

AYSO Tournament Handbook- Abbreviated Version

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a standardized source of information for planning and conducting an AYSO tournament.

What is a Tournament? Any organized special event that brings together teams of soccer players for the purpose of competing in soccer games; whether for sportsmanship, friendship, a championship or other competitive recognition, with or without awards or other recognition, in an environment that is good for the players and good for the game.

Why hold a Tournament?

Participation: Provide a valuable opportunity for players to play the game of soccer beyond the primary/regular/core season.

Development: Foster Region, Area or Section development through camaraderie, demonstrate the AYSO philosophies to your local community, build player and volunteer camaraderie or as a playoff activity that advances teams to Area or Sectional play.

Fundraising: Activities to support player scholarships, keeping Regional registration fees affordable, field development, field usage fees and new equipment. AYSO is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, and all fundraising must be designed to protect this status.

Tournament Scope

Tournaments in AYSO are defined by their Scope. The scope also defines the level of authorization required.

Region Tournament: Open to AYSO teams within a specific AYSO Region. Regional Commissioner approval required.

Area Tournament: Open to AYSO teams within a specific AYSO Area. Area Director approval required.

Section Tournament: Open to AYSO teams from within a specific AYSO Section. Section Director approval required.

AYSO Invitational Tournament: Open to AYSO teams only and from any Section. National Director of Tournaments approval required.

AYSO Open Invitational Tournament: A tournament that includes both AYSO and non-AYSO teams. National Director of Tournaments approval required.

International Tournament: Open to AYSO teams, international teams and possibly non-AYSO teams. National Director of Tournaments approval required.

Step 1: Decide to Conduct a Tournament

Who will host the tournament? Is it the local Region, or will this be a larger event that the Area or Section will host?

Read and understand all AYSO National Rules and Regulations, National Policies, and other tournament policies.

Poll other volunteers in your Region (Area or Section), including coaches, referees, board members, Area staff. Is there a volunteer base to support the tournament?

Format

What kind of competition will it be? Soccerfest, in which players show up and are assigned to teams as they register? A pool-play, round-robin and/or elimination format in which teams ultimately vie for a championship?

What type of teams will compete? How will the format of competition be structured, including pool-play and advancements to any medal-round games?

Will the format and expected number of teams fit into available field space and within the timeframe? How many fields will you need? Will this be a one, two or three day weekend or week long tournament?

Follow the National Coaching Standards – 7v7 for U-10, 9v9 for U-12, etc.

Date

Determine the best time to hold the tournament. Consider other activities in the area, the activities of the target audience and the impacts of cancellation of the tournament from the selected dates due to weather or other circumstances beyond your control.

What will the cancellation policy be – to offer refunds to the teams or to reschedule to another date?

Facilities

Do you have the facilities to host the tournament? Calculate the number of fields needed. Determine where to secure fields and the cost. Determine equipment needs (goals, nets, flags, marking equipment). Assure that adequate parking, trash, bathrooms, food are provided.

Size

How many teams do you expect and how many age divisions will be included?

Team/Player Eligibility

What kind of teams and players will be included? For AYSO players, state the year of eligibility – July 31 is used to define the year. If your tournament will include non-AYSO teams, teams must represent one affiliation, i.e., players are all registered with AYSO, USYS, etc.

Inclusion of non-AYSO teams will require additional documentation and approval processes beyond those required for AYSO-only tournaments. For international teams, there will be special USSF and FIFA application requirements and accompanying application fees.

Will the tournament accept co-ed teams? If so, stipulate that such teams will only be accepted to play in boys' divisions.

Roster sizes must follow the National Coaching Programs with a maximum of 10 players for U-10, a maximum of 12 for U-12, a maximum of 15 for U-14, and a maximum of 18 for U-16 through U-19.

Costs

Estimate the costs using the budget spreadsheet. Consider facility fees – playing fields, setup, trash, bathrooms, etc, souvenirs and awards for participants, refreshments for both participants and volunteers, staff planning expenses, medical personnel – first aid, EMTs, etc, advertising, concessions, postage and office supplies.

Fees

Will the tournament generate income, either as a fundraiser or to offset any costs? Team Registration Fees – Each participating team will pay an entry fee to attend your tournament. Since different age division teams have different roster sizes, many tournaments have a graduated fee schedule based on the maximum number of players per team. Other income sources can include sponsorships, vendor fees, Advertising, and donations.

Staff and Volunteers

Where will the volunteers come from and how will you recruit them?

Key staff members are needed to plan and coordinate tournament activities. The **Tournament Director** is responsible for the successful organization of the tournament as well as a very public representative of AYSO. The **Treasurer** facilitates the creation and maintenance of the tournament budget. The **Safety Director** prepares the Safety Plan form as well as provides advice on any key risk management steps in planning for the tournament. The **Referee Administrator** leads the development of the Referee Plan as well as any key rules requirements. The **Coach Administrator** leads the efforts of developing the tournament rules. The **Registrar** processes tournament applications and is responsible for team check-in. All volunteers must be appropriately certified and trained.

