your team. If this is the case, the next step is to enlist help from your Club, and if needed, the League. Options you should consider are: getting advice, asking for disciplinary intervention, or filing a serious problem report.

- Getting Advice - If you encounter a problem within your team that you are unable to solve, you may contact your Age Coordinator or the Club's Coaching Director for **advice on what to do next**.
  - Example: *"The coach is very critical of all the players. I've tried talking to the coach, but can't seem to get through. My kid, and the other kids on the team, don't seem to be having a good time. A few of the players are talking about quitting. What can I do?"*
- Asking for Intervention – You should contact the **Club's Disciplinary Committee if you encounter a problem that you think merits disciplinary intervention**.
  - Example: *There's a coach on a team that we played last week who encourages their players to play very rough and do slide tackles (which are illegal in U6 and U8 soccer). Whenever a player from their team knocks over another player, the team's sideline yells out encouragement. Our coach tried to talk to the opposing coach and their parent referee during half time and after the game, but it didn't do any good. What should I do?*
- Serious Problem Report – **If you encounter a serious problem, you can file a Serious Problem Report with the League**. Serious Problem Reports should be used very judiciously; they merit very close scrutiny by the League Board, which oversees the 7,500+ players in the U10 and above age divisions. If you encounter a problem serious enough to file a Serious Problem Report, you should notify the Club Disciplinary Committee as well. If a situation arises that merits reporting, parents, coaches or referees may submit a Serious Problem Report. See [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org) for more information.
  - Example: *At my child's game today a physical fight broke out between the referee and a parent from my team.*

# 12 Things I Know for Sure

## A Youth Soccer Coach's Notes from the Sidelines

1. The **Number One Question** I'm asked by parents of young, new players is: "**Why isn't my kid hungry for the ball out there?**" The two emotions I see most on the faces of the younger players who are completely new to soccer are fear and confusion. Think about why for a moment. We spend a lot of time teaching our children to share, be nice, wait in line and take turns. During a soccer match, we suddenly expect these same children to steal the ball, cut in line, and not share the ball with the other team. But if kids learn these "bad" behaviors in the context of healthy assertiveness, competitive play and good sportsmanship, then soccer can be a safe place for them to learn skills -- street smarts, boardroom savvy, survival skills -- that extend far beyond soccer. Spend some time (outside of game day) kicking the ball with your child and in simple language explain that during a game, they get to be different and why.
2. **Cheer Wildly; Don't Coach** – At young ages, **kids cannot process multiple commands**. At young ages simple directions like: "get the ball" and "run towards the goal" are appropriate. Avoid sequenced directions like: "run and steal the ball and then pass it inside to Katie." And, above all, avoid telling kids **how** to do something: "run faster," "pass left," "kick it harder." Wondering what's appropriate to shout out in support of your child from the sideline? Chris Curran of Anderson Township, Ohio, who has coached and refereed soccer for 12 years, encourages parents to show the same restraint as they show at other school events. "If you wouldn't stand up and start shouting 'Sing! Sing it louder, Suzy!' during a school choir concert, you shouldn't spend the whole soccer match screaming, 'Kick it! Kick it harder!'"
3. **Teach Problem Solving** - Coached positively, **soccer is a powerful way to teach good decision-making** and to build confidence. The Dutch model of soccer is built entirely around this concept: everything in soccer is a problem to be solved. Unlike some other sports, soccer players cannot be closely coached at game time. Players make hundreds of decisions independently after the starting whistle blows: where to run, when to tackle or shoot, when to dribble versus pass, etc.. Encouraged by coaches & parents, players become creative thinkers and decision makers, smart players who excel individually and as a team.
4. **Never Compare Your Child to Another** child. "Why don't you run as hard as Jenny?" "Look how Thomas gets to the ball first." **Comparing one player to another is not healthy** for a child. And I haven't seen many productive interactions between parents when they begin to compare their kids to others. Give your child an internal framework to measure his or her progress. It's not about who's the best out there; it's about what's best for each individual child.
5. **The Worst Time to Talk to Your Child** about soccer is on the way to or from the game. The most basic "parenting 101" fundamentals are: make your child feel safe and make your child feel loved. This may sound over-the-top lovie-dovie, but thousands of years ago even the Greeks knew that **"without a sense of safety there can be no learning."** It takes courage for a kid to show up to a soccer field to play a new sport on a team of kids, some or all they may not know prior to the season. Even as an adult player, I still get pre-game jitters. When parents ask me what they should say to their child on game day, here's what I suggest:  

