

Whitpain Recreation Association
Travel Soccer Program
Guidelines for Tryouts and Team Formation
As of January 2026

The Whitpain Recreation Association (WRA) is a nonprofit organization offering youth sports programs in field hockey, baseball / softball, basketball, and soccer. WRA's soccer programs include intramural, academy, and travel levels. These guidelines are written specifically for the travel soccer program and focus on the tryouts and team formation processes. These guidelines are written by the committee of volunteers who operate the travel soccer program for WRA, and are written for the benefit of families and individuals who participate in or are considering participating in WRA travel soccer.

1. Who may participate

WRA travel soccer is available for youth aged approximately seven to eighteen. Please see the precise age cutoffs in section 4 below. Verification of age will be required by submission of a birth certificate or similar documentation at the time of registration in a competitive league by the team. WRA travel soccer programs are offered for both boys and girls, and these guidelines apply equally in all ways to both genders. Participation in WRA travel soccer is not limited by geographic residency of the participant, i.e. players may reside in any location. However, the WRA is a community-based program serving Whitpain Township and Wissahickon School District, and travel soccer leadership may consider place of residency during tryouts and team formation.

2. When will tryouts be held

WRA travel soccer leadership will annually decide upon a schedule for tryouts for players aged U8 through U14. Formal tryouts will not be held for players aged U15 and above. In lieu, "identification sessions" may be held for these older players, at the discretion of the boys' and girls' coordinators and coaches. See additional information on identification sessions in section 5 below.

The committee will seek to hold tryouts in late March and early April of each year. Prior to this timing weather is often too cold or unreliable to hold multiple outdoor events, and after this timing there are often too many competing events (e.g. school spring break, religious ceremonies, and games and practices for other sports). The precise schedule for annual tryouts will be posted to the WRA travel soccer webpage approximately one month prior to the scheduled tryout dates.

Recognizing that even in late March and early April participants may have competing priorities, the committee will seek to schedule tryouts after school and over the weekends to attempt to incite maximum participation.

3. Where will tryouts be held

The committee will seek to hold all tryouts at Centre Square Park (CSP) for ease of coordination, and since CSP is the home of WRA's programs. If "overflow" from CSP becomes practically impossible, the committee will utilize other fields in the vicinity of CSP such as Montgomery County Community College. The committee will seek to hold as many tryouts as possible on CSP turf fields 3 and 4 but may utilize CSP's grass fields in order to avoid conflicts with other sports or to take advantage of available daylight.

4. What are the age cutoffs for tryouts and team formation

U.S. Youth Soccer has decided to move to a player age grouping of August 1 through July 31 beginning in the 2026-2027 season / registration year. This change will better align youth soccer with the school calendar and reduce situations where players are placed in a different age group than their classmates. Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer (EPYS) and the Inter-County Soccer League (ICSL), WRA's primary governing body and league, respectively, will follow this age grouping, as will most area clubs. After significant dialogue and consideration, WRA's Travel Soccer Committee has decided WRA will also follow this age grouping **for ages U8 through U14**. Players U15 and older will be treated differently, as further detailed in section 5 below. Additionally, in recognition that schools in eastern Pennsylvania do not follow the same age grouping for grade level as is being proposed by U.S. Youth Soccer, WRA's Travel Soccer Committee has also decided to treat players with birthdays in August differently, as detailed in section 14 below.

Age cutoffs for the 2026-2027 season are as follows:

- **U8** players are those born between 8/1/18 and 7/31/19
- **U9** players are those born between 8/1/17 and 7/31/18
- **U10** players are those born between 8/1/16 and 7/31/17
- **U11** players are those born between 8/1/15 and 7/31/16
- **U12** players are those born between 8/1/14 and 7/31/15
- **U13** players are those born between 8/1/13 and 7/31/14
- **U14** players are those born between 8/1/12 and 7/31/13

Additional information about this age group change can be found on the websites of involved organizations as follows:

- [Updated Decision on Age Group Formation - US Youth Soccer](#)
- [Age Group Formation \(2026-27 Season\) - Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer](#)
- [Inter-County Youth Soccer League | New Club Application](#)

5. Which ages have tryouts and which have skill assessments

Travel soccer committee leadership has decided that formal tryouts will be held for ages U8 through U14, inclusive.