One important volunteer consideration is referee staffing. Does the hosting entity have enough referees or will teams be required to bring referees? Some tournaments require a nominal referee deposit as an incentive for the teams to bring referees. The deposit is returned after the tournament if the team's referees meet their commitment. If you choose this approach, carefully plan the amount of referee deposit, the requirements that need to be met, and the process for refunding the deposit after the tournament is over.

Tournament Name & Logo

Choose the tournament name carefully. Include AYSO in the tournament name. Many tournaments develop a unique logo that, along with the tournament name, is part of the “branding” of the tournament. Logos are used on Web sites and tournament literature. They also can be carried forward to tournament souvenirs such as t-shirts, pins, medals, etc.

Step 2: Apply for Authorization to Conduct the Tournament

Tournament authorization is mandatory for all AYSO tournaments. Complete the Authorization packet available on ayso.org. This packet should include the budget, safety plan, referee plan, tournament invitation, tournament rules, team application form, and team referee form. Once prepared, submit your Authorization Form for approval, following the levels as indicated by the tournament scope.

Step 3: Plan to Conduct the Tournament

Secure the necessary facilities

Secure use of the fields well in advance and in the form of a written agreement (permits) that state the responsibilities of each party, such as field marking and set-up, clean up, etc. Secure an alternate field or fields in the event of unforeseen unavailability, or in case of an overflow in the event of lengthy game delays. Considerations in site selection are availability for restroom facilities, proper shelter in case of inclement weather or lack of shade, and sufficient free parking space. Obtain a Certificate of Liability for the site. By accessing AYSO’s ecerts program on ayso.org. Instructions for access are on the website. If more assistance is needed, contact the Risk Management Department at the NSTC.

If there is more than one site, assign a site coordinator to handle any problems. Walkie-talkies or other communication instruments are very helpful when multiple sites are used. A field coordinator is helpful to coordinate starting times, to ensure referees are accessible, to address safety issues or injuries, and to act as an information conduit.

Plan for security personnel, either during tournament hours, after tournament hours, or both. A small investment in security may prevent problems and safeguard valuable equipment.

Develop the field budget. All field expenses should be included- field marking materials, goals, nets, corner flags, rental of tents, security, etc.

Advertising

Once the tournament is authorized, it can be listed on the national Web site – this is “free” advertising. Advertising can include mailings, flyers to local Regions/organizations, newspaper, radio or television.

Inform local media and community leaders about the tournament and get them involved. A tournament newsletter is a good vehicle to keep all participants informed during the months preceding the tournament.

Ensure that local Regions are informed of the tournament. They are the best source of volunteers, and it will serve the tournament well to keep their interest and excitement alive.

Contact a local photographer or assign a volunteer to photograph tournament events. It can help to get media attention after the tournament. AYSO's publication, PlaySoccer, accepts photos for print. Tournaments may also consider using photos for future brochures or presentation on a tournament Web site.

Website

Set up a web site to function as an information resource regarding the tournament. Include tournament invitation, application form and instructions, tournament rules, refund policy, and a contact for further questions. Also include the list of teams accepted into the tournament, game schedules, referee schedule, maps and directions.

Tournament Program Handbook

Design and develop a tournament program. The tournament program can serve to raise funds by the sale of advertising space. The informative sections of the program should include: tournament rules, the tournament events, game schedules, the referee schedule, local attractions, a site and local Area map, list of tournament participants, staff and sponsors. The site map should show the tournament headquarters, first aid site, the numbered fields, home and visitor sidelines, restroom and locations.

Order Materials

Based on estimates of the numbers of teams, the size of your staff, and the number of referees and other volunteers you will expect, calculate the amount of the following supplies needed: Tournament mementos: lapel pins, t-shirts, referee coins, and other tournament souvenirs, Awards for the winning teams, Staff and volunteer shirts,. First Aid supplies, Bathrooms and trash containers, Communications: radios, walkie-talkies, cell phones, Field setup supplies: paint, extra goalposts, nets, corner flags, Transportation: rental trucks and golf carts, tents, easy-ups, tables, chairs, booths, and Scorekeeping materials.

Recruit Volunteers

In addition to the key staff, recruit volunteers to help with field setup, snack bar and concessions, team check-in, scorekeeping, field monitors, bathrooms and trash collection, parking control and Referees.

Register Teams

In the Tournament Invitation include the type of tournament, dates, location, fees and contact information as well as the acceptance process. Distribute the invitation to all AYSO regions and post on website after the tournament has been approved.