On the way to the game: **"I'm looking forward to watching you play"** and **"I love you"**  
On the way home: **"I love you"** and **"what do you want to eat?"**
6. **See You at the Game**. If you sign your child up to play soccer, then **you should be at the games**. Games are at public parks, and parents should be present for that reason alone. But if coming to watch your child's game is not one of the highlights of your week, then something bigger is wrong.

Soccer is a way for families to spend time together, and an opportunity to create an extended family of friends with other players and their families. If you plan on doing the “drop and roll” (dropping your kid off for games instead of watching) for the majority of games or prefer to sit in the car in the parking lot reading the paper instead of cheering wildly on the sideline, then frankly I don’t think our soccer program is a good fit for your family. Youth soccer is coached by unpaid volunteers, and parental support is required, not optional. Every child deserves to have an adult family member or friend rooting for him/her from the sidelines.

7. **Coach the Child First, the Athlete Second.** Some believe you should coach the athlete first, and the individual second. That is, teach athletic skills first, and try to connect with the individual second. Maybe this works for adults. But for young players, the opposite is true. If **a child knows you care about him, he’ll be much more motivated** to learn and excel. *The mind is the athlete, the body simply the means it uses to run faster, hit further, or box better.* ~ Bryce Courtenay.
8. **The Coach and Parents are Partners.** Given the focus required by players at this young age to play the game, players need to know that parents and coaches have a healthy partnership. If you want to coach the players, come to practice and help out. Let’s face it: a natural parental instinct is to be protective. Talking to someone about their child is bound to an emotional exchange. In challenging discussions -- whether a coach has an issue with a parent or parent has an issue with the coach -- always **look for communication, not conflict.**
9. **A Soccer Season is NOT a Fitness Program.** I am hearing more parents tell me that fitness is one of their objectives for their child’s sports experience. A season of soccer is a good supplement to a youth fitness program, but a lousy substitute. If weight and/or fitness are issues for your child, then exercise and diet may be answers. But signing your kid up for a season of soccer is not. One hour of soccer a week won’t get or keep a kid fit. **There are no substitutes for daily exercise and good nutrition.**
10. **You Can’t Do a “Don’t Do.”** If you are going to help coach, give positive instructions. By positive I don’t mean upbeat or cheery; I mean giving instructions that describe action. Call out “kick the ball to the outside” instead of “don’t kick the ball into the middle.” **Give instructions that are immediately actionable** (“get to the ball first”), not prohibitive (“don’t wait for the ball”).
11. **The Tone is Set at the Top.** If there is only one thing I’ve learned in business, it’s this: the tone of any human organization is set at the top. From a little girls’ soccer team, a university, a government, or a company like Enron, the people at the top set the tone. **It’s the coach and parents who set the tone** for a kids’ sports team. And the tone should be: *“We honor the game. We respect the referees and do not question their calls during the match. Above all, we recognize this is a special time in the kids’ lives that cannot be relived.”*
12. **They Play To Have Fun** - We want to have a positive, supportive atmosphere so that every player has a great experience. Regardless of ability, **every member of the team deserves to be treated with encouragement.** *The most important measure of success in a season is not goals scored or passes made, but whether your child wants to play next season.*

## Team “Help Wanted” List

Each team needs active involvement help from parents to make the team run. Each Sunday, every family is expected to help the coach set up the cones and pop-up goals before the game, and every family is expected to help the coach take down the pop-up goals and collect the cones. Each family should volunteer for one game for snacks. In addition, each family should volunteer for one of the following jobs:

