



Texas Charter School Academic & Athletic League (TCSAAL)

Soccer Rules & General Procedures

2026-2027 Season

2026-2027 TCSAAL Standings Changes:

Starting with the 2026-2027 school year, TCSAAL will adopt a points system for standings. A win will be worth 3 points, a draw worth 1 point, and a loss worth 0 points. As a result, tie games at the end of regulation will no longer involve penalty kick shootouts for regular season games, and will conclude as a draw. Penalty kick shootouts will remain in effect for playoff games. This system will operate on a trial basis for this school year only..

TCSAAL Point of Emphasis 2026-2027

- **Tie Games**
 - During the 2026-2027 school year, tie games will remain as ties during the regular season for division and non-division games as TCSAAL will begin a point-based standings system (1 point for a draw).
 - **EXCEPTION:** Playoff games that end as ties will operate as follows:
 - Games ending in regulation time with a tied score will move to a golden goal overtime.
 - If the game remains tied at the end of the overtime periods, the game will move on to a penalty kick shootout.
 - If a tie game is suspended at half or during the 2nd half, due to weather or unforeseen circumstances, the tie will be the final result.
- The first team (home team) listed on the schedule and their fans must take the South or West side of the field and the second team (visiting team) and their fans must take the North or East side of the field. In the instance that the spectator stands are only on one side of the field, spectators should be positioned on the side of the stands on the same half of their team.
- TCSAAL Soccer will follow the rules set forth by the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS). Please review the NFHS Soccer Rulebook. For a detailed list of NFHS Rule Changes specific to 2026-2027, please visit <https://www.nfhs.org/sports/soccer/rules>. Other exceptions include those amended by the TCSAAL rules found in this document or in our *Handbook*. For a full list of points of emphasis for the NFHS Soccer season specific to 2026-2027, please consult the following: <https://www.nfhs.org/resources/sports/soccer-points-of-emphasis-2026-27>.
- Noisemakers are allowed for all outdoor activities, per NFHS regulations. However, noisemakers that involve amplified sound (speakers, air horns, etc) are not allowed as these can interfere with gameplay and officiating communication. Noisemakers may be removed from the spectator areas if the official deems it necessary to do so.

Penalty Card Rule Clarification:

YELLOW CARD: In the event that a player receives a yellow card, they must leave the field immediately. However, the team can put in a replacement player. The player receiving the yellow card may come back into the game at the next substitution opportunity for their team after play resumes. **CLARIFICATION EMPHASIS:** Players receiving a yellow card during the course of the game must leave the field immediately. Teams may replace said player following the yellow card or the team may play short one

player. The player will be allowed to reenter the game at next available substitution opportunity as determined by the referee(s) after play resumes. Please note that TCSAAL DOES NOT track yellow cards accumulated throughout the season and TCSAAL does not require our teams to do so.

RED CARD: When a player receives a red card, they are eliminated from the game. That individual will also have to sit out the next game (whether this is in the regular season or playoffs). A team will not be allowed to sub in a player and they must play short a player. If your team falls below 7 players due to the red card, they will forfeit the game immediately.

Roster Deadlines:

The deadline to make roster changes is a specified date set by TCSAAL each school year. All roster changes must be made through your TCSAAL Regional Director before 5:00 pm on the date listed in the Roster Lock Deadline Document found on our website's Rules & Documents page.

Section 1: Field of Play

Art. 1... The Field will be determined by site availability

Section 2: The Ball

Art. 1... Game balls for all age levels shall be spherical, with a circumference of 27-28 inches and a weight of 14-16 ounces. Game balls under these standards should be of Size 5 in accordance with normal manufacturing standards.

POINT OF EMPHASIS: For the 4th-6th Grade age grouping in soccer for the 2026-2027 school year, the size of the game ball will be determined on a regional level between the coaches, athletic directors, TCSAAL Regional Representative, and the TCSAAL Regional Director.

Section 3: The Players and Substitutions

The Number of players

Art. 1... The game shall be played by two teams, each consisting of not more than 11 players (but no less than 7 players), one of whom shall be the goalkeeper.

- a. Boys cannot play on a girls team however girls can play on a boys team. See TCSAAL Handbook for more information.
- b. Students can play up in age level but they cannot play down in age level.
- c. Students may not play on two different teams. See TCSAAL Handbook for more information.