Players aged U15 and older will be invited to join informal skill assessment sessions. Such skill assessment sessions will be scheduled for particular dates and times which will be publicly shown on the WRA's website. However, these assessments may include players of any age U15 and older. The Travel Soccer Committee recognizes that many teams U15 and older have been playing together for several years, and that restructuring such teams to reflect U.S. Soccer's new age groupings may be detrimental to the team, the coach, and/or the players. The intention of the skill assessment sessions is to provide the girls' and boys' coordinators and the involved coaches maximum flexibility to determine how teams will be structured for ages U15 and above. While providing an opportunity for players whose skills have changed to move between teams, and the opportunity for players entirely new to Whitpain to be placed on an appropriate team, are both highly important, the Committee also wishes to provide coaches the opportunity to maintain existing teams—even if that team is comprised of a mix of ages under the new U.S. Soccer age groupings—if the coach and the involved player families desire to do so. If a team elects to remain together as a mix of ages (for instance, U16 and U17 players together on one team), it should be noted that such a team will need to play in the league division appropriate for the *oldest* players on the team.

6. How many teams will be formed

Travel soccer leadership wishes to include as many participants on our teams as possible, but must ensure (1) that all players are competitive at the travel level, and that (relatedly) all WRA teams will be competitive in ICSL and other leagues; and (2) that all teams have the ability to train and play games on our high-quality facilities at CSP. The facilities at CSP have limited availability due to the number of soccer teams participating, other WRA sports which use the facilities, and external organizations that WRA allows to use the CSP facilities in order to offset the cost of maintaining and replacing the facilities, for which the WRA is responsible. Given these realities, the WRA will seek to field up to three travel teams at the U8 through U12 levels, and two or fewer teams at the U13 and older levels. This goal has most to do with team roster size changes at the U13 and older level (see section 7 below).

7. How many players will be placed on a team

WRA travel soccer follows EPYSA rules regarding roster size, which are as follows:

- U8, U9, & U10—play 7 players per side per game (with goalie)- roster maximum 12
- U11 & U12—play 9 players per side per game (with goalie)- roster maximum 16
- U13 and older—play 11 players per side per game (with goalie)- roster maximum 22

Roster minimums shall be at the discretion of each coach and the boys' and girls' coordinators. Generally, coaches will desire to have at least 3-5 substitute players available per game, even if a team does not have its full roster.

8. Might some tryout participants not make a team

Yes, given the details in sections 6 and 7 above, it is possible a player who participates in tryouts may not be placed on a WRA travel soccer team. All decisions as to team formation are for the current year **only**, and the WRA encourages any individual interested in our travel soccer programs to try out any year regardless of prior years' results.

9. How many tryouts will be held

WRA will hold two (2) tryouts for each age group aged U8 through U14. The travel soccer committee reserves the right to combine age groups and / or genders of tryout participants as it sees fit to operate a successful and efficient tryout operation.

10. How many tryouts should my participant attend

All participants are **highly** encouraged to attend both tryouts offered for their age group. However, a participant is only required to attend one tryout offered for his / her age group. Special exceptions for someone who misses both tryouts but is still invited to join a team will be considered only in rare, unusual circumstances such as a player who has a broken limb as of both tryouts, a player who is out of the country for both tryouts, or a player who has a serious illness affecting both tryouts. Conflicts with other sport events or failure to know the tryout dates do not constitute a special exception.

11. Do I need to register for tryouts and if so, how and what does it cost

All participants must register in advance to participate in a tryout. This rule will be enforced without exception for the 2026 tryout season. Any player not registered for a tryout as determined as of check-in will be (1) asked to show proof of his/her registration if

they believed this has been completed, or (2) asked to step aside from the check-in line and complete registration via mobile phone or personal computer prior to the player entering the field for tryouts. Players not completing a registration **will not** be permitted to tryout.

