

## Questions Involving the Build-Out-Line for Academy Games

**Why have the build-out-line?** The whole purpose of the build-out-line is to “promote playing the ball out of the back in an unpressured setting.” In terms of developing players, it is important to create an environment where they can work on the skills and tactics which will allow them to become not only physically, but mentally competent players. Building out of the back promotes possession based and thoughtful play, as opposed to clearing the ball and playing only high-pressure counter-attacking soccer.

Teams should use the opportunity to play the ball into a player who is behind the line in an unpressured position and then concentrate on working the ball up the field as a team, as opposed to kicking the ball as far up the pitch as they physically can. This type of play does promote creative and controlled soccer, does not promote player development at a technical or tactical level and, therefore, does not fall into the philosophy of the US Youth Soccer (USYS) Academy program.

While USYS does not explicitly promote the tactical aspects of development, the build-out-line offers an opportunity to work on minimal tactical awareness (i.e. if I receive the ball here, where’s my next pass and run; or if my teammate receives the ball there and the defenders are there, where do I need to go to best help my teammate) while offering the technical development of a proper pass and trap in a situation which should allow for a more competitive and fun match to not only watch, but for the players to experience.

**What is the rule? When can defenders attack the ball?** Basically, during a goalkick or when the keeper has the ball in their hands, the defending team needs to be behind the build-out-line. Once the keeper (or whomever takes the goalkick) plays the ball, play is live, and the opposing team may cross the build-out-line to press the ball. A few caveats to the rule:

- The goalkeeper or the player taking the goalkick may play the ball beyond the build-out-line without it touching a teammate. However, they may not punt the ball or perform a dropkick, “as this would defeat the purpose of the build out line and reduces the opportunity to play out of the defending third in an unpressured setting”.
- While possessing and playing the ball offensively is the main goal of the build-out-line, defending against it has also proved problematic. Some teams have used it as an opportunity to press and keep the ball in the defensive third by throwing multiple defenders at the player receiving the ball. This is not a realistic manner of defense, as it leaves defending teams wide open. This is not something that players of these ages would readily recognize, and coaches are encouraged to defend the build-out-line realistically, not only to promote early exposure to proper team defending, but also to promote buildup play, the purpose of the line.
- It is also important to note that the build-out-line is also the line for offsides in U9/U10 matches, not midfield. This allows for more attacking play by allowing attacking players to stretch the field further and forcing defenders to open up more space and therefore allow more time for attacking players to work on skills.

**Where should the build-out-line be placed on the field?** Being newly introduced this upcoming spring, on a U8 field, the build-out-line will be midfield. This means on goalkicks defending players will need to move behind midfield until the ball is passed in. A caveat to the U8 rule, is that the goalkick must be played to a teammate within their defending half (this means the goalkick itself cannot go past midfield). A U8 field should be between 25 and 35 yards long and 15 and 25 yards wide with an optional

center circle (5-yard radius) and optional goal area (5 yards deep and each edge being 4 yards from either goalpost).

As for on the U9/U10 field, the build-out-line is to be placed equidistant (halfway) between the top of the penalty area and midfield. A U9/U10 field should measure between 55 and 65 yards long and 35 and 45 yards wide with penalty areas being 12 yards deep and 24 yards wide.

**At the end of the day**, all these points are moot unless everyone involved in the academy programs buy-in and adhere to the playing philosophy and best-practices put forth by USYS. We can't have some teams or clubs following these guidelines while some do not and expect quality results. It is for the development of the players and the betterment of soccer overall in East Central, that we come together to embrace a culture which promotes intelligent, thoughtful, skillful and strong players who enjoy not only winning, but also growing within the ever-evolving game. It is important for clubs, directors, coaches and parents to put winning and losing on the back burner in favor of developing quality players at young ages by promoting competition, success, dealing with losing creating environments which promote quality play. This doesn't mean don't play to win. Soccer is a game and games are played to win. However, there right ways and wrong ways to do it. Instead of relying players' athleticism and physical prowess, promote the development of technique and tactics while still incorporating their abilities. Encourage players to play out of the back, not just kick the ball as far as they can and have the fastest player run onto it. Try to avoid allowing players at U8 sitting in the goal to prevent goals, while instead promoting as many players in the attack while keeping balance and shape. Be sure coaches understand how to alter matches if scores begin to run up. Coaches and directors should be working together across club lines to increase the quality of our kids' play, not work against each other. Again, these are guidelines, but they will lead to better soccer and player development.

Resources:

[https://usys-assets.ae-admin.com/assets/1/15/LawsOfTheGame\\_8AndUnder.pdf](https://usys-assets.ae-admin.com/assets/1/15/LawsOfTheGame_8AndUnder.pdf)

[https://usys-assets.ae-admin.com/assets/1/15/LawsOfTheGame\\_10AndUnder\(1\).pdf](https://usys-assets.ae-admin.com/assets/1/15/LawsOfTheGame_10AndUnder(1).pdf)