



# PARENT HANDBOOK FALL 2022





# Welcome

Welcome to the Fall 2022 Season! We are so excited to have you join us this season, and we look forward to working with your child. The Parent Handbook outlines the format, goals, and expectations of the Mighty Kicks program.

Please take the time to read through the material contained in this handbook, and please reach out to us with any questions you might have.

Our goal is to provide the best youth soccer experience for you and your child!

*Coach Zach*





# SUCCESS THROUGH CHARACTER

Learn more about the Mighty Kicks Life Skills that are taught during each session.

## SESSION FORMAT

Learn more about what a Mighty Kicks session looks like.

## PARENT EXPECTATIONS

Learn about the expectations for parents while their child participates in a Mighty Kicks program.

## CURRICULUM AND PLAYING RULES

Learn about the playing rules used during Mighty Kicks league programs.



# Success Through Character

Sports provide a great environment for kids to develop character. However, good character is not learned unless it is taught. Research shows that, just like skill, character is malleable (it can be developed and adjusted). Coaches have a great opportunity to have a positive impact on the kids they instruct. They should embrace this opportunity by helping kids develop Grit, Character and the Growth Mindset.

Grit: Resilience, Perseverance, Bravery – getting back up after a fall. Facing and conquering adversity and challenge.

The “Growth Mindset” is the mental attitude that believes that things such as talent and intelligence are developed through effort, repetition and hard work. The “Fixed Mindset” believes that intelligence and skill are something you are born with. Someone with the Fixed Mindset may say “some people are smart while others are not,” or “that kid is a natural at soccer.” Someone with the Growth Mindset may say, “I learned that new skill through practice and hard work,” or “I got better at soccer through the struggle of failing and fixing.” Find more Character Development information on our Blog, Life Skills Page and Parent’s Resource Page: [www.mightykicks.net](http://www.mightykicks.net)



### The Mighty Kicks Life Skills

- Have Confidence: Believe in your abilities. **YOU CAN DO IT!** You can do it well.
- Respect Others: Do to them what you would like them to do to you (**GOLDEN RULE**). Be polite –considerate-appreciate others. To show regard for a person’s self-esteem.
- Positive Attitude: Seeing the good in a situation.
- Share: Allow someone to use something you own.
- Play Fair: following the rules. Honest behavior.
- Be Kind: Caring, pleasant, friendly, and nice. Showing you care about other people. Doing what is right towards others. (**GOLDEN RULE**)
- Listen: Follow the instructions of your parents, teachers and coaches. Don’t make them have to tell you twice. Pay attention. Hear and respond to commands. Listen carefully to the instructions.
- Be Honest: Always tell the truth. Truthful way of behaving, speaking and thinking.
- Try Hard: Work until the work is done. Attempt to do it with all your effort. Attempt things that are difficult. Maximum effort.
- Have Fun: Smile, be happy and enjoy what you are doing. Be someone that others want to be around.
- Be Brave: Conquer fear. Try something scary if it is necessary and right. Choose to make an effort even though there is a risk.
- Work Together: Help each other to the goal. Celebrate your teammate’s victory. Cooperate. Cooperation makes the group stronger.

# Benefits of Youth Soccer

## Benefits of Youth Soccer

- Coordination - Confidence - Character
- Agility - Balance - Strength
- Life Skills - Team Skills - Social Skills
- Basic Soccer Skills - Elementary Techniques - An understanding of the game
- Healthy lifestyle habits - Fitness - Endurance
- Improved Self-Concept and Self-Esteem
- Creativity - Imagination
- Fun - Kids learn best while enjoying themselves
- Educational - encouraging learning and development through experience and repetition of skills
- Exercise - improves memory, attention, immune system, mood, and fights obesity and diabetes



# Session Format

## Guided Free Play (10-15 Minutes)

As players arrive, coaches begin putting players in a “street soccer” style play. Street soccer simply refers to a free play environment with no coaching. Coaches are there to guide play and make sure players stay safe. Street soccer provides an opportunity for players to just play without adult intervention. The first two players who arrive begin playing 1v1 and new players are added until it is a 4v4 game. Once all players have arrived, the coach may choose to begin practice or allow children to play a little longer.