Planned Acceptance

Accept teams on a first come, first accepted basis after the team registration fees have been received. Ideally, there should be at least a 30-day deadline from when the tournament will be held to accept all tournament invitations. The hosting entity must notify teams within 48 hours of the entry deadline of their acceptance or non-acceptance. The option can be given to teams not accepted to be placed on a waiting list. Those who do not accept this option must have their check returned within 48 hours. Letters confirming acceptance into the tournament should be immediately sent out.

Fees/Deposits

Only accept registration checks that are drawn on Region accounts. ***No personal checks or credit cards can be accepted for payment.*** AYSO does have a Paypal electronic payment option for Regions. It must be arranged through the Finance Dept. at the NSTC. Call (800) 872-2976 ext. 5410 for further information.

AYSO Rosters

Tournaments are encouraged to use EAYSO generated rosters whenever possible. If manual rosters are being used, they must be typed or printed in ink. All rosters must bear the "wet" signature of the Regional Commissioner or his/her designee. Rosters that contain guest or outside players must so identify these players. In addition, all rosters containing guest players must have an accompanying approval letter stating in which tournament(s) the player(s) have been approved to participate. In cases where rosters indicate outside players, in addition to a signed letter from the Regional Commissioner, approval from the Area and Section Director must also be obtained and delivered to the tournament director before acceptance is given to the team to enter the tournament.

Roster size: Each AYSO U-19 and U-16 tournament team shall have a maximum of eighteen (18) and a minimum of twelve (12) registered players. Each U-14 shall have a maximum of fifteen (15) and a minimum of twelve (12) registered players, U-12 team shall have a maximum of 12 registered players; U-10 teams shall have a maximum of ten (10) registered players.

If non-AYSO teams are to be invited, check with the National Support & Training Center for the required documentation that must be presented by each team.

Notification

Once a team application is received and requirements have been met, notify the team of their acceptance into the tournament. Do so in writing; e-mail is permissible if verification of receipt of the message can be made. Include the following in the acceptance packet: Tournament rules, Tournament site directions and geographic map, List of local activities going on during the tournament, Information on local accommodations and restaurants, List of local services in the area, Information on special events in connection with the tournament and Information on referee and coach meetings (if any).

If a team is not accepted, notify them immediately and mail a refund together with the notification of non-acceptance within 48 hours.

Schedule Games

When scheduling games, work to provide as many pool play games as possible (a minimum of three games is a good rule of thumb). Decide on the number of games that will be guaranteed to each team.

Two popular methods of scheduling are random scheduling and seeding. Random scheduling is just that, randomly done. Random scheduling must be fair in the sense that out-of-town teams must be accommodated (i.e. they should not receive the first game slot of the day), and sufficient rest time in between games should be ensured.

Seeding is more complicated. In order to properly seed teams, the only part of the schedule that is firm is the first round. Subsequently, teams are scheduled based on whether they have won or lost each game. Eventually there is a winner of the winners' bracket and a winner of the consolation bracket. These two final teams may or may not play each other for the championship.

The format of competition must also be considered. The most common way is to group teams in such a manner that each plays all teams within its group or pool. The teams then advance to the semi-finals and final game by their winning record.

When developing the game schedule assure that teams are not assigned too much playing time on any given day or in any period where the players will not have sufficient rest and recovery time.

Distribute the schedule as soon as it is finalized. A good lead-time is at least two weeks in advance of the tournament. It is inevitable that a schedule may change after it is published. Date all versions of the schedule and publish a schedule change notice on the website.

Assign Referees

Assignments should be made based on experience and/or certification levels, both for center referee position as well as for assistant referee positions. Every effort should be made to assign neutral referees. Referees should not be assigned to matches involving teams from their home Regions or Regions with which they are personally familiar, especially in semi-final, consolation or final matches. It is strongly recommended that youth referees not officiate in matches in their own age group. Youths who are players in the tournament should not be used as referees.

If a referee commitment fee is charged, there must be a method for tracking which referees were assigned to each game, and which referees officiated the games (accounting for no-shows, etc.), including those assigned as standby referees. This will determine which teams have earned a refund of their referee commitment fee.

Special Events

The tournament can include special events for players. Such events include an opening and/or a closing awards ceremony, Soccerfest, picnic or dance. For volunteers, host a social event or Coach or referee workshops conducted by "experts".

The official start of the tournament may be signaled by some form of ceremony. A soccer exhibition game or a tournament game could be scheduled to signal the ceremonial start of the tournament. Opening events can include the presence of local dignitaries, and should showcase participating teams.

An awards ceremony should take place as soon as possible after the last game. It may be as casual as handing out awards in the middle of the field as each game concludes or as ceremonious as presenting awards in front of a large crowd. Simple recognition of participation and competition is a reward in itself for those teams and volunteers who took the time to come and make the tournament a success. If sportsmanship is part of the tournament, consider giving the most impressive award to the winners of this honor.

