

2026 Age Group Cut-Off Change FAQs

1. What is the age group cut-off for team registration for 2026 and how is it different?

Taking effect with the 2026/2027 season age group cut-offs will shift to August 1 - July 31. This is a shift from the previous age group cut-off of January 1 - December 31.

- This change will impact all SOCAL League, GA and DPL teams next season.
- MLS Next Homegrown will continue with the January 1 - December 31 cut-off.
- MLS Academy and EAL are yet to confirm which cut off they will use. We will plan accordingly for these leagues as soon as a decision is released.

2. What age group will my player be in next season and when are tryouts?

AGE GROUP	CITY SC TRYOUT DATES
U7: August 01, 2019 - December 31, 2020	December 1-5, 2025
U8: August 01, 2018 - July 31, 2019	December 1-5, 2025
U9: August 01, 2017 - July 31, 2018	December 1-5, 2025
U10: August 01, 2016 - July 31, 2017	February 23-27, 2026
U11: August 01, 2015 - July 31, 2016	February 23-27, 2026
U12: August 01, 2014 - July 31, 2015	February 23-27, 2026
U13: August 01, 2013 - July 31, 2014	February 23-27, 2026
U14: August 01 2012 - July 31, 2013	February 23-27, 2026
U15: August 01, 2011 - July 31, 2012	April 20-24, 2026
U16: August 01, 2010 - July 31, 2011	April 20-24, 2026
U17: August 01, 2009 - July 31, 2010	April 20-24, 2026
U18: August 01, 2008 - July 31, 2009	April 20-24, 2026
U19: August 01, 2007 - July 31, 2008	April 20-24, 2026

3. Why are the Age Group Cut-Offs Changing?

US Club Soccer (US Club) and US Youth Soccer (USYS) are implementing this change with the goal of:

- Increasing participation at younger age levels
- Keeping more kids in the game as they progress through high school
- Align better with the nationwide youth soccer season (August 1 – July 31)
- Better match school calendar years, allowing more children to play with classmates, enhancing both the social and developmental experience of youth players.

4. How is City SC preparing for the change to ensure all players are placed appropriately?

The Club is working diligently to ensure the transition is as smooth as possible for all players and coaches. We are taking the following steps to prepare for the change:

- Internally auditing all rosters to confirm which age group each player will fall into next year.
- Scheduling a series of age group training sessions with the new age groups to help players and coaches get familiar with the new player pools. (More info to follow.)
- Ensuring players have ample opportunities to train and be evaluated within their new age groups prior to tryouts.
- Coaching assignments will be finalized and released ahead of our usual timeline to allow coaches additional opportunities to get familiar with the new player pools prior to tryouts.

As always, our goal is to form the most competitive teams at every age group based on the respective player pool, placing players on the teams that best fit their skill level and individual player development needs.

5. What is the purpose of the in-house age group training sessions? When will schedules be released?

In-house age group training sessions are designed to provide all of our City SC players with ample opportunities to train with the player pool that they will try out with for the 2026 season. The sessions will help the players begin forming bonds within their new age group to help ensure smooth transition with the natural roster changes. The sessions are also an opportunity for City SC coaches to work with the new player pools in advance to ensure that all players are appropriately placed at tryouts.

We will begin holding the age group training sessions in November. Dates, times, locations and additional details will be communicated via your coaches as soon as possible.

6. When will coaching assignments for 2026 be released?

We are working to finalize coaching assignments ahead of our typical timeline. The intent is to finalize and publish coaching assignments for the U7-U9s by early November.

Coaching Assignments for age groups trying out in February and April will be finalized and posted at the earliest possible date preceding tryouts.

7. What are the specific benefits of “repeating” a year?

Promotes Technical Development: Players have more ball contact per game on a smaller field, playing with lower numbers, providing more opportunities to strengthen individual technique. For 7v7 and 9v9 players, this improves preparation for 11v11.

Physical Benefits: Places late developers who were previously at a physical disadvantage in a more appropriate environment, providing better opportunities to improve in all aspects of their game.

Confidence Boost and Social Benefits: Repeating a year can improve confidence and encourage leadership skills for players who already have a year of experience at the age group. Creates a supportive learning environment for every member on the team.

8. What is the club policy on players “playing up?”

Our club policy on playing up remains unchanged. Regardless of age group cutoffs, opportunities to “play up” will continue to be considered on a case by case basis and will be at the discretion of the coaches and directors based on our professional assessment of what is in the best interest of each individual player. Decisions regarding “playing up” will be discussed with parents individually and will be made in advance of tryouts.

- We are auditing all rosters to understand which age group each player will fall into next year and to guide decisions regarding which age group will be the best fit for each individual player and will benefit the teams as whole.
- We believe the majority of players will benefit most from playing in their true age group. This philosophy is based on physical, social and psychological factors. Age-appropriate training and games provide the best conditions to foster development in youth players.
- We understand there are unique situations - such as players born after August 1st who are in a higher grade level at school. However, all requests to “play up” will still be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the head coach and club directors, based on what is determined to be in the best interest of the individual player.

9. Can my child try out for multiple age groups?

Players are required to try out for their true age group based on the August 1 - July 31 cut-off unless coaches have pre-approved the player to try out in an older age group.

Players are not allowed to play down in a younger age group as this is a violation of league rules.

10. What can I do to help prepare my child for tryouts for the upcoming season?

We understand that tryouts can be a stressful time for parents and players. We encourage parents to review our [Tryout Preparation Tips](#) to help support your player in the tryout process.

11. Will I have to purchase a new uniform?

Fortunately this change aligns with City SC's uniform cycle. We are currently in the second year of a two year uniform cycle, so all players (new and returning) will be required to purchase a new kit next year. Uniform cycles are aligned with manufacturer production cycles to ensure that we always have adequate access to product inventory.

12. How will jersey numbers be assigned next year with the change?

The club will re-assign new jersey numbers to all players to ensure that there are no duplicate numbers within an age group. This in-house numbering policy has been immensely beneficial, allowing for more fluid movement between rosters, eliminating jersey number conflicts and additional uniform costs to parents when players move teams. There will be consideration to this policy for players at older age groups who are currently in the recruiting process. The club is in the process of evaluating the best way to manage jersey numbers for these players.

13. What are the primary benefits of the new age group cut-offs?

Social Development: Aligning age group cut-offs with school calendars groups most players with their classmates, helping build stronger bonds and relationships on and off the field which will positively impact the overall player experience and social aspect of the game.

Increased Continuity and Age Appropriate Opportunities for All Players: Aligning with the school calendars and grouping more players with their classmates works in both directions.

- Reduces the number of “trapped” players who are forced to play in an older age group due to discrepancies between soccer age cut-offs and school year cut-offs. (These are players who are in 8th grade when the majority of their teammates are in 9th grade.) “Trapped” players experience disruptions in their 8th grade year while older teammates play high school in the winter, and again their senior year when the majority of their team graduates and they move to a younger team for their final season.

- Reduces the number of “force ups.” These are players who are forced to play up in an older soccer age group against their biological age if they want the experience of playing with their classmates.

While there is no way to completely eliminate instances of trapped players and force-ups, The August 1 - July 31 is the most effective way to reduce these structural frictions and ensure greater continuity, fair opportunities, and age-appropriate experiences in youth soccer. It places more players in the right place, at the right time, with the right teammates, resulting in both performance enhancing benefits and a more joyful and socially empowering experience.