## Coach Welcome and Life Skill Review (5 Minutes)

Coach greets all players and welcomes them to practice. Coach goes over the objective for the day and tells a life skill story lesson with the Mighty Kicks value word for the day.

## Warm-up and Introduction to Skill Work (5-7 Minutes)

Players participate in a gross motor warmup focused on balance, agility, and coordination. During this warm-up, the ball is introduced and a new skill with the ball is taught.

## Skill Application (5-7 Minutes)

Players participate in an age and developmentally appropriate activity to work on the skill being taught. Players are given ample opportunities to practice their new skill before applying it to the game.

## Scrimmage (10-15 Minutes)

All practice sessions should end in a 10 minute scrimmage where players have the opportunity to practice the skills they learned during the day’s lesson.

## Team Cheer and High Fives (2 Minutes)

Coach brings the team back together to review the soccer skill, life skill, and provide an opportunity for a final team cheer before leaving the field.



# Parent Expectations

1. Have your child properly equipped (shin guards, proper apparel and size 3 soccer ball). Two year old Parent/Child Class is not required to have shin guards.
2. Bring water and/or drink for your child.
3. Bring a size 3 soccer ball for your child.
4. Communicate effectively (make sure you are receiving the emails and the coach has your updated contact info). All parents should download the Demosphere App and utilize it for all communication.
5. Respect the Coach and Officials (report any issues to the Pre-Academy Director)
6. Abide by the rules outlined with registration (ex. children stay with team during the game; parents comments are positive and encouraging; assist the coach when necessary)
7. Encourage your children (stay positive).
8. Review the resources on the “Parent’s Corner” Page at [MightyKicks.net](http://MightyKicks.net) and utilize character development activities, handouts and more.
9. Abide by all COVID-related protocols and procedures. Failure to do so may result in removal from the facility.



## **THE GOALS OF MIGHTY KICKS:**

1. FUN: ENJOY THE PLAYING OF THE GAME OF SOCCER.
2. IMPROVE MOTOR SKILLS, COORDINATION, AND HEALTH.
3. GENERATE INTEREST IN SOCCER (AND SPORTS).
4. TEACH THE BASIC SKILLS AND RULES.
5. CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT.

## The Purpose

The Pre-Academy Program exists to provide an early soccer experience that is fun, developmentally appropriate, and teaches the fundamentals of the game of soccer to all children. The Pre-Academy is for all levels of players and teaches the foundational skills of the game while also incorporating a curriculum that teaches important life skills.

The Pre-Academy Program is provided by Mighty Kicks Southern Kentucky. To learn more about the Mighty Kicks methodology and curriculum, please visit [mightykicks.net](http://mightykicks.net).



## Why Mighty Kicks?

Mighty Kicks offers a format appropriate for the early development of soccer skills with our youngest athletes. Mighty Kicks also offers explicit teaching of life skill development. These important concepts we hope for kids to learn from sports participation must be actively taught. The Mighty Kicks curriculum specifically teaches these life skill lessons through a developmentally appropriate format.

People often think that in order for a child to progress in a sport, they must face higher and higher levels of competition physically. Research does not support this. In fact, college coaches are often dismayed at the lack of technical ability of even their top athletes. Our rush to put kids in a “higher” league is often at the detriment of their technical ability. It is not uncommon in recreational programs to find a few kids that stand out above the rest. They often developed earlier and can use their speed or increased strength to “win” in these early years. What happens to that child when they rely on size, speed, or athletic ability and then everyone else catches up? That child then hits a development plateau that many times cannot be overcome because it is too late.

