

Playing Up/Down in OVSL:

Ohio Valley Soccer League requires players to participate in the correct, age-appropriate division unless the League Board of Directors grants special permission.

There are several situations where the league will consider play-up requests. Below is the process to be used by the requesting parent, and the criteria that the Board will apply. **Playing up is not a “right,” but is rather an exception only used under the criteria outlined below.** Playing-up exceptions are made by the Ohio Valley Soccer League Board. The Coaches will be consulted but the OVSL Board will be the final arbiter in playing-up decisions. Playing up must benefit both the child and the league!

Process

The parent requesting that their child “play-up” should submit an OVSL Age Division Exception Form, below. The request should be made in conjunction with your registration form. Normally, this will be done by early August, but can also be done in between seasons (February). Before the season begins, the board will discuss forms received for approval. The Board is the final arbiter in deciding if a player may move up. If an age coordinator or league coach is not familiar with a player (e.g., a new player to the league), the player shall play in the first game of the lower age bracket. The lower age bracket coordinator or board member will observe the player and make a recommendation to the Board. In no case will moving up be approved if the player is **more than** one year younger than the age bracket requested.

Criteria

The League Board will consider the following factors in determining whether to approve a “play up” request.

- 1. Exceptionally Skilled Player - Level of play significantly exceeds peer group.** Particularly in the lower age brackets, when only 4 or 5 players are on a side at one time, an exceptional player may dominate play to the extent that the game is no longer competitive for the opposing team. A player who fits these criteria must dominate play in more than one phase i.e. striking and passing; defending and challenging; defending and striking, etc. Though parents or coaches may often feel that a child is dominant because the child is the best on the team, the exceptionally skilled criteria apply to the child in relation to the entire league and most other children of his or her age. **Typically, a player who is approved for this reason has extensive tournament or competitive soccer experience beyond the recreational league.**
- 2. Physical Ability and Above Average Size.** If a child is exceedingly big for his or her age group and has above average soccer skills, the Lower age

bracket coordinator may recommend a play-up request – particularly if there is some risk that the physical play of the child may pose a danger to smaller “of age” players.

3. **Parental Hardship.** In some situations, families with multiple, close-in-age children are not able to juggle the demands of supervising children in too many different age brackets. The Board may allow “play-up” requests for parental hardship if the player is of a high caliber, and would like to join a team with a sibling. The “play-up” player must be physically able to participate with the older division, and must demonstrate above average soccer skills.
4. **Overall Benefit to the League.** If there is an overall benefit to the league for moving a player up, the Board may approve it. For example, if the older division needs to fill a coaching vacancy, but the ability of a parent to take on the coaching position is contingent on his or her child moving up, the League may approve it. In unusual situations, the League may request that a grouping of players move up due to overall numbers balancing across divisions. If this is to occur, an overall approval by the Board is required.

Miscellaneous League Information:

Late Registrants

After registration deadline, players will be placed on waiting lists and assigned to teams if space becomes available. There is no guarantee your child will be placed on a team if the registration form and payment is received after the registration deadline.

Team Formation

OVSL strives to balance player ability and experience throughout the teams in each age division. Recreational teams are newly formed each year to help achieve this balance. All players are expected to play a portion of every game, except in cases of injury or discipline.

Uniforms and Equipment

Uniforms are included as part of player registration. Your child will receive a uniform consisting of a shirt and socks. The uniform will be distributed to the players through the team's coach. Parents will need to provide the children with shorts, shin guards and a soccer ball. Soccer shoes are recommended, but are not mandatory.

Ohio Valley Soccer League Age Division Exception Form

Child's Name: _____

Parent (Guardian): _____

Phone Number: _____

Parent's email address: _____

Child's Birth Date: _____

Age at cutoff date (7/31): _____

Age Division applying to: _____

Prior OVSL Coaches: _____

Prior soccer experience: _____

Reason for requesting the exception:

Parental Volunteer Commitment (concession/field preparation/coach):

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Frequently Asked Questions on Playing Up/Down

- [What does it mean to play-up or play-down?](#)
- [How are the age brackets defined?](#)
- [Can I request a play-up into the age-bracket containing most of my child's grade?](#)
- [Is it always a good idea to play-up into the age-bracket containing most of my child's grade?](#)
- [My child is a very talented player and isn't challenged by playing in his/her age-bracket - can he/she request to play-up into an older age bracket?](#)
- [My child would like to play with a sibling or friend in an older age bracket. Is this possible?](#)
- [If my child played-up last year will he/she automatically be played-up this year?](#)
- [Is it possible to play-up more than one age bracket?](#)

Q. What does it mean to play up or down?

A. Teams are organized into divisions that group players by their birthdates, not by their grade in school or by their soccer skills. A division contains players in a given age-bracket, for example, 8/1/02 to 7/31/04. A player whose birth date falls after the end of the bracket, i.e. is younger, can request to *play-up* into the next older division. Conversely, but only under exceptional circumstances, a player whose birth date falls before the start of the bracket, i.e. is older, can request to *play-down* into the next younger division.

Q. How are the age brackets defined?

A. The [age brackets](#) are defined by the United States Youth Soccer Association and are the same for all regions nationwide. Generally two-year age brackets are specified that begin on Aug 1 and end on July 31. A bracket is named by the end of the age range. For example, for the 2001 season, the Under-7 bracket, which is a one-year bracket, will contain players born between 8/1/94 and 7/31/95, inclusive. Another way of saying this is that all players in the U7 division will be under 7 (and over 5) on 7/31/2001.

Q. Can I request a play-up into the age-bracket containing most of my child's grade?

A. Yes, but you *must* complete the age division exception form. The request will be reviewed for approval by the board of the Ohio Valley Soccer League.

Q. Is it always a good idea to play-up into the age-bracket containing most of my child's grade?

A. No. If your child is an average player relative to age-bracket peers, playing-up will put him or her in the position of being younger and probably weaker than most others on the team. This is particularly true when playing-up into a two-year age bracket. For example, there is a significant difference between the U12 and U14 brackets, where some of the 13 year olds are well into adolescence, physically and mentally. The end result may be that the social benefits of playing with grade-mates are negated by the soccer difficulties.

Q. My child is a very talented player and isn't challenged by playing with his age-bracket peers - can he/she request to play up into an older age bracket?

A. Yes, provided there is evidence from the previous season that validates the request. Typically, this will be based on information from the player's coach from the previous season or some equivalent proof. This form of play-up request requires a **written request** to accompany the registration form. This request is **not** guaranteed to be granted and may depend on other logistical factors.

Q. My child would like to play with a sibling or friend in an older age bracket. Is this possible?

A. Only if at least one of the two conditions above are met. It is generally a very bad idea for an average or weak player to play-up, because of the amplification of the ability difference. It is unlikely to produce a positive experience for the player and it is an added burden on the coach and the other players of the receiving team.

Q. If my child played-up last year will he/she automatically be played-up this year?

A. No, there is no automatic carry-over from year to year. A play-up request must be made every year.

Q. Is it possible to play-up more than one age bracket?

A. No.