



Mahaska County Soccer Club
Vision and Philosophy



Mahaska County Soccer Club is dedicated to developing players, building character, and fostering a lifelong love of soccer – while growing the game in our community.

Table of Contents

1. Purpose of This Manual
 2. MCSC Player Development Philosophy
 3. Program Philosophies: Rec vs Travel
 4. Program Comparison Table
 5. Which Program Should My Player Choose?
 6. Age Group Development Guides (Quick Guides)
 7. Coach Sideline Behavior Guide
 8. Coach Code of Conduct
 9. Player Code of Conduct
 10. Parent Code of Conduct
 11. Parent FAQ
 12. Why We Don't Emphasize Winning at Young Ages
 13. What Success Looks Like
 14. Volunteer
 15. Important Information
-



Purpose of This Manual

This manual provides clear, appropriate age guidance for parents, players and coaches within the Mahaska County Soccer Club. Our goal is **long-term player development**, not short-term results.

Winning is a byproduct of good development — not the primary objective.

This guide outlines: - Developmental priorities by age group - Appropriate coaching behaviors - Practice structure and session ideas - Player, coach, and parent expectations



MCSC Player Development Philosophy

Mahaska County Soccer Club offers **both Recreational (Rec) and Travel soccer programs**. While both programs share a commitment to player development, they serve *different purposes* and require *different approaches*.

Our goal is to provide the **right environment for every player**, regardless of ability, commitment level, or long-term goal.

MCSC has established a Player Development Roadmap to guide our players, families, and coaches, showing the long-term development path we are working toward as a small youth soccer club.

Even with different levels, **the philosophy stays the same.**

Rec Soccer

Focus on learning & enjoyment
Equal playtime emphasis
Broad skill exposure
Intro to tactics

Travel Soccer

Faster pace, higher expectations
Earned roles over time
Position refinement
Advanced tactics



Recreational Soccer Philosophy

Purpose: Recreational soccer exists to introduce players to the game, build fundamental skills, and foster a lifelong love of soccer in a fun, low-pressure environment.

Core Principles:

- Soccer should be *fun, inclusive, and welcoming*
- Equal opportunity to play and learn
- Development over competition
- Mistakes are expected and encouraged

Rec Soccer Priorities:

1. Enjoyment and participation
2. Basic technical skill development
3. Sportsmanship and teamwork
4. Confidence and effort

Coaching Emphasis:

- Equal or near-equal playing time
- Simple instruction and encouragement
- Focus on individual improvement, not results
- Rotate positions at all ages

Success in Rec Soccer Looks Like:

- Players want to come back next season
- Players are confident with the ball
- Positive sideline behavior
- Smiles, effort, and engagement

Travel Soccer Philosophy



Purpose: Travel soccer is designed for players seeking a *higher level of commitment and competition*. It challenges players to develop advanced skills, tactical understanding, and personal responsibility.

Core Principles:

- Commitment and accountability matter
- Training intensity drives improvement
- Competition is part of development
- Team goals and standards are emphasized

Travel Soccer Priorities:

1. Advanced technical development
2. Tactical understanding and decision-making
3. Competitive mindset and resilience
4. Preparation for higher levels of play

Coaching Emphasis:

- Playing time based on effort, attitude, attendance, and role
- Higher training expectations
- Increased tactical instruction
- Clear standards for behavior and commitment

Success in Travel Soccer Looks Like:

- Players show growth in game understanding
 - Teams compete with confidence and discipline
 - Players take ownership of development
 - Respect for teammates, opponents, and officials
-



Program Comparison Just for Kicks, Recreational, and Travel Soccer

Category	Just for Kicks	Recreational Soccer	Travel Soccer
Ages	5 & under	6–10 years old	8 years old–High School
Cost	\$40 per player	\$50 per player	\$80 per player + \$65 uniform kit
Primary Purpose	Introduction to soccer	Fun, foundational development	Competitive development
Commitment Level	Very low	Moderate	High
Practices	2 short sessions per week	2 to 3 practices per week	2+ practices per week
Games	Informal play	Local games	League & tournament play
Playing Time	Equal for all players	Equal or near equal	Based on effort, role, and attendance
Focus	Fun, movement, ball familiarity	Skill building & confidence	Advanced skills & tactics
Tryouts	None	None	None
Travel	None	None	Local
Coaching Style	Fun, energetic, playful	Instructional & encouraging	Demanding, instructional
Measuring Success	Smiles & engagement	Improvement & enjoyment	Growth, performance & accountability



Which Program Should My Player Choose?