Mighty Kicks believes in developing every child and developing every child’s proficiency with the ball at their feet. That’s why we emphasize “Every kid with a ball, every time.” Mighty Kicks is NOT a “beginner” program. Mighty Kicks is an EVERYONE program. We believe in challenging every child through differentiated instruction to meet the developing needs of everyone. How do we do that? Through a specially designed curriculum that focuses on individual skill development before team concepts.



## The Curriculum

The Mighty Kicks Curriculum outlines 8 weeks of soccer specific skills that we believe are the most important to establishing the foundation of later soccer development. Every child is given the opportunity to hone these new skills in a variety of ways and at a variety of levels. At the end of every session (“the game”), children have the opportunity to practice these specific skills in an appropriately competitive environment.

The skills taught each week include the following:

1. Dribbling for Control (Using all surfaces of the foot: inside, outside, in-step, and sole)
2. Stopping and Moving (Using all surfaces of the foot to stop, turn, and move)
3. Striking a Ball with the Inside of the Foot
4. Striking a Ball with the In-Step (Laces) of the Foot
5. 1v1 Attacking
6. Turns
7. Shielding the Ball
8. Review of Skills

Previously learned skills are reinforced each week and there is an ongoing focus on specific foot skill development. Every week players are focused on getting touches on the ball through a series of footwork exercises and juggling patterns. All players are taught proper juggling technique, even in our youngest ages, in order to develop the habit later on.

All sessions follow the outline above under “Session Format”. All Mighty Kicks coaches and volunteers have been given a specific curriculum to follow. This curriculum outlines a specific Life Skill as well as specific soccer focus for the week. Each week your child will learn one of the Life Skills from above and will participate in a soccer lesson that emphasizes individual player growth.



## How are teams formed?

Players are randomly assigned to teams by age. Each team has a volunteer head and assistant coach. Our professional staff coaches, led by Coach Zach Salchli, are part of every team's session as they lead all children through a series of activities with the support of the volunteer coaching staff.

As a commitment to ensuring a high level experience for all participants, all of our professional staff coaches must hold a minimum USSF "D" License. All of our volunteer head and assistant coaches undergo professional development with the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association to complete their US Soccer Grassroots License. Additional training is provided by Director Zach Salchli, the United Soccer Coaches Association, and other SKY Soccer Program Directors. We provide this training for free to all coaches. If you are interested in taking part in our coaching program, please contact Zach Salchli at [zach@mightykicks.net](mailto:zach@mightykicks.net)



## Game Format

Players will participate in a game each week. This game varies depending on the age and developmental stage of the players. The coaches are responsible for ensuring that children stay active and engaged during the course of the game. They are also responsible for player safety. If your child is not practicing safe play, they may be asked to sit out of a game. Please ensure that your child understands how to participate appropriately.

Please understand that children at this age do not “see” the game the same way adults do. They do not process or think about space in the same way. Do not expect them to see the things you do. Let them have fun! Encourage them!

We do not emphasize team concepts at this age. We will teach proper technique of striking a ball for a pass; however, we do not expect kids to pass at this age. Neither should you. They are not going to pass. We want them to fall in love with the ball, and if we’re successful, they’re obviously going to want the ball at their feet!

Games will be played in a 3v3 or 4v4 format depending on age. At times, coaches may choose to utilize a 2v2 format. This is the new player development initiative utilized by the FA in Belgium and has become very popular throughout Europe. The goal of the game should be to provide children an age and developmentally appropriate environment to practice skills. Over the course of the season stamina will allow children to play longer amounts of time. We will also introduce a new rule each week that makes the game look more and more like “real” soccer. Be patient with your child as they learn the rules of the game.



## Parent Rules During the Game

1. Under no circumstances should parents be on the field during the game. The only time parents should be on a field is during the 2 Year Old Parent/Child Class. All parents must stay behind the white lines of the field.
2. Coaches have been instructed to try and keep the ball in play, but please do not kick the ball if it comes to you. This is a safety issue. Please stop the ball at your feet and allow a coach to come and redirect play. At times, a coach will just tap the ball to keep it in play. Please understand that this is fine. There are no championship trophies being handed out. We want kids actively engaged and keeping the ball in play limits down time.