Registration will open approximately one (1) month before tryouts are scheduled to be held. Registration is completed through WRA's webpage which redirects to TeamSnap, WRA's electronic sports management system. Users without a TeamSnap account may need to create one in order to register for travel soccer tryouts. The ability to register will remain open and available until **24 hours before the second tryout for your scheduled age group**. After this, registration will be unavailable, and as noted above a player cannot participate in tryouts if he/she is not registered.

For 2026, tryouts will cost \$25.00 for all participants aged U14 and younger, without exception. This fee will cover any number of tryouts (including for the player's given age group or the next age group older). This fee **will not** be credited to future team costs if the participant is successful in being placed on a team. If this tryout registration cost presents a hardship to any participant, the WRA offers hardship waivers, and the player is encouraged to email info@playwra.com for more information.

12. How long will each tryout be and what should a player do before and when arriving

Each tryout session will last 90 minutes. Participants are encouraged to arrive 10-15 minutes early to check-in and receive a pinnie and in case there are questions regarding registration. No announcements will be made regarding team formation at the end of a given tryout, and the player is free to leave the field as soon as the trainer in charge of tryouts has indicated it is concluded.

13. What is the policy for inclement weather

A decision on whether to hold or cancel tryouts based on inclement weather or other unforeseen circumstances shall be made by the boys' and girls' coordinators and other travel soccer leadership. Generally, tryouts to be held on turf fields shall be held unless there is lightening or torrential rain. Tryouts to be held on grass fields shall be canceled if rainfall is significant enough to affect the usability of the surface.

14. Can my player try out for a younger team or an older team

Players may not tryout for a team targeted for younger ages.

Players may tryout for a team targeted for one age older than the player. However several caveats are worth noting. Firstly, this must be done **in addition to** attending at least one tryout for the appropriate age group. Secondly, the player should disclose to WRA's travel soccer committee before or at the outset of the tryout that he / she is not aged appropriately for the tryout. Thirdly, WRA travel soccer has had—and will continue to have—a longstanding policy that in order to be placed on a team the age above the player's age, he or she must rank **among the top five (5)** players on the older team. Any player ranking sixth or lower for the older team will not be considered for inclusion on that team. The boys' or girls' coordinator will review rankings as to this situation and will inform coaches and players of the decision, i.e. ability to ignore the "top 5" ranking rule is not at a coach's discretion.

For the 2026-2027 season, given the change in age grouping by U.S. Soccer, the WRA Travel Soccer Committee has decided to treat players U14 and below with birthdays between 8/1 and 8/31 of a given year differently than those with birthdays between 9/1 and 7/31. Players with August birthdays will have the opportunity to tryout for a team targeted for one age older than the player (under the new age groupings) just like all others. *However*, players with birthdays in August can place *anywhere* on a black, white, or green team of the year older and be offered a roster position on such older team. The intention of this policy is to give players with August birthdays a high level of flexibility to either remain playing with their grade-level peers OR to play with the appropriate age cohort per the new U.S. Soccer guidelines.

For illustrative purposes only: hypothetically, a player born August 18, 2016 would fall in the U10 age grouping for the 2026-2027 season under U.S. Soccer's new guidelines. Such a player would most likely be entering fifth grade in fall 2026, and likely has more fifth grade friends than fourth grade friends. For Whitpain, under the above-stated policy, this player could tryout for BOTH the U10 (mostly fourth graders) and U11 (mostly fifth graders) teams—he/she would need to attend at least one of the two tryouts for each level. If he/she places on any roster (black, white, or green) at the U11 level, he/she would be offered the opportunity to play either U11 or U10; whichever he/she wishes. A player born September 10, 2016, by comparison, could also tryout for the U11 (and U10) teams, but would need to rank among the top 5 players on the U11 black team in order to be offered a roster position on that team.

