



THE DIFFERENT POSITIONS IN YOUTH SOCCER

It can be confusing trying to figure out the different positions in youth soccer. It's important to understand each position a player may take on the field because that's determines his or her duties during the playing of the game.

Here I will explain the basic positions that young children will play in soccer games. There are essentially 4 different positions in youth soccer with some variations in the duties of each player when the number of players on the field changes.

1. GOALIE

OTHER NAMES: Goalkeeper. Keeper

MAIN DUTY: Prevent the soccer ball from crossing the goal line into the net. Goalie can use her hands to stop the ball from going into the goal provided the ball is within the borders of the penalty area.

LOCATION ON THE FIELD: Almost always inside the rectangular area known as the penalty area. Goal keepers may leave the area occasionally to distribute the ball downfield with her feet. Only out of desperation at the end of a game will a goalie possible stray far away from protecting the goal and try to support the offense.

The exact size of the penalty area depends on the age group of the players and the **size of the soccer field**.

2. DEFENDER

OTHER NAMES: Fullback. Back. Sweeper. This position is sometimes more precisely described as center-back for defending the middle and wingbacks who defend more toward the outside areas of the field.

MAIN DUTY: Defense. They defend their own goal, preventing the opposition from scoring and breaking up dangerous scoring opportunities. Depending on the game's situation defenders can press forward at times to support and participate offensively.

The sweeper got this name because their job is to "sweep up" any attacking moves or clean the soccer ball out of the area. Sweepers are often the last line of defense in front of the goalie.



LOCATION ON THE FIELD: Backs will spend the majority of time on their own half of the field, but sometimes support the offense by pressing forward, particularly on set plays like corner kicks in their opponents' side of the field.

Left backs play primarily on the left side of the defensive zone. Right backs play primarily on the right side of the defensive zone.

3. MIDFIELDER

OTHER NAMES: Halfback. Stopper

MAIN DUTY: Midfielders connect the defenders and the forwards. Generally, they have excellent passing skills. With larger formations of 7 or more players, midfielders can be deemed offensive midfielders or defensive midfielders. All midfielders have both defensive and offensive duties.

Stoppers are defensive midfielders. They are the first line of defense, whose job it is to stop the initial attacks in the middle of the field by the opposition. The stopper usually plays between the fullbacks and the midfielders.

LOCATION ON THE FIELD: Halfbacks usually stay between the 18's but can visit the corners too. Left midfielders play primarily on the left side of the defensive zone. Right midfielders play primarily on the right side of the defensive zone.

4. FORWARD

OTHER NAMES: Striker. Wing

MAIN DUTY: Score goals. Like many other sports the ones who score often get the most attention. Forwards are players that stay in an attacking position. The term striker usually refers to a single player that plays nearest the opposition's goal. Wings are forward that play wider, somewhat closer to the sidelines.

LOCATION ON THE FIELD: All forwards tend to push "forward" on the field toward the opponent's goal when possible. Strikers tend to play in the middle and regular forwards may play anywhere along the front line, often designated as right wing or left wing.



These are the basic 4 different positions in youth soccer, goalkeepers, backs, mids, and forwards. The number of positions is more limited with small sided soccer and there are several good reasons for playing on smaller fields with a smaller number of players.

The complexities of positions and formations dictate that you keep it as simple as possible for the youngest soccer players.

These positions used in youth soccer are like the positions used at all levels of the game. However, the positions of players in youth soccer change depending on how many players are on the field at one time.

Youth soccer positions and numbers are:

- **1– Goalkeeper (GK)**
- **2– Right Back (RB)**
- **3– Left Back (LB)**
- **4– Right Side Center Back (RCB)**
- **5– Left Side Center Back (LCB)**
- **6– Defensive Midfielder (DM)**
- **7– Right Midfielder/Winger (RM)**
- **8– Central Midfielder (CM)**
- **9– Striker/Center Forward (S/CF)**
- **10– Attacking Midfielder/Playmaker (AM)**
- **11– Left Midfielder/Winger (LM)**

At a professional level, there are eleven players on a soccer team. Youth soccer games are often played with 6, 7, 8, or 9 players on each soccer team depending on the player's age.