<p><b>Parent Role</b></p>
<p><b>Assistant Coach</b> - The team needs at least one Assistant Coach to help run practice and be available to coach games when the Head Coach cannot be there. If you'd like to help out with running practice, please feel free to show up to ANY practice with running shoes or cleats on and your help will greatly appreciated and gladly accepted. If you want to take an active role in coaching practices and games on a consistent basis, please see the Head Coach about filling out the SAY Soccer volunteer form.</p>
<p><b>Club Volunteer Requirement</b> – A minimum of 6-8 hours of Club level volunteer time is required <i>per family</i> to fulfill the Club Volunteer requirement. (The Club requires that each family fulfill the requirement or “buy out” the requirement for \$100, in place of volunteering.) Please see <a href="http://www.montclairsoccer.org">www.montclairsoccer.org</a> to see a list of potential volunteer positions.</p>
<p><b>Party</b> – At the end of each season we have a team party and present the players with written awards and souvenirs (like trophies or tee shirts). For most teams this is a well loved event. Some teams put together slide shows set to music or make DVDs from video clips taken during the season. Other teams put together a photo montage for players to keep or get sweatshirts made with the team name. At least two parents typically coordinate the festivities. It's often a pot-luck.</p>
<p><b>Photo Day</b> – Distribute Photo Day forms and send out an announcement to the team about Photo Day. If asked, help the coach congregate the team players together on Photo Day for the photo shoot.</p>
<p><b>Trophies</b> – Collect money from parents for trophies or other season souvenir and buy them in time for the end of season party</p>
<p><b>Referee</b> – For U8 games, the team needs a parent to referee the match. To referee a U8 game, you don't need a referee license. The coach can train parents to referee U8 matches. Also, the MSC Referee Coordinator will offer a training session on “How to Coach a U8 Soccer Game”, usually the night before the first game of the fall season. The Team Manager will be circulating a sign up sheet for Game Referees. We'll need a parent referee for every game in which we are the Home team. The Head Coach can provide a copy of the U8 game rules.</p> <p>For U10 and above games, the League requires that every team have a licensed referee who officiates at least 6 games (other than your own teams) during the season. If you are willing to obtain your referee license and referee games during the season, please let the Head Coach know.</p>
<p><b>Snacks</b> - Each family should sign up at least once for game snacks, bringing orange slices for half time and a light snack and drinks for after the game. The Team Manager may circulate a sign up sheet for game snacks.</p>
<p><b>Team Manager</b> – This parent coordinates sign ups for snacks, parent referees, and parent volunteers. The Team Manager helps contact parents about game or practice changes or rain outs. The Team manager handles email communication on behalf of the coach to the team.</p>
<p><b>Positive Coaching Team Contact</b> – Every team needs a “Positive Coaching Contact.” This parent polls all the team parents to see if they've satisfied their PCA participation requirement and helps communicate information about upcoming PCA workshops. Every parent is required to attend a PCA workshop at least once.</p>

# Parent Agreement with the Montclair Soccer Club - PARENT COPY

This is an important document about the upcoming season. Please read it carefully, initial where appropriate, and sign on the second page, and turn it to your child's coach.