Choosing the right soccer program depends on your child's age, interest level, commitment, and goals. Below is a simple guide to help families decide which MCSC program is the best fit.

Choose Just for Kicks if your player:

- Is 5 years old or younger
- It is new to organized sports
- Needs a fun, low-pressure introduction to soccer
- Enjoys running, kicking, and playing games
- Is still learning how to follow basic instructions

Just for Kicks is about fun first. It builds confidence, coordination, and excitement for the game.

Choose Recreational Soccer if your player

- Is 6–10 years old
- Wants to play soccer but also participate in other activities
- Is learning basic skills and rules of the game
- Enjoy practice and games without added pressure
- Benefits from equal playing time and position rotation

Recreational soccer focuses on development, confidence, and enjoyment while introducing teamwork and game understanding.



Choose Travel Soccer if your player:

- **Is 8 years old through high school age**
- Demonstrates strong interest and motivation to improve
- Enjoy practicing and competing at a higher level
- Can commit to additional practices, games, and travel
- Is comfortable with competition and performance-based roles

Travel soccer is for players seeking a more competitive environment with higher expectations, accountability, and advanced development.

Important Notes for Families

- There is no “right” or “wrong” choice — players develop at different rates
 - Players may move between programs as their interests and goals change
 - Playing multiple sports is encouraged, especially at younger ages
 - Coaches and club leadership are happy to help guide families
 - There are no Travel Soccer for High School Aged players in the Spring, due to High School Soccer.
-



Age Group Development Guides

U4–U5 (Ages 4–5): Just for Kicks (JFK)

Discovery Phase

Primary Objectives

- Build excitement and love for soccer
- Develop basic coordination and movement
- Introduce the ball as a friend

Key Focus Areas

- Running, stopping, turning, jumping
- Dribbling with any part of the foot
- Kicking the ball toward a target
- Listening and following simple instructions

What Practices Should Look Like

- 30–45 minutes maximum
- Small-sided games (3v3 or 4v4)
- Every player has a ball
- Frequent water breaks



Coaching Guidelines

- No positions
- No Heading the ball
- No tactics
- Minimal lines, maximum touches
- Use imagination and fun themes (pirates, animals, space)

Sample Activities

- Red Light / Green Light (dribbling)
 - Sharks and Minnows
 - Freeze Tag with a ball
-



U6–U8 (Ages 6–8): Foundation Phase

Primary Objectives

- Build confidence on the ball
- Encourage creativity and bravery

Key Focus Areas

- Dribbling with control
- Turning and shielding
- Basic passing and receiving
- Shooting with accuracy

What Practices Should Look Like

- 45–60 minutes
- Small-sided games (4v4 or 5v5)
- 1v1 situations encouraged

Coaching Guidelines

- Still no permanent positions
- No heading the ball
- Encourage players to try moves
- Allow mistakes — they are learning tools



Sample Activities

- Dribbling obstacle courses
- 1v1 gates game
- Shooting games

Coach Behavior

- High energy
 - Constant encouragement
 - Celebrating effort, not outcomes
-



U9–U10 (Ages 9–10): Skill Development Phase

Primary Objectives

- Improve individual technique
- Introducing basic game understanding

Key Focus Areas

- Dribbling under pressure
- Passing with purpose
- First touch
- Basic defending principles (pressure)

What Practices Should Look Like

- 60 minutes
- Small-sided games (7v7)
- Begin structured warm-ups

Coaching Guidelines

- Introducing simple team shape
- Rotate positions
- Ask guided questions ("What option did you have?")

