

Silent Saturdays

Silent Saturday is used in AYSO Regions throughout the country. Its main purpose is to allow kids to just play and have fun. Silent Saturday is a throwback to the old schoolyard days when kids would congregate after school and on weekends just to play all day, without regard to who was winning and repercussions for poor play and decision-making. Coaches are requested to communicate and reinforce this with spectators!

The objectives of Silent Saturday are:

- To emphasize that the game is about letting the kids have fun and play.
- To show that kids can play well on their own with limited instruction.
- To help the few parents and coaches who feel they must provide constant direction, understand how disruptive it can be.
- To give players the chance to trust their skills and instincts without sideline input.
- To encourage leadership skills among the individual players as they have the unique opportunity of giving their own instruction on the field.
- To encourage a sense of true teamwork as the players must learn to rely upon one another and communicate with each other accordingly.
- To support our volunteer referees, both youth and adult, by eliminating sideline interference and comments.

The spirit of Silent Saturdays is to allow players to make decisions and learn the game. After all, if the child doesn't make their own mistakes, it will hinder their development in the sport. If parents think their children are confused and don't know what to do without sideline instruction, that's an indication that players haven't been allowed to make their own decisions. Players will learn the game by making their own decisions, learning from their mistakes, and continuing to play.

[For more information, watch this video](#) of Scott Gimple, AYSO's Director of Operations, discussing the benefits of having a Silent Saturday. This interview was featured on the Hallmark Channel and talks about best practices, why screaming from the sidelines is bad for player development and what to do when all of this becomes unmanageable. Consider sharing this video with families during your kick-off meeting or as needed when sideline behavior becomes an issue.

Some basic rules:

Spectators

We request that you make no verbal comments about the game or direct any comments to the players, referees or coaches. **Clapping IS allowed!** Be creative in how you choose to cheer your child's team – make signs to hold up or bring a rally towel in the team's color and wave it wildly. There are lots of ways to cheer other than verbally – applaud/clap, but please no horns, whistle or noise-makers.

Coaches

It is recommended that you do not provide any direction – verbal or non-verbal – to players who are on the field. Speak to the team before the match, at substitution breaks and at halftime as you normally do. During the match, speak quietly to players on the bench about the game. If required, quietly call a player on the field over to the touchline to provide tactical instruction. Then let them convey the message to the team.

Players

While on the field, you are encouraged to speak to each other as normal. Continue to support and provide direction to each other, as you have in the past. Substitute players on the bench, should remain quiet and not cheer or provide tactical instruction to their teammates. Lest they simply replace the coach or act on their behest.

Referees

For this special day, referees are asked to monitor the spectators and coaches' adherence to these guidelines and to offer gentle reminders if the recommendations are not being followed. Continue to verbalize often during the game as you normally do. You are there to help the players have a safe, fair and fun time.