As shown in the list of soccer positions above, each position has a specific number associated with it.

The interesting thing is that within **the rules of soccer**, there is actually no requirement for a player to wear any specific number at all. (Although they do have to display a **unique number** so the referee can easily identify them.)

It's important to know that the numbers used at the start of this article relate to a game where each team is fielding 11 players. Yet, because of the nature of youth soccer, it's often the case that there are fewer players than 11 on each team.

Youth players often don't have the capacity to run for as long or as far as older players. And to compensate for this, the field they play on is often considerably smaller than a full-size field, and the game time considerably shorter.

The number of players most commonly used in a youth soccer game is 6 players vs 6 players, 7v7, 8v8, or 9v9. But in games featuring older youth players, you will still see 11v11 is still used.



You also can't talk about soccer positions without talking about soccer formations. This is because the position of the players on a soccer field creates what is known as a soccer formation.

In soccer, a formation is an overall picture of where the players are positioned on the field.

For example, in an 11 a side soccer game, you will often hear people talk about formations such as 4-4-2, 4-3-3, or even 5-4-1. These groups of numbers relate to the position of each player on the field.

To clarify this, let me explain this a bit further...

The numbers in a formation start from defense and work their way forward through the midfield and end with the forwards.



In the example of the formation “4-4-2”, the **first number 4** refers to the group of defenders, the **second number 4** refers to the midfielders, and the **last number, the number 2**, refers to the forwards.

Each number indicates how many players are playing in that position on the field.

Again, using the 4-4-2 example, this means that there would be **4 players in defense, 4 players in midfield, and 2 playing offense**. In a 4-3-3 formation, there would be **4 players in defense, 3 in midfield, and 3 players positioned in the offense**.

You may have also noticed that **whenever formations are listed there is always one number less than the total amount of players on a team**. The reason for this is that the goalie is never included in the number in formations.

Instead of putting a number “1” in front of every single formation, it is simply assumed that a goalie is on the field as part of the team.

This can be safely assumed because, **in soccer, it is a requirement that a goalie is part of every team and always present on the field**. As it is also the case that there is only ever one goalie on the field for a team at any one time and they always play in the position directly in front of the goal.

Youth Soccer Positions: Including Diagrams and Formations

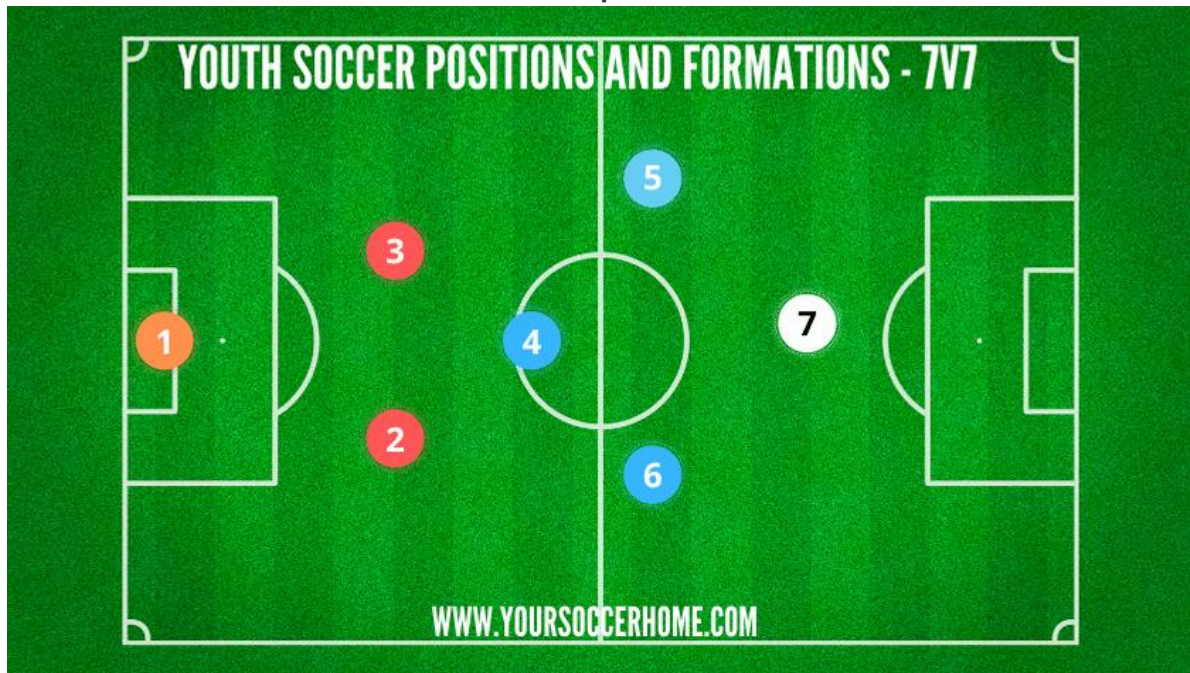
Now we’ve established what the position numbers on a player’s jersey refer to and how formations are a key part of understanding soccer positions, let’s look in more detail at the positions used in youth soccer.