Sample Activities

- Rondos (3v1, 4v1)
 - Possession games
 - Small-sided scrimmages with conditions
-



U11–U12 (Ages 11–12): Building the Player

Primary Objectives

- Strengthening technique at speed
- Develop soccer IQ

Key Focus Areas

- Passing combinations
- Receiving under pressure
- Finishing techniques
- Defending (1v1, recovery)

What Practices Should Look Like

- 60–75 minutes
- 9v9 or 7v7
- Increased intensity

Coaching Guidelines

- Introducing positional roles (not specialization)
 - Encourage communication
 - Begin basic tactical concepts
-



U13–U14 (Ages 13–14): Transition Phase

Primary Objectives

- Prepare players for 11v11
- Improve decision-making under pressure

Key Focus Areas

- Tactical awareness
- Speed of play
- Team defending and attacking principles

What Practices Should Look Like

- 75–90 minutes
- 9v9 transitioning to 11v11
- Fitness through soccer activities

Coaching Guidelines

- Teach principles, not rigid systems
 - Manage physical and emotional changes
 - Emphasize respect and responsibility
-



U15–U18 (Ages 15–18): Performance Phase

Primary Objectives

- Refine skills for competitive play
- Prepare for high school, college, or lifelong soccer

Key Focus Areas

- Advanced tactics
- Position-specific responsibilities
- Leadership and communication
- Mental resilience

What Practices Should Look Like

- 90 minutes
- Match-realistic intensity
- Tactical training integrated with technique

Coaching Guidelines

- Players take ownership of learning
 - Encourage leadership
 - Provide constructive, specific feedback
-



Coach Sideline Behavior Guide (Game Day Expectations)

MCSC expects coaches to model positive behavior and create a supportive game-day environment for players, referees, and families.

Sideline Do's

- Encourage effort, attitude, and teamwork
 - Provide brief, clear information when needed
 - Allow players to make decisions
 - Reinforce learning moments after substitutions or at halftime
 - Show respect to referees, opponents, and spectators
-

Sideline Don'ts

- Do not yell constant instructions
 - Do not coach every touch or decision
 - Do not argue with referees
 - Do not criticize players publicly
 - Do not focus solely on winning or the score
-



Coaching the Game by Program

Just for Kicks & Recreational Soccer:

- Minimal instruction during play
- Let players explore and enjoy the game
- Praise bravery, effort, and sportsmanship

Travel Soccer:

- Provide tactical guidance sparingly
 - Emphasize problem-solving
 - Hold players accountable respectfully
-



Coach Code of Conduct

All Mahaska County Soccer Club coaches are expected to uphold the highest standards of behavior, professionalism, and sportsmanship. Coaches play a critical role in shaping the experience of our players and representing MCSC in the community.

Coaches Will:

- Place player development, safety, and enjoyment above winning
 - Create a positive, inclusive, and respectful environment for all players
 - Treat every player with fairness, dignity, and respect
 - Be prepared, organized, and punctual for practices and games
 - Teach age-appropriate skills and concepts aligned with MCSC philosophy
 - Encourage effort, confidence, and sportsmanship
 - Communicate clearly and respectfully with players and parents
 - Support referees and always model respectful behavior
 - Follow all MCSC, league, and facility policies
-

Coaches Will Not:

- Use abusive, demeaning, or inappropriate language or behavior
 - Publicly criticize or embarrass players
 - Argue with referees, opponents, or spectators
 - Favor winning over player development, especially at younger ages
 - Compare players publicly or negatively
 - Encourage unsafe or unsportsmanlike play
-



Coach Responsibilities

- Attend required coach meetings or training sessions
- Report injuries, safety concerns, or misconduct promptly
- Always ensure proper supervision of players
- Uphold MCSC's commitment to inclusion and respect

Coach Expectations

- Be prepared and organized
- Create a positive, safe environment
- Treat all players with respect
- Communicate clearly with parents
- Model sportsmanship

Remember

The game belongs to the players.

A calm, positive sideline helps players:

- Play with confidence
 - Making better decisions
 - Enjoy the game
-



Player Code of Conduct

The Mahaska County Soccer Club is committed to creating a safe, positive, and development-focused environment where players can learn, grow, and enjoy the game of soccer. All players are expected to follow this Code of Conduct.

1. Attitude & Sportsmanship

- Play with a positive attitude and a willingness to learn.
- Show respect to teammates, coaches, referees, opponents, and spectators always.
- Win and lose with class, celebrate success humbly and accept mistakes and losses with maturity.
- Encourage teammates and never use negative language or gestures.

2. Effort & Development

- Give your best effort at every practice and game.
- Come ready to learn, improve, and challenge yourself.
- Listen to coaches and follow instructions.
- Understand that mistakes are part of learning and growth.

3. Attendance & Punctuality

- Be on time and prepared for all practices and games.
- Notify your coach in advance if you are unable to attend.
- Regular attendance is important for individual and team development.