Art. 2... The home team will provide and keep an official scorebook. When a red card is issued, the home team is responsible for sending information to TCSAAL by the next day.

Art. 3... A game shall not be started with fewer than seven properly uniformed players on each team. After the game is started, it may not be continued with fewer than seven players on either team. If a team has fewer than seven eligible players, the game shall be terminated and a forfeit shall be declared.

EXCEPTION: Should a team drop below seven players due to a player having to leave the field for a temporary equipment repair, minor injury, yellow card, or due to a blood-rule situation, the team will be allowed to play with fewer than seven (7) players until the situation has been resolved. Once the situation has been resolved, the player(s) that left the game will be allowed to return.

a. A game cannot be started with less than 7 players. If a team of at least seven players is not present at the official start time, they will be granted a grace period of 15 minutes in which they will be able to still successfully field a team without penalty.

- i. During the 15-minute grace period, the game will begin as soon as enough eligible players (7) are present for both teams.
- ii. If a team does not have enough players at the end of the 15-minute grace period, the game will be ruled a forfeit and the team without enough eligible players will be penalized with the loss.

Position of players

Art. 1... The team winning the coin toss shall have the option of:

- a. choosing which end of the field to attack; or
- b. taking the kickoff.

Art. 2... Teams shall exchange goal lines after each regular period and each overtime period.

Substitutions

Art. 1... Time for Substitutions

- a. Goal kick
- b. After a goal
- c. During a break in the game due to injury
- d. Halftime
- e. On their own throw-in or corner kick
- f. When the opposing team is currently substituting
- g. On their own corner kick
- h. MANDATORY: Any time there is a cautioned or injured player, that player MUST be substituted immediately.

Art. 2... Procedure for Substitutions

- a. A team shall always get the referee's permission to substitute prior to doing so. The only exception to this is at halftime. During halftime, teams can substitute without the permission of the referee.
- b. Switching a goalkeeper with another player that is on the field already is similar to a normal substitution. A team must get the permission of the referee in order to do so and must follow the proper and time and procedure for substitutions.

Section 4: Player Equipment

Required Equipment

Art. 1... The required player equipment includes a jersey, shorts, stockings, suitable shoes and shinguards which shall provide adequate and reasonable protection, be professionally manufactured, age- and size appropriate, not altered to decrease protection, worn under the stockings, and are worn with the bottom edge no higher than 2 inches above the ankle. **Shinguards must meet NOCSAE standards at time of manufacture and seal & height range permanently marked on front of shinguards.** Equipment shall not be modified from its original manufactured state and shall be worn in the manner the manufacturer intended it to be worn. It is also recommended that male players wear a supporter and protective cup. Requirements for uniforms:

- a. Jerseys and stockings of opposing teams shall be of contrasting colors and, in the event of a similarity of color; the away team shall be responsible for making the necessary change.

b. The home team shall wear dark jerseys and stockings, and the visiting team shall wear white or light jerseys and stockings.

- c. When an illegally uniformed team is unable to correct the situation or cannot verify state association approval of the uniform, the game shall be played. The referee must, however, notify the association following the game.

- d. Except for the uniform of the goalkeeper, jerseys, shorts and stockings of teammates shall be of similar color, design and pattern.

1. All jerseys shall be numbered on the front (may be on the jersey and/or shorts) and back (of the jersey).

2. The goalkeeper's jersey shall be different from that of any official, teammate or opponent.

- e. Shoes must be worn by all participants in a game. Shoes with soles containing metal (aluminum, magnesium, titanium, etc.), leather, rubber, nylon, or plastic cleats, studs, or bars, whether molded as part of the sole or detachable, are allowed as long as the referee does not consider them dangerous.

f. Hard casts or splints must be padded with closed cell foam at least 1/2" thick. Facemask, if worn, must be molded to the face with no protrusions; player must have a medical release at game site signed by a physician for use of mask; Metal ankle braces must be worn inside socks; non-metal may be worn outside of sock. Soft padded headbands allowed.

Art. 2... It is recommended that team captains wear an upper arm band of a contrasting color.