As mentioned above, in youth soccer, there are various positions used depending on how many players are on the field at any one time.





Youth soccer positions: 7v7



Soccer positions for 7v7 youth game
Goalie – Orange / Defenders – Red / Midfielders – Blue / Forwards – White

The positions and numbers for the players in a 7v7 youth soccer game are:

- **1 – Goalkeeper**
- **2 – Right side defender**
- **3 – Left side defender**
- **4 – Central midfielder**
- **5 – Left side midfielder**
- **6 – Right side midfielder**
- **7 – Striker**
 - The recommendation for the under 9 and under 10 age groups is that they play in soccer games of 7v7 players.
 - The most popular setup for a 7v7 soccer game is with a formation of **2-3-1**.
 - As you can see in the image above the players are positioned with two players in defense, three in midfield, and one striker.
 - With the players in these positions, the midfield is the strongest part of the team. This is important as the center of the field is where most of the action happens.
 - Having three players in midfield gives the team enough numbers to be able to drop back and support the defense when needed but also move forward and support the offense as needed.



Youth soccer positions: 9v9



Soccer positions for 9v9 youth game

Goalie – Orange / **Defenders** – Red / **Midfielders** – Blue / **Forwards** – White

The positions and numbers for the players in a 9v9 youth soccer game are:

- **1 – Goalkeeper**
- **2 – Right side defender**
- **3 – Left side defender**
- **4 – Central defender**
- **5 – Left side midfielder**
- **6 – Central midfielder**
- **7 – Right side midfielder**
- **8 – Center forward**
- **9 – Striker/playmaker**