4. Respect for the Game

- Follow the rules of soccer and the expectations set by your coaches.
- Accept referee decisions without argument.
- Play fairly and avoid dangerous or reckless behavior.



5. Safety & Preparedness

- Wear required equipment at all practices and games:
 - Shin guards (mandatory)
 - Appropriate footwear
- Bring a water bottle for every practice and game.
- Take care of personal health and speak up if you are injured or not feeling well.

6. Team Responsibility

- Be a good teammate and respect everyone.
- Take care of club equipment and facilities.
- Represent Mahaska County Soccer Club positively on and off the field, including at-away games and events.

7. Behavior Expectations

- Bullying, harassment, disrespectful behavior, or inappropriate language will not be tolerated.
- Poor behavior may result in disciplinary action, including reduced playing time, removal from activities, or suspension from the club.

Player Commitment

By participating in Mahaska County Soccer Club programs, players agree to uphold this Code of Conduct and help create a fun, respectful, and development-centered soccer environment.

Our goal is simple:

Develop better players, better teammates, and better people—while fostering a lifelong love for the game of soccer.



Parent Code of Conduct

Mahaska County Soccer Club is a volunteer-driven organization dedicated to developing players, promoting sportsmanship, and fostering a lifelong love of soccer. Parents play a vital role in creating a positive experience for all players.

By participating in MCSC programs, parents and guardians agree to uphold the following expectations:

1. Support a Positive Environment

- Encourage all players, not just your own child.
 - Emphasize effort, improvement, and enjoyment over wins and losses.
 - Allow coaches to coach and players to play.
 - Remember that youth soccer is about development, confidence, and learning.
-

2. Respect Coaches & Volunteers

- Treat coaches, referees, and volunteers with respect always.
 - Understand that coaches and many club roles are filled by volunteers.
 - Address questions or concerns calmly and privately, never during games or in front of players.
 - Follow the club's communication guidelines when concerns arise.
-

3. Sideline Behavior

- Cheer positively and refrain from shouting instructions to players.
 - Avoid criticizing players, coaches, referees, or opposing teams.
 - Respect referee decisions, no arguing or confrontations.
 - Help create a safe and welcoming sideline environment for everyone.
-



4. Model Sportsmanship

- Demonstrate respect through your words and actions.
 - Teach players to handle success and disappointment with class.
 - Set a positive example of teamwork, self-control, and fairness.
-

5. Commitment & Communication

- Ensure players arrive on time, prepared, and with required equipment.
 - Communicate absences or schedule conflicts to the coach in advance when possible.
 - Support team commitments and club events.
-

6. Safety & Well-Being

- Prioritize player safety and report injuries or concerns to coaches.
 - Help ensure players are properly equipped and ready to participate.
 - Support club policies are designed to protect players physically and emotionally.
-

7. Social Media & Public Conduct

- Represent Mahaska County Soccer Club positively online and in public.
- Do not post negative or harmful comments about players, coaches, referees, or the club.
- Address concerns directly with the appropriate club representative rather than publicly.



8. Consequences

Failure to follow this Parent Code of Conduct may result in:

- A warning from the coach or club leadership
 - Removal from the sideline
 - Further disciplinary action as determined by the club
-

Parent Commitment

By registering your child with Mahaska County Soccer Club, you agree to support this Parent Code of Conduct and help create a respectful, development-focused soccer experience for all players.

Together, we build a positive soccer community—one player, one family, and one team at a time.



Parent FAQ – Mahaska County Soccer Club

1. How much playing time will my child receive?

- **Just for Kicks:** All players participate equally.
 - **Recreational Soccer:** Equal or near-equal playing time for all players.
 - **Travel Soccer:** Playing time is based on effort, attitude, attendance, development needs, and team role.
-

2. Is winning important?

Winning is never the primary goal at MCSC.

- At younger ages, development and enjoyment matter most.
 - At Travel levels, competition is part of development, but never at the expense of sportsmanship or player growth.
-

3. How often are practices and games?

- **Just for Kicks:** 2 short sessions per week.
- **Recreational Soccer:** 1–2 practices per week and local games.
- **Travel Soccer:** 2 or more practices per week, league games, and possible tournaments.

Schedules may vary by age and season.

