



Michigan State Youth Soccer Association

US Soccer Formats of Play & Calendar Birth Year Teams Question & Answers

1. What does 'Birth Year' mean?
 - a. Birth year means a player will play in the age group of the year of their birth. The Birth Year calendar dates run from January 1-December 31. For example, if you are born between January 1 and December 31, 1999, you will play in the 1999 birth-year age group. If you are born between January 1 and December 31, 2002, you will play in the 2002 birth-year age group.
2. Why is MSYSA moving to birth years?
 - a. This change is to be adopted as a best practice by August 2016 and will be mandatory in August 2017 of all youth member organizations affiliated with US Soccer. However, the US Youth Soccer State Associations, including Michigan, are proceeding with implementation in 2016.
3. Why is US Soccer Federation transitioning to the Birth Year?
 - a. The US Soccer Federation is transitioning to the Birth Year to align youth soccer in America with the rest of the world. The majority (if not all) of countries around the world conduct soccer in the birth year. US Soccer Youth National Teams will also make the transition as well. US Soccer recognizes that the change will also help players develop faster and at younger ages in terms of long-term development.
4. Are there playing benefits to transitioning to the Birth Year?
 - a. The main benefit of playing birth year is for developmental purposes. Playing birth year will allow the strongest players to play against older players, which assists in development.
5. How will playing Birth Year benefit players at the grassroots level?
 - a. At the grassroots level, it will allow for better development because it will provide opportunities for individual players to raise the competitive standards and improve team competition and create more meaningful league matches.
6. Can players play up in an older age group?
 - a. Yes, players may play up age groups. It is recommended that players play up by no more than two years.
7. How will the mandated small sided game format help develop players at the grassroots level?
 - a. Small-sided games (SSGs) are a stair step approach to the adult 11 v 11 game as they allow players to grow technically, tactically, physically and psycho-socially at a developmentally appropriate rate.
 - b. The move to SSGs for preteen players is based on educational research on the way children learn. Just as with their academic education their soccer education is progressive. Empirical studies have been conducted into the improvements in the game environment for children in SSGs as opposed to the adult version.
 - c. SSGs aid in player development. They allow players to have a higher percentage of contact with the soccer ball than in the 11 v 11 game, both offensively and defensively, which indirectly improves a player's soccer technique. SSG's also exposes players to an increased number of soccer situations (game phases), which helps improve their tactical knowledge and ability to make good decisions with and without the ball.



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- d. Active participation, more playing time, less players on the field, more opportunities to defend & attack and simplified rules equals more fun and enjoyment, which directly impacts the player retention rate.
8. Are other organizations mandated to transition to the birth year and small sided formats of play?
 - a. Yes, all member organizations of US Soccer Federation will be required to comply with this US Soccer mandate.
9. How does this model of play look for older players and how does it affect them?
 - a. The English FA did a case study on this format of play and developed a video that demonstrates the benefits of this mandate. To view the video, please [click here](#) or visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D1Lb5pDTaCg>.
10. What if my club or league can't afford to purchase new goals or re-paint/structure the existing fields?
 - a. MSYSA offers many recreational grant opportunities each year to member organizations of MSYSA. We strongly encourage you to review our grant packages and submit a grant to potentially aide in this transition. Visit www.michiganyouthsoccer.org to view our grant applications.