



## Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Age Matrix Change – Recreational Program

### 1. What exactly is changing?

Beginning with Recreational Registration in April of 2026 (the start of the 2026–27 season), US Soccer is moving to an August 1 -July 31 school year cycle for all age groups. This replaces the old calendar year (aka birth year) system.

### 2. Why was this change made?

Major youth soccer governing bodies reviewed participation and education data and concluded that aligning soccer age groups with school grades helps more kids play with classmates, improves social fit, and reduces the number of “trapped players” (kids whose soccer age group doesn’t match their grade).

Starting Soccer - Many kids begin playing on a soccer team in order to be with their friends. Under the calendar year system, a player born in December would not be able to play on the team with their best school friend who was born in January. At the youngest age groups, the mission to grow the game, provide opportunities for as many players as possible, and help children fall in love with soccer. Any barrier to a player starting to play the game goes against those goals.

### 3. How does this effect my player?

Incoming Tots, U5, U6 and U7 Players will be placed on teams formed using the new school year age matrix.

Established U8-U19 teams may stay together, as long as they follow current GHSC Policy. Any new players added to established teams must be the proper age group.

### 4. Will repeating an age group hinder my player’s development?

No. Most soccer experts agree that playing with similarly aged players allows for better development overall, which will lead to a stronger, more diverse skill set. Moreover, players playing on an age appropriate team will be better able to compete with other teams, as opposed to playing up and competing with teams that are on average 8 months older.

### 5. What should I do if I want my player to play up?

Incoming U5, U6 and U7 players, and any players new to GHSC in the older age groups, who desire to play up must follow the protocol outlined in the GHSC Policies and Operating Rules.