3. Encourage positively. Some examples of appropriately positive phrases that help kids do better: “Keep working hard!” “You’re doing great, keep it up!”. Giving specific directions is not helpful. They don’t understand what you are talking about anyway.
4. Please know, your child will fall down. No, that other child did not do that on purpose. They are little kids, and they have very little control over their bodies. Please be patient.
5. Encourage your child to sit with their team when they are not in the game. If your child is struggling to do so, they may sit with you, but we encourage that children sit with their team in the appropriate team space.

### **Game Rules for 5U and 6U**

- Game begins with a kick-off. This kick may go in any direction but may not be “double-touched” by a player. This means the player kicking may not touch the ball again until it is touched by another player.
- Games are to be played in a 4v4 format.
- All out of bounds play results in a kick-in by the opposing team.
- A kick-in is placed on the boundary line and follows the same rules as the kick-off.
- All balls that go over the goal line will be awarded a goal kick for the defending team. There will be no corner kicks.
- On a goal kick, players must place the ball on the goal line and kick the ball into a teammate. The opposing team must retreat behind the midfield line until the ball is in play.
- Coaches should always encourage players to retreat back to provide space for opposing team to kick the ball in during any restart.
- One coach per team should be on the field to help manage the game.
- A kick-off should occur following any goal scored.
- No scores are to be kept for ANY game!
- All players should get to play in at least 50% of every game.

### **Game Rules for 4U**

- Same as above except the game should be played in a 3v3 format.
- Only players and coaches may be on the field during a game. There should be no parents on the field.





## **How can I help make this a great experience for my child?**

1. Be unbelievably positive about everything. Kids respond to your reactions. Make every reaction positive.
2. Support the coach with the objectives of the program. We want to give every child opportunities to grow. This is not the World Cup. We do not care about the score.
3. Get involved! Volunteer to help coach, bring snacks, or be the team mom or team dad. There are so many ways to help out. Please reach out to Coach Zach if you are interested in being involved in any way.
4. Don't compare your kid to others. It's tough not to do, but please remember that every child grows and develops differently. If your child is a little physically behind, don't worry. If your child is athletically superior, don't get too excited. Let your child have fun and be a kid.



## Parent Participation Program (Parent/Child Class)

Our youngest participants (2020 for the Fall 2022 season) take part in a Parent Participation Program, sometimes called a “Mommy and Me” program. Parents are expected to participate with their child in this introductory program. All children who are 2 Years Old at the time of the season must participate as part of the Parent Participation Program. This program focuses on gross motor development, listening skills, and the ability to follow directions. This introductory program provides children with the foundation needed to successfully join the Pre-Academy in their next season.



## Uniforms

All Pre-Academy players are provided a uniform t-shirt as part of registration. You are not required to purchase anything additional. Players may choose their own color of shorts and socks. Shin guards are required for all players aged 4 and up but are also highly recommended for ages 3 and up.

## Practice and Game Schedules

All practices and games are being held at Lovers Lane Soccer Complex. Practices will be held at the following times

**2017 and 2018 Boys:** Practice will be held at 5:30 PM on Tuesdays

**2017 and 2018 Girls:** Practice will be held at 6:30 PM on Tuesdays

Our 2019 and 2020 age groups meet just **once a week** on Saturday mornings at 10:00 AM (2020) and 11:00 AM (2019).