Other Equipment

Art. 1... Illegal equipment shall not be worn by any player. This applies to any equipment which, in the opinion of the referee, is dangerous or confusing. Types of equipment which are illegal include the following:

- a. projecting metal or other hard plates, or projections on clothing or person;
- b. head, arm, thigh or hip pads containing sole leather, fiber, metal or any unyielding materials;
- c. shinguards which have exposed sharp edges or have been altered;
- d. spectacle guards;
- e. hats, caps or visors.

Exception 1. The goalkeeper may wear a head protector made of closed-cell, slow recovery rubber or other similar material that stays soft in its final form. This head protector shall not have a bill, or other protruding design. It shall not cover the face, other than the forehead, and shall be secured by a chin strap.

- g. knee braces with exposed metal. Any covering/sleeve made by a brace manufacturer may be worn;
- h. ankle braces, unless covered by a stocking or other suitable material.

Art. 2... Hair control devices may be worn if made of soft material and not for adornment.

Art. 3... Sweatbands may be worn on the head or wrist if made of soft material.

Art. 4... Jewelry shall not be worn except for religious or medical medals (even if jewelry is taped). A religious medal must be taped and worn under the uniform. A medical alert must be taped and may be visible. Colored mouth protectors are allowed.

Art. 5... Artificial limbs, which in the judgment of the state high school association are no more dangerous to players than the corresponding human limb and do not place an opponent at a disadvantage, may be permitted. Upper limb prostheses and above-knee leg prostheses are discouraged. Hinges shall be lateral and covered by suitable material. All permissible artificial limbs shall be covered by at least 1/2 inch foam rubber padding.

Art. 6... Hearing aids worn in or behind the ears are legal provided that the device does not create the threat of injury.

Art. 7... A tooth and mouth protector (intraoral), which shall include an occlusal (protecting and separating the bite surfaces) and labial (protecting the teeth and supporting structures) portion and covering the posterior teeth with adequate thickness, is legal. It is recommended that the protector be properly fitted and:

- a. Constructed from a model made from the individual's teeth.
- b. Constructed and fitted to the individual by impressing the teeth into the tooth and mouth protector itself.
- c. The tooth and mouth protector should be of a readily visible color, other than white or clear.

Art. 8... A protective face mask may be worn by a player with a facial injury. The mask may be made of hard material, but must be worn molded to the face with no protrusions. A medical release for the injured player signed by a physician (MD/DO) shall be available at the game site.

Coaches' Responsibilities

Art. 1... Each coach shall be responsible for ensuring that each of his/her players is properly equipped. Prior to and during the game, shirts shall be tucked into the shorts, unless manufactured to be worn outside.

PENALTY: A player improperly equipped shall be instructed to leave the field of play when the ball next ceases to be in play. Play shall not be stopped immediately for an infringement of this rule except that the referee may stop play immediately where there is an immediate dangerous situation. There shall be no replacement until the next opportunity to substitute. However, the removed player may re-enter during a dead ball after reporting to an official who shall be satisfied the player's equipment and uniform is in order.

Section 5: Game Officials, Timer, and Scorer

Game Officials

Art. 1... There shall be two (2) referees in total to officiate the game. TCSAAL may utilize a 3 person official crew during playoffs.

Timer

Art. 1... The head referee shall be the official timer and will:

- a. start the timing device when the ball is put into play and stop the timing device when needed
- b. be aware of the position of the ball when it becomes dead;
- c. signal when time for a period has expired.

Scorer

Art. 1... All scores will be kept on the field by the head referee.

Section 6: Duration of the Game and Length of Play

Length of Periods

Art. 1... Two equal halves of 40 minutes each shall be played in the Varsity games, 35 minute halves will be played in the Junior Varsity games, 30 minute halves will be played in the 9-10th grade & 6th – 8th grade games, and 25 minute halves will be played in the 4th – 6th Grade games.

Art. 2... Periods may be shortened if mutually agreed upon or in any emergency, by agreement of coaches or ordered by the head referee, provided it is determined to shorten the periods before the game or before the second half begins and all remaining periods are the same length.

Art. 3

a... In the event a game must be suspended (terminated game) for any reason and the score IS tied, the referee shall declare it a tie game if one complete half or more of the game has been played. In the event a game must be suspended (terminated game) for any reason and the score is NOT tied, the referee shall declare it an official game if one complete half or more of the game has been played. If less than one-half of the game has been played, the game may be rescheduled from the start.

b...EXCEPTION - MERCY RULE: In the event a game must be suspended (terminated game) for any reason and less than one-half of the game has been played and a team is ahead by at least 5 goals, the referee shall declare it an official game and the game will NOT be rescheduled.

