

About SYSL's Travel Program

Beginning with Grade 3, SYSL players switch from a recreational, intramural In-Town program to a developmental, competitive Travel program.

This program is a lot of fun for everyone involved and generates lasting memories and friendships, but being on a Travel team also requires a commitment from both parent and child:

Prioritization. We understand soccer isn't the only thing in you and your child's lives. But rosters are designed with nearly full participation in mind, so we need your child to be at practices and games. Missing the odd game or practice isn't an issue. But if this going to be a regular occurrence, it's going to cause problems for the team and Travel might not be a good fit for your family.

Punctuality. Travel games start promptly at the designated kickoff time and borrowing players from another team isn't an option like it is for In-Town. Meanwhile, coaches are looking to accomplish as much as possible in the limited practice time. So it is absolutely vital that Travel players be at games and practices on time -- which means fully outfitted and ready to go at the start time.

Communication. We will be introducing a new SYSL mobile app for the fall season that will allow coaches, parents, and older players to communicate easily with one another in real time and the ability to confirm plans to attend games and practices. In the rare event that your child will not be able to attend a particular game or practice, you will need to make sure your coach know about this as early as possible.

You're bound to have questions. Here are some that we anticipate being asked:

Q: So games are competitive now?

A: Yes, goals are counted and there are wins, losses, and draws. Don't fear: there's still an emphasis on fun, playing time for all, and good sportsmanship.

Q: What are the games like?

A: Games are 7 v. 7 with goalkeepers and consist of two 30-minute halves.

Q: Who do we play against?

A: We are a member of Middlesex Youth Soccer League (MYSL) and play games against other towns in MYSL. Current MYSL members include: Billerica, Burlington, Charlestown, Chelmsford, Dracut, Everett, Lowell, Malden, Medford, Melrose, Reading, Stoneham, Tewksbury, Wakefield, Waltham, Westford, Wilmington, and Woburn.

Q: Where do the games take place?

A: Approximately half of our games take place at home in Somerville, with Capuano Field serving as the home field for our G3/G4 (U10) age division. The other games will be away games in other MYSL towns.

Q: When do games take place?

A: Most games are Saturday -- typically morning or early afternoon. Occasionally there will be a makeup game on a weeknight.

Q: What about practices?

A: Weeknight practices go from one per week in In-Town to two per week in Travel. Usually one practice is at Capuano and the other is on a smaller field.

Q: How are Travel teams formed?

A: In order to facilitate competitive games, Travel teams consist of players of similar skill levels. Players are ranked by skill level, with the top group of players being placed on the first team, the next group on the second team, etc.

Q: How are players evaluated?

A: We use data from in-game evaluations (returning Travel players only), coaches' evaluations of their teams at the end of past season, and field evaluations in a formula that determines the player rankings.

Q: Are players ever placed on a team other than the one corresponding to their ranking?

A: In order to ensure that all our Travel teams have coaches, age coordinators are allowed to move a player up or down one team from their natural team placement to a team with a coaching vacancy in order to allow that child's parent to coach that team. Any other exemptions are exceptionally rare and require the approval of the SYSL board of directors.

Q: What if my child wants to play for a specific coach or with friends?

A: Sorry, we are unable to accommodate requests for a specific coach or teammates at the Travel age, as team assignments are based on skill level.

Q: What if we need to carpool with another family?

A: We ask Travel coaches to facilitate carpooling on their teams. We are confident you will be able to find a carpooling arrangement on whatever team your child is assigned.

Q: Who are the coaches?

A: Some of our Travel coaches are parents of players on the team, some are SYSL board members, and some are simply coaches. All of our coaches have passed CORI background checks, sign a Coach Code of Conduct for the league, and are encouraged to take US Soccer coaching training and licensing courses.

Q: Who are the G3/G4 Age Coordinators?

A: Beth Balter is the G3/G4 Girls Age Coordinator and Liz Shea is the G3/G4 Boys Age Coordinator.