Mementos for All: Provide participants some form of remembrance from the tournament. Awards, mementos and/or souvenirs should be planned and ordered for all participants, including all players, coaches, referees, and volunteers.

Team Exchanges: Inform team coaches if it is customary for teams to exchange token gifts or mementos with each other. If this is customary for the tournament, then suggestions for gift ideas such as pins or patches should be made at the time the Invitation goes out.

Emergency/Safety/First Aid

Emergency planning requires interaction with local municipal agencies. Alert all emergency facilities about the tournament. Notify police, fire rescue, ambulance companies, and local hospitals in the area. Provide a copy of the AYSO registration form, which includes the parent/guardian consent form. Obtain written confirmation from the facility that the form will be acknowledged as consent for medical treatment. If the form is not acceptable, coordinate with the facilities and determine what is acceptable. This is very important! Incorporate this as a requirement for team registration and let all teams know, in writing, what documentation is needed.

Medical/emergency personnel should be on-site before teams start to arrive and remain until all matches have concluded and field monitors have had a chance to report no apparent injuries on the fields.

In the event that a player requires medical care as a result of injury or illness that occurred during the tournament, a parent or guardian must give permission for the player to return to play.

Refunds

Develop a refund policy to address team drops, tournament cancellations, and referee commitment fee, if applicable. All refund checks, regardless of reason, must be made out to the team's Region and must be mailed to the Region's treasurer.

Concessions

Concessions held at tournaments vary in content. They may involve the sale of food, merchandise and entertainment activities. Refreshments for volunteers, spectators and players are important parts of the tournament. Providing water either free of charge or as a concession item is essential. Determine what and how it will be sold. Consider requirements for permits, licenses and insurance..

Information Booth

The information booth is a center for the distribution of tournament information. Provide game, referee, and event schedules, tournament standings, site maps, and general information about the local area. Have a general map of the area available showing hospitals, restaurants, sporting good stores, theatres, etc.

Sponsorships

Solicit local businesses and individuals for sponsorships. Avoid conflicts with national sponsors.

Final Check

Meet with tournament staff to review the rules, identify potential problems, complete a final checklist of tasks and who is responsible. Conduct a review of all printed material. Confirm receipt of all tournament supplies and that all goods ordered have been received. Complete a site inspection.

Step 4: Conduct the tournament

Set up the fields- Mark lines on the fields, set up nets and corner flags, post directional signs.

Assure adequate trash containers, bathrooms, and necessary facilities- Collect trash, clean bathrooms throughout the tournament

Assign volunteers- Check in at a central location. Assure training in communications, safety, and job specifics. Provide identification (name tag, shirt)

Provide food/refreshments- Run concession stand or have outside vendors. Assure volunteers are fed

Safety and first aid response- Set up first-aid station with supplies, radios, SAI and Incident Report forms.

Pre- tournament Coaches meeting: Review the rules and policies and resolve any last minute problems. Have it the same day as check-in.

Pre-tournament Referee meeting: Review tournament rules and policies and clarify any questionable areas. Resolve any scheduling problems.

Team check-in: Verify team rosters. Assure coaches possess wet signature AYSO registration forms for each player.

Run Games: Assure that fields have trained field monitors, qualified referees, and that games start & stop on time. Assure game cards are complete and get to the scorekeeper. If monitored substitution is allowed in U-16 and/or U-19 age divisions, provide an independent monitor to record the substitutions.

Scoring: Locate the scorekeeper away from distractions. Assure timely delivery of game cards. Post Results/standings in central location on a regular basis throughout the tournament.

Award prizes: Present trophies/medals at the field or central location

Clean up & Take Down: Take down and store equipment, pick up trash

Step 5: Wrap up after Tournament

Calculate fee refunds: Calculate and disburse referee commitment fee to region within 14 days (if applicable)

Pay final bills: Determine and pay outstanding liabilities/invoices.

Accident/incident reports: Assure completion as necessary. Send AYSO Incident Report to involved parties (RCs, ADs, SDs, NSTC)

Thank the volunteers: Schedule a thank you celebration for all who volunteered.

Lessons learned: Conduct evaluation meeting. What worked? What didn't work? What do we especially want to do again next year? What do we want to do better next year? Solicit and compile feedback from the teams who attended the tournament.

Final Income & Expense Statement: Complete and submit within 90 days. Send to authorizing entity.

Resources

Forms and sample documents can be found on ayso.org. Other resources include the Section Tournament Administrator, members of the National Tournament Advisory Commission, and the Programs department of the NSTC. AYSO offers a Tournament Management Training course.

Website

www.ayso.org