4. What is expected of parents on the sidelines?

- Cheer positively for all players
- Allow coaches to coach and referees to officiate
- Avoid coaching from the sidelines
- Support effort, not just results

Positive sidelines create better experiences for players.



5. Can my child play other sports?

Yes — especially at younger ages. MCSC supports multi-sport athletes. Specialization is **not encouraged** at early ages.

6. What equipment does my child need?

- Soccer ball (size appropriate for age)
 - Shin guards (required)
 - Soccer cleats (recommended)
 - **Travel players:** Official uniform kit (shorts and jersey)
-

7. How are coaches selected?

- Recreational and Just for Kicks coaches are often volunteer parents supported by the club
- Travel coaches are selected based on experience, commitment, and player development focus

All coaches are expected to follow MCSC philosophies and codes of conduct.

8. Who should I contact with questions or concerns?

- Start with your child's coach for team-related questions
- Contact MCSC Director, Greg Walter
 - Email: coachgwalter@gmail.com

We encourage respectful, timely communication.



9. How do I know if Travel soccer is right for my child?

- Travel soccer requires a higher level of commitment from both players and families. If you are unsure, Recreational soccer is always a great option.
- Club leadership and coaches are happy to help guide families.

10. What are the registration fees?

- MCSC fees have consistently remained significantly lower than those of surrounding community clubs, made possible through the commitment of our volunteers and the generosity of donors.
- **Just for Kicks** is \$40 per player per season. This includes a team shirt.
- **Recreational Soccer (Non-Travel)** is \$50 per player per season. This includes a team shirt.
- **Travel Soccer** is \$80 per player per season.
 - Each player will need a uniform kit that includes a jersey and shorts. The jersey costs \$40 and includes the club logo, jersey number, and the player's last name on the back. Shorts are \$25. Uniforms do not need to be purchased every year if they still fit your player.

11. Are parents allowed to coach their own child?

- We strongly encourage parents to coach their own children.
 - Parent coaches play a vital role in creating a positive, supportive experience for our players.
 - As a thank-you, any parent who coaches their child's team will receive a full refund of the registration fee.
-



Why We Don't Emphasize Winning at Young Ages

At Mahaska County Soccer Club, we believe **long-term development matters more than short-term results**, especially for younger players.

When winning becomes the main focus too early, players may:

- Avoid taking risks or trying new skills
- Become afraid of making mistakes
- Lose confidence or enjoyment
- Burn out or leave the sport altogether

Instead, at younger ages we emphasize:

- Ball mastery and creativity
- Decision-making and problem-solving
- Confidence and enjoyment
- Learning through mistakes

As players grow older and progress into Travel soccer, competition becomes a **tool for learning**, not the sole measure of success.

By prioritizing development first, we help players:

- Improve faster over time
- Become more confident and resilient
- Develop a lifelong love of the game

Winning is a result of good development — not the goal.



What Success Looks Like for MCSC

- ✓ Players stay in soccer longer
- ✓ Skill improvement
- ✓ Confidence on and off the ball
- ✓ High school coaches recognize MCSC players
- ✓ Players enjoy practices and games
- ✓ Families trust the development process
- ✓ Positive player and parent feedback
- ✓ Winning follows development—not the other way around
- ✓ Love for the game



Volunteering Mahaska County Soccer Club

Mahaska County Soccer Club is proud to be a **100% volunteer-run organization**. Every practice, game, and opportunity we provide for our players happens because parents, coaches, and community members step up to help.

Our coaches volunteer their time to develop players and foster a love of the game—and we ask that **all families support the club in other ways as well**, including helping in the concession stand. Concessions play a vital role in keeping our program affordable, maintaining fields and equipment, and ensuring we can continue to offer quality soccer experiences for our kids.

Volunteering in the concession stand is a simple way to give back. It helps the club run smoothly, supports our players on and off the field, and strengthens the sense of community that makes Mahaska County Soccer Club special.

Many hands make light work. When we all pitch in, our kids win.

Thank you for supporting Mahaska County Soccer Club and for being part of something bigger than the game.



Mahaska County Soccer Club

Important Information

- **Facebook “Like Us”**
- **Website: www.mahaskasoccer.com**
- **TeamReach:**
 - **Group Code: MAHASKASOCCER**
- **Player Development Roadmap**
- **Coaches Manual**
- **Club Parent Manual**
- **Club Director: Greg Walter**
 - **Email: coachgwalter@gmail.com**