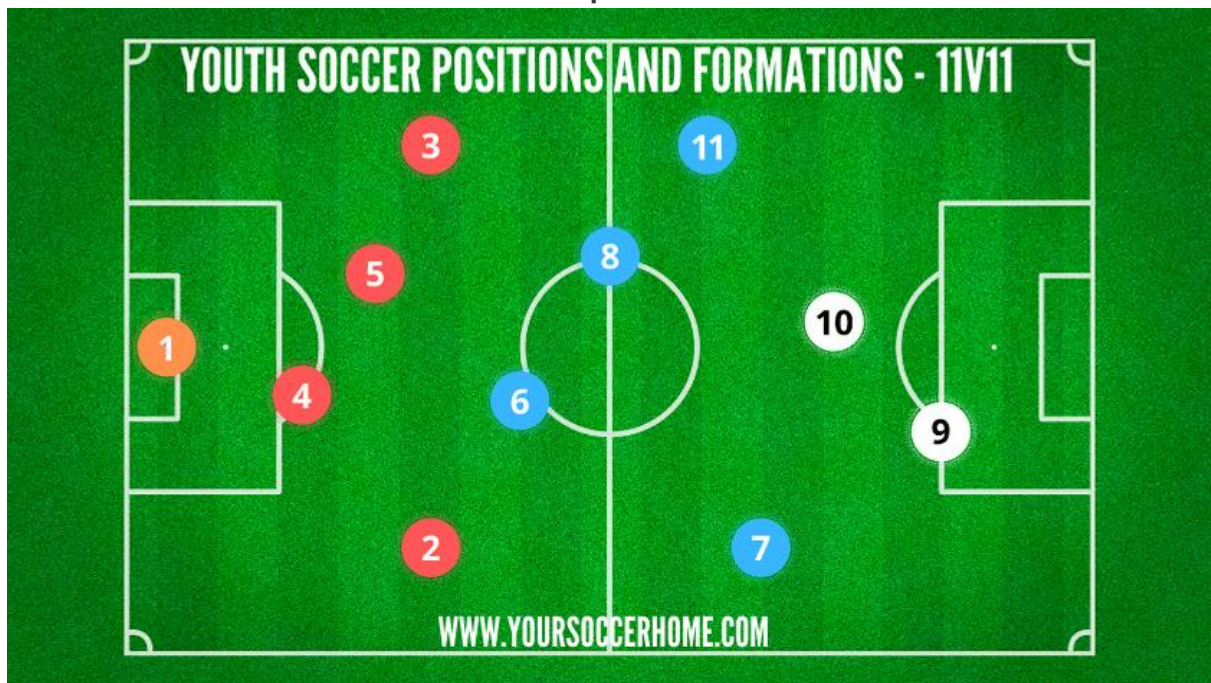
The recommendation for the under 11 and under 12 age groups is that they play soccer games of 9v9 players. In a soccer game of 9v9, you will usually see players positioned in a formation of **3-3-2**. Three players in defense, three in midfield, and two players playing offense.



Having 9 players on the field means there are now enough players to play two players in the position of offense rather than only one player while still maintaining the strength of the defensive and midfield.

Having this extra player in an offensive position also means the team has an extra player in position to score when the opportunity comes up. And every team hopes that this extra player translates into more goals!

Youth soccer positions: 11v11



Soccer positions for 11v11 youth game
Goalie – Orange / **Defenders** – Red / **Midfielders** – Blue / **Forwards** – White

Once a youth soccer team gets to the stage where they are playing 11v11 the position of the players on the field becomes very similar to how the players are positioned in a pro-level soccer game.

In 11v11 soccer one of the most long-standing and most often used formations is **4-4-2**.

This formation has 4 players positioned in defense, 4 in the midfield, and 2 upfront.

Having the players in these positions provides a strong line of defense and midfield. The players can quickly cover all the areas and move forward and back as needed.



It also allows for two players in the main attacking positions. Often one of these players will play slightly further back than the other. Positioned just in front of the midfield they act as a playmaker and a link between the midfield and forwards.

The positions and numbers for the players in a 11v11 youth soccer game are:

- **1– Goalkeeper**
- **2– Right back**
- **3– Left-back**
- **4– Right side Center Back**
- **5– Left side Center Back**
- **6– Defensive Midfielder**
- **7– Right Midfielder/Winger**
- **8– Central Midfielder**
- **9– Striker/Center forward**
- **10– Playmaker**
- **11– Left Midfielder/Winger**

Conclusion and Recommendations

Hopefully, this has helped you understand the positions of the players in youth soccer.

If you, or someone you know, are looking to dramatically improve your soccer abilities in a short space of time, then you can quickly recommend VSA soccer training camps to someone you know.

VSA training camps are dedicated to seeing 6-12 yr. old soccer players improve and become the best they can be. Check out the rest of the VSA website by clicking on the link www.villaverdesocceracademy.com.