Art. 4... A period shall end at the expiration of time.

EXCEPTION: Play shall be extended beyond the expiration of a period, in regulation time and overtime, to permit a penalty kick to be completed.

Intervals Between Periods

Art. 1... The halftime interval shall be 5 minutes for all regular season games. All sub-varsity (4th-6th Grade / 6th-8th Grade / 9th-10th Grade / JV) playoff games will be given a halftime interval of 5 minutes. All Varsity playoff games will be given a halftime interval of 10 minutes.

Art. 2... Between each period, teams shall exchange ends and alternate the kickoff.

Tie Games

Art. 1... Regular-season games which are tied at the end of regulation time (see "Length of Periods") shall remain as tied games (see "Standings Changes") with 1 point awarded in the standings to both teams. Please see Point of Emphasis on the First Page of the TCSAAL Soccer Rule Book.

Art. 2... Playoff games which are tied at the end of regulation time (see "Length of Periods" above) shall have an overtime period not to exceed 10 minutes of play, and it shall be conducted in sudden death format with teams changing sides at the 5 minute mark. At the end of the overtime period, the teams shall decide the game by means of a shootout if the game remains tied (see Tie Games Art. 3a/3b/3c).

Art. 3a... Procedures for shootout: The shootout will consist of 5 shooters per team. Each shooter will have 1 attempt to make a goal shooting from the 12 yard mark at center goal. The teams will alternate shooting with the visiting team kicking first. In the event that the teams are still tied at the end of the 5 attempt shootout then the teams will go into sudden death shootouts: each team will get one kick alternating starting with the visiting team. At the end of each round if one team has scored and the other has not then the game will be final. If both teams, or neither team have managed to score a goal then the teams will move onto the next round of sudden death. Ten (10) different individuals must kick for a team before an individual is

allowed to kick a 2nd time (including the 5 shooters in the initial shoot out and all shooters in the sudden death shootouts). The only exception to this is if your team played the game with less than 10 players or has less than 10 eligible players by this point in the game then a shooter may rekick after every eligible player on their team has kicked.

Art. 3b... If a team has a player that is injured during the game or during the shootout and cannot participate in the shootout, the opposing team may reduce the "10 eligible players" rule (see Art. 3a) to the same number of players as the other team. This means that if Team A starts the shootout with only 10 players and a player is injured during the shootout (bringing them to 9 players), Team B may have a shooter re-kick. However, as would be the case in any regulation or overtime period, should a team fall below the required 7 player minimum requirement for a team, the game would be terminated at that point and a forfeit would be issued.

Art. 3c... For all portions of the shootout, any eligible player on the team's roster may be allowed to kick. Players are NOT required to be on the field at the end of the match in order to participate in the shootout.

Art. 4... The interval between the second half and the first overtime shall be three minutes. The interval between the first overtime period and the shootout period shall be two minutes.

Section 7: Competition Codes / Sportsmanship

Competition Codes are established in order to ensure that any participating school, athlete, coach, fan, participant, or any other individual associated with our member schools, conduct themselves in a manner that is in the same spirit as the TCSAAL Mission & Vision. Individuals, campuses, and other entities failing to meet the standards set forth by the following competition codes may be subject to penalty.

Team Requirements for Playoff Games:

In any playoff round, the Home Team is responsible for the Official Score Book and the Visiting Team is responsible for keeping the Score Board. Both these volunteers will sit at the Official Scorer's Table and they will be the only personnel at the table. If one team doesn't have a TCSAAL approved volunteer, the opposing team will be responsible for both volunteer roles. All other Regular Season requirements remain in-effect for Playoff Games other than the volunteer roles described above.

Any rules not covered in these rules will primarily follow the 2026-2027 NFHS rulebook.

USSF rules do NOT apply to TCSAAL gameplay.

For a complete list of the rule differences between NCAA/NFHS/IFAB, consult the following: Comparative Study of Rules of Laws

All players, coaches, and spectators are bound by these rules and the TCSAAL Handbook.