15. Who will run tryouts

WRA travel soccer has contracted with Laina Matus Training (LMT), a professional soccer training organization, to operate all tryouts. The precise format of the 90-minute tryout shall be determined by LMT with input from the WRA travel soccer committee, but will likely include some skill-based drills for younger ages and several small-sided (i.e. 3v3, 4v4, or 5v5) games. LMT trainers may move players from field to field during tryouts for competition and other soccer reasons.

16. Will goalies have separate tryouts

WRA travel soccer believes that especially at younger ages, all players should be comfortable playing in the field and should be able to demonstrate competence in passing, receiving, and shooting a soccer ball. For this reason, all tryout participants will be expected to participate in field play (drills and small-sided games). Small-sided games most likely will not have goalies, but rather will be played on small-sized nets. The tryout may include larger (7v7, 9v9) games toward the end of the tryout, and goalies may be introduced to these larger games. Relatedly, it is **possible, though not assured**, that LMT trainers may pull players who desire to be goalies aside from the larger group at some time during tryouts to assess their goaltending abilities. As such, players who are willing to be goalies should express that willingness to LMT trainers and the travel soccer leadership before or at the outset of the tryout, but such players should also be prepared to participate fully in all field-play activities of the tryout.

17. Who is permitted on the field during tryouts

WRA will strictly enforce that only permitted persons may be on any field during a tryout. This is limited to: LMT trainers, evaluators (see section 18 below), the boys' and girls' coordinators, and the chair of travel soccer.

18. Who will evaluate tryouts

In order to avoid bias and provide an aggregate of manageable data, WRA travel soccer has utilized—and will continue to utilize—a three-input evaluation system. These inputs are as follows: (1) an LMT trainer who has no conflict of interest or biased familiarity with any players shall complete one (1) evaluation scorecard; (2) a WRA travel soccer coach unaffiliated with the age group trying out (i.e. a coach from a different age) shall complete one (1) evaluation scorecard; and (3) the coaches associated with the age group trying out shall **combine** their opinions, scores, and comments into **one (1)** evaluation scorecard. Spectators to a tryout may view several coaches from the age group in question on the field during a tryout, but it is worthwhile to note that such coaches' scores, opinions, and comments will be combined into only one evaluation scorecard which carries the same weight as evaluators (1) and (2) above. Any existing coach (head or assistant) properly registered in GotSport for any level team (black, white, or green) in an age group can participate in that age group's tryout if they wish, but they must confer and agree with the other coaches from that age group in order to complete and submit one (1) coach evaluation scorecard.

At the conclusion of a tryout, evaluation scorecards from each of input (1), (2), and (3) detailed above will be labeled and submitted to the boys' or girls' coordinator, Laina Matus, or the chair of travel soccer for safe keeping. One of these parties will be responsible to average the three inputs per player and provide a score for that tryout. The same process will be completed at the second tryout, and the player shall receive an average score across both tryouts which is his/her final ranking. It should be noted, then, that if a player only attends one tryout, he/she shall receive only one score, which may be worse or better than an average of two scores may have been depending on his/her performance. (Missing a tryout does not lower one's score from the tryout he/she attended; a second score simply is not registered.)

19. How are players evaluated

Generally, players of all age levels are evaluated on basic soccer and athletic skills such as receiving the ball, passing the ball, shooting, physicality, defensive shape and form, tenacity, awareness, etc., as viewed by the evaluators. The evaluator shall utilize a letter grade system as follows:

A	Exceptional	4.0 points
A/B	Good	3.5 points
B	Average	3.0 points
B/C	Needs development	2.5 points
C	Weak	2.0 points
X	Not appropriate for travel soccer	0 points

20. Following tryouts, how are coaches selected and teams formed

In the approximately 1-2 weeks following completion of a second tryout, the boys' or girls' coordinator will aggregate all tryout scores as described above and produce a master ranking of all players who tried out for a given age group.