1. I agree to get my child to practice and games on time. I understand that it can be embarrassing for my child to be late and that I may be putting him/her at risk by not providing adequate time for warm up. I will be on time with my child. This shows respect for the coach, and it tells my child that he or she is my top priority. \_\_\_\_\_
2. I agree to use positive encouragement to fill my child's "Emotional Tank" because athletes do their best when their Emotional Tank is full. I understand that fewer than 1% of youth sports participants receive college scholarships and that the top three reasons kids play sports are a) to have fun, b) to make new friends, and c) to learn new skills. I understand that the game is for the players, and I will keep sports in the proper perspective. \_\_\_\_\_
3. I agree to reinforce the ELM Tree of Mastery with my child (E for Effort, L for Learning and M for bouncing back from Mistakes). I understand that mistakes are an inevitable part of any game and that people learn from their mistakes. I understand that children have different abilities and that the true measure is not how my child compares to others but how he/she is doing compared to his/her best self. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I will "Honor the Game." I understand the importance of setting a good example for my child. No matter what others may do, I will show respect for all involved in the game including coaches, players, parents, and referees. I understand that I am expected to model behavior consistent with good sportsmanship. I understand that parents should cheer for ALL players, including the opponent. I understand that if I yell excessively, or am abusive, I will be asked to leave or be suspended. I understand that if I disrespect the official, opponent, coach, players of either team, or parents of either team I will not only be asked to leave the game, I may be suspended from the team. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I understand that criticizing the referee is NEVER allowed. We – players, coaches, referees – are all students of the game. Especially at the U6 & U6 levels, referees are learning on the job. I understand that *we maintain a zero tolerance policy towards dissent with the referee*. If the referee makes a "bad" call against my team, I will Honor the Game and be silent! If I have an issue with how the referee is handling the game, I will talk to my child's coach and ask him/her to talk to the referee. I will not go onto the field or start yelling at the referee. \_\_\_\_\_
6. I will refrain from yelling out instructions to my child. I understand that this is the coach's job. I will limit my comments during the game to encouraging my child and players from both teams. \_\_\_\_\_
7. I will refrain from making negative comments about my child's coach in my child's presence. I understand that this plants a negative seed in my child's head that can negatively influence my child's motivation and overall experience. \_\_\_\_\_
8. I am making a commitment to get my child consistently to the majority of practices and games in the season. I understand my child cannot have a team without active participation by parents. I will do my best not to overbook my child on game days. I understand that this is a sports team, not child care, and will treat it accordingly. I will not leave my child unsupervised. I understand that all games are in public parks, and parents are expected to take responsibility for caring for their children. I will make sure to be present at my child's games, or have a guardian or adult family member present to support my child at games. \_\_\_\_\_

9. I will attend a Positive Coaching (PCA) workshop during my child's first season of soccer. I understand that info about workshops can be found at [www.jlysl.org](http://www.jlysl.org).
10. I understand that parents cheer, and coaches coach. I understand that if I am not willing to sign up to coach a team, come to every practice, and help out as a coach, I should NOT be coaching from the sidelines during games.
11. I will cheer, but avoid criticizing. I understand there is a difference between cheering ("nice pass," "good run," "way to go") and criticizing ("run faster," "kick harder," "what are you doing?"). I understand that most kids are positively motivated by cheering, but few children are positively motivated by criticism during a game. I realize that practices, not games, are the best time for constructive feedback.
12. I understand that during games parents are not allowed on the field. I will stay on the sidelines during the game, and not go behind the goal during games. If my child is injured and the referee has not noticed, I will ask the coach to get the referee's attention.
13. I will make sure my family and guests give the kids and the referee room on the sideline. I understand that during games, team families and coaches are expected to stand 3 feet from the sideline. I understand that parents and coaches need to stand well back from the sideline, showing the kids that the touchline is an important line for out of bounds.
14. I understand that each week I need to help my child's coach set up the cones and the goals, and help pack up the cones and goals after every game.
15. I understand that no dogs are allowed at any time at practices or games. I understand that if I bring a dog to a game, I am demonstrating that I do not respect the rules of our sports fields and I may be suspended from the program.
16. I understand that I am responsible for the guests I bring and/or invite to the games.
17. I will pick up all litter after games and practices, especially straws & wrappers of box drinks. I will make every effort to leave the field **cleaner** than how we found it.
18. I understand alcoholic beverages (before, during, after) at the field for practices, games or are prohibited.
19. I grant the Club and JLYSL parties the right to use players' name, picture and/or likeness in printed, broadcast and other material concerning the soccer program provided that such use is related to the player's status as a participant in the soccer program.
20. If my child has special medical needs (asthma, for example) I will make sure to inform my child's coach and make sure a parent or guardian be always present with appropriate medication for child at all practices and games.

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Parent's Signature

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Print Child's Name

**Note: There are two copies of this Parent Agreement. THIS ONE IS YOUR COPY TO KEEP.**

## Parent Agreement with the Montclair Soccer Club

This is an important document about the upcoming season. Please initial each item on this page, and sign your name on the second page, and turn this Parent Agreement into your child's coach.

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Parent's Signature

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Print Child's Name

**Note: There are two copies of this Parent Agreement.**

**THIS ONE IS TO BE CAREFULLY READ, INITIALED AND SIGNED BY YOU, AND THEN TURNED INTO YOUR CHILD'S COACH.**