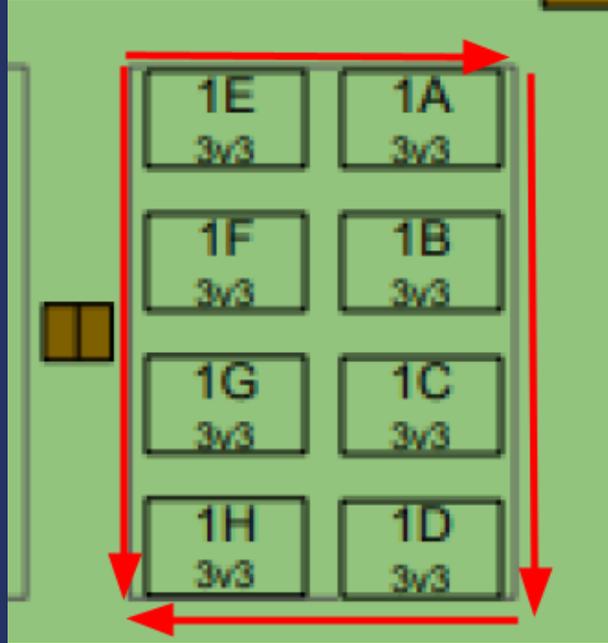
On game days, players will participate in a 15 minute practice session prior to their game. Game lengths vary depending on the age group.

**2017 and 2018 Girls meet at 9:00 AM on Saturdays,** and **2017/2018 Boys meet at 12:00 PM on Saturdays.**



## Practice and Game Day Seating (UPDATED AUGUST 2021)

Ensuring the safety of all of our participants is our # 1 priority. In order to ensure that players are safe and that the playing field is safe for all participants and coaches, we ask you to adhere to the following protocols for spectators:



1. Spectator seating on **Tuesday night** practices should follow the RED ARROWS above. Please sit on the periphery of the field. This would be in the areas where there is no bermuda grass. You will see a distinct change in grass type. Please sit where the grass changes.
2. Spectators should refrain from going into the area bounded by the RED ARROWS. This space is reserved for players and coaches only. This is to allow players and coaches to easily move spaces, if needed.
3. This applies only to **Tuesday night** practices. On Game Days, spectators may sit at the individual field but must be at least 1 YARD (3 FEET) from the sideline. Games on Field 1A, 1D, 1E, and 1H should always try to sit off the bermuda grass when possible. Please see Saturday seating arrangement below.



## **Game Day Seating (All Age Groups EXCEPT 2020 Parent Program)**

**There will be a designated "PLAYERS AND COACHES ONLY" side for each field. Parents and specators should sit opposite of this side. Please make sure EVERYONE in your family understands seating arrangement. Usually it is extended family who sit in the wrong spaces. Please help us by ensuring that everyone in your party knows where to sit.**

**Fields A,B,C parent side will ALWAYS be on the periphery of the larger field (fescue grass). This also applies to Fields F, G, H. The center fields will be marked to designate Coaches Side vs. Parent Side.**

**UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD NON-PARTICIPANTS BE ON THE FIELD.**

Please monitor additional children. Siblings are not permitted on the fields. This includes siblings using empty fields to kick a ball. We have had balls fly onto practice and game fields that were kicked by siblings. This is a huge safety hazard. Please monitor all children in attendance with you.



## Communication

SKY Soccer uses Demosphere as its main form of communication. Please ensure that you have downloaded the Demosphere app.

### Inclement Weather and Cancellations

In the event of severe weather or a situation where the park has been closed, you will be notified via Demosphere. This is one reason it is very important to have the Demosphere app installed. All schedule notifications will be sent via Demosphere. This includes all weather-related cancellations.



## Coaching Format

The Pre-Academy Program relies on a team of professional staff coaches and trained volunteers to implement our program each season. With more than 500 participants per season, it is no small task to organize and prepare all coaches to implement our program. Staff coaches work in tandem with volunteer coaches to ensure that all players have access to high quality instruction and support.

Every team in Pre-Academy will have one parent volunteer as a head coach and one parent volunteer as an assistant coach. These volunteers will be your primary point of contact for the season. Each volunteer is trained by the Kentucky Youth Soccer Association and completes the US Soccer 4v4 Grassroots License, as well as in-house training led by the Pre-Academy Director. All volunteer coaches must undergo a background check and complete Risk Management training where they learn proper protocol to follow in keeping players safe.