It is important to note that possible team coaches are identified by the boys' and girls' coordinators **after** player rating and ranking are complete as described above. All WRA travel soccer coaches are volunteers, and are usually the parent of a player. However, players are not placed on a team because their parent is willing to coach. Rather, the boys' and girls' coordinator will examine the master ranking and determine whether a parent known to be a willing coach volunteer has a child that has placed within the numerical range logically identified with a black, white, or green level team based on roster size. If so, the boys' or girls' coordinator will reach out to that coach volunteer and confirm his/her willingness to volunteer to coach the team. If multiple volunteers have children that have numerically placed in the same range (i.e. will logically be on the same team), it is the boys' or girls' coordinator's discretion to determine which volunteer shall be asked to be the head coach (vs. an assistant coach). The previous sentence includes the situation where two previously head coaches from differing age groups under the former U.S. Soccer age grouping now have children who placed on the same team under the current age groupings: the boys' and girls' coordinator and the chair of travel soccer shall have responsibility to decide which individual shall be the head coach. If no known volunteer coach has a child that has numerically ranked for a logical black, white, or green team, the boys' and girls' coordinator shall work to identify possible volunteers. If no parent

volunteers, the boys' or girls' coordinator may decide to inform all parents of a given possible team that without a volunteer the team will not be able to form.

Once coaches have been identified and accepted the role, the boys' or girls' coordinator will communicate player rankings to the head coach of the black team of a given age group. Communicating with one another, the coordinator and head coach will determine how many players shall be invited to the black team based on roster size, rankings, and what the coach knows about the players listed.

Please note that coaches, once identified, have some discretion in selecting team members. Rankings are meant to provide general guidance, and are useful in that regard, but head coaches—especially those who have coached the age group before—are able and permitted to make team formation decisions based on additional elements including (but not limited to): team structure needs (e.g. if ranked players are all offensive players, and the coach determines a lower-ranked defensive player is needed); coach-ability of players, as demonstrated in past seasons or in the tryout(s); unusual outlying performance (e.g. if the coach knows a player to be a strong performer but one tryout grade shows an unusually weak performance and / or the player did not appear to be performing as he/she usually does at the tryout); etc. **The boys' and girls' coordinators and the chair of travel soccer have responsibility to ensure that coaches' team formation decisions are made with proper rationale and fairness.**

Once the black team head coach has determined who will be invited to join the team for the 2026-2027 season, the coach or the coordinator will email each player with an official invitation. The email will convey the invitation but will also describe the expected level of commitment and cost for joining WRA's travel soccer program. Players and their families will have a stipulated period of time—usually 48 hours—to accept the invitation. Once that time period has passed, the invitation to join **that and any other** WRA travel soccer team has expired and is no longer valid. These team acceptance rules are set in place and enforced to avoid players who seek to tryout for, and potentially join, multiple area teams.

Once a black team has been solidified, the coordinator will communicate with the white team head coach to repeat the process outlined above, including player decisions and invitations. Once the white team has been solidified, if applicable, the coordinator will communicate with the green team head coach to repeat the process. Once the green team has been solidified, the coordinator will communicate with any players who were not selected for a WRA travel soccer team.

21. What if I wish to further discuss the decision made regarding my player's level

Through these guidelines and many meetings, the travel soccer committee has attempted to create fair and open tryout and team selection processes that still provides coaches and coordinators some discretion to form competitive travel teams. Nonetheless, the committee realizes that some players and their families may disagree with the processes or the decision made with regard to team assignment.

Anyone wishing to provide comment, criticism, or suggestion as to the tryout structure or these guidelines can email same to the Chair of Travel Soccer, currently Kyle Speece, on kspeece@gmail.com.

Those families or players who wish to discuss to the decision made following a tryout may communicate with the boys' coordinator or girls' coordinator, as applicable, currently [Steve McElroy](mailto:stevemcelroy@gmail.com) (stevemcelroy@gmail.com) and Colleen Mallozzi (colleenmallozzi@gmail.com) respectively. Please note that **under no circumstance** will the numerical ranking of any player be provided to any parent in the travel soccer program other than the head coaches of the black, white, and green teams. However, the coordinators can provide general information about a player's performance during a tryout including comments provided by evaluators and/or other information as to team formation decisions.

Thank you for your interest in WRA Travel Soccer.

--- END OF GUIDELINES --