



2026–27 League Rules & Match-Day Guidelines

The following is a parent-friendly overview of important rules and match-day guidelines for each of our participating platforms. Families should familiarize themselves with the rules specific to their player's league.

MLS NEXT Academy Division

Summary of Important Rules

1. **Attendance & Commitment:** MLS NEXT Academy Division expects players to prioritize their team responsibilities, including training, matches, and required league events.
2. **Outside Competition:** Playing for another club or team outside of the MLS NEXT program is generally restricted during the season unless specifically permitted under league rules.
3. **Game-Day Rosters:** Being listed on the full team roster does not guarantee selection for every match. A maximum of **20 players may be selected for a match-day roster**.
4. **Player Registration & Eligibility:** All MLS NEXT registration and eligibility requirements must be completed before a player is permitted to compete.
5. **International Clearance:** Foreign-born players over the age of 10 may require FIFA International Clearance before participating, regardless of citizenship.
6. **Travel & League Events:** Travel, league matches, and required MLS NEXT events are part of the overall commitment to the program.
7. **Parent & Spectator Conduct:** Parents and spectators represent both the team and club. Inappropriate behavior may result in consequences for the individual, team, or club.
8. **Sportsmanship & Safety:** Player safety, sportsmanship, respect for officials, and appropriate conduct are major expectations of all MLS NEXT participants and families.

Uniform Requirements

	Saturday	Sunday
Home	Light Kit	Dark Kit
Away	Dark Kit	Light Kit

IMPORTANT: Players must bring BOTH complete uniform kits (jerseys, shorts, and socks) to every match. Uniform changes may be required to avoid conflicts with the opposing team.

Substitution Rules

U13

- Teams receive **2 substitution moments per period**.
- Substitutions are unrestricted, meaning players may re-enter.
- Breaks between periods do not count as substitution moments.

U14

- Teams receive **3 substitution moments per half**.
- Substitutions are unrestricted, and players may re-enter.
- Halftime does not count as a substitution moment.

U15, U16, U17 & U19

- Teams receive **3 substitution moments per half**.
- Once a player is substituted out, the player **cannot re-enter during that same half**.
- Halftime does not count as a substitution moment.

Concussion Exception: Special substitution exceptions may apply under the MLS NEXT Academy Division Concussion Protocol.

Ball Size

- **U13:** Size 4
- **U14–U19:** Size 5

Daily Minute Restrictions

Players are permitted to play a maximum of **90 total minutes per day across a maximum of two matches**, including participation in outside competition.

This document is intended as a simplified parent and player reference. Official league rules, technical standards, competition policies, and club directives take precedence if there is any discrepancy or league rule change.