Every team will also have access to one of our Pre-Academy Staff Coaches. These coaches hold a minimum of the US Soccer “D” License which requires the completion of many hours of coaching instruction and testing. Pre-Academy Staff Coaches will be assigned to work with a “pod” of teams who will follow the Pre-Academy Staff Coach for their practice sessions. This Staff Coach will serve as the “Lead” Coach for practice sessions with the volunteer coaches assisting the implementation of the curriculum. On “game days”, the volunteer coaches will lead their teams during the game. This model provides opportunities for coaching development for all coaches in the program and ensures that all of our players have access to the same curriculum and teaching across the program.

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer head or assistant coach, please reach out to Zach Salchli at [zach@mightykicks.net](mailto:zach@mightykicks.net). If you hold a minimum of a US Soccer “D” License and would like to join the Pre-Academy Staff, please also reach out to Coach Zach at the above email address.



## COVID-19 ADDITIONS TO THE HANDBOOK (UPDATED AUGUST 2020)

In consideration of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases, Mighty Kicks will be taking a proactive step toward mitigating risk. Please note that there is always an inherent risk involved in any sport or physical activity, and it is impossible to get rid of all risks. However, we believe a proactive stance is always best and want to be prepared to keep all kids and families safe. In accordance with this, please practice good social etiquette in maintaining social distancing and keeping those around you safe.

### Steps Mighty Kicks Southern Kentucky will be taking:

- *Response and Reporting:* If any case or symptoms of COVID-19 are reported or detected, the Mighty Kicks coach, if not Zach Salchli (Director), will report this information immediately to Zach Salchli the Director of Mighty Kicks Southern Kentucky. Program Director and all Staff Coaches will take advice and adhere to guidelines set forth by the Barren River Health Department for Return to Play of affected families. Coach Zach will also relay information to all families that came into contact with the individual as required by any local authorities.
- *Social/Physical Distancing:* Please be mindful of social distancing when possible and respectful of other families who are trying to maintain social distancing.
- *Facemasks:* Facemasks are not currently required. This may change as a result of local, state, or federal guidance.

### Steps Families need to take when attending a session:

- If your child or any member of their household is or has displayed any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 they must remain at home and not attend a session. Please inform Zach Salchli (Owner/Director) if this occurs with your child or any member of your household. Parents should take their child's temperature prior to arrival at the park. No participant should arrive at the park with a fever of 100.4 or higher.

## About the Director

Mighty Kicks is led by Coach Zach Salchli. Coach Zach is currently the Head Coach at Warren Central High School. Most recently, Coach Zach was the Director of Student-Athlete Development for Women's Soccer at Western Kentucky University and former Head Coach for the Greenwood Lady Gators Soccer Program leading the Lady Gators to a national ranking for the first time in school history in route to two regional championships and state quarterfinal appearances. His time with Greenwood resulted in being named the 2018 Kentucky Girls' Soccer Coach of the Year as well as the 2018 United Soccer Coaches South Region Coach of the Year. In addition, Coach Zach was awarded the 2015 Coach of the Year by the Southern Kentucky Referee Association, 2016 Greenwood High School Coach of the Year, and the 2022 Kentucky Youth Soccer Girls Competitive Coach of the Year.

Coach Zach holds the USSF National "C" License, United Soccer Coaches National Diploma with Distinguished Pass, and works as a Head Coach with the Kentucky Olympic Development Program. Coach Zach holds his M.Ed. degree in Learning and Instruction from Vanderbilt University. Coach Zach's research interests focus on early childhood literacy development and creating environments that support literacy learning, specifically in younger children.

Coach Zach has been married for 12 years to Ashley, and they have one daughter and one son. In their very limited spare time, they enjoy hiking, cooking, and visiting new cities (New York City is their favorite!).

