



Charlotte Soccer Academy 8U- 9U-10U Youth Academy FAQ 2025-2026

What is the Academy Philosophy?

The Youth Academy Program philosophy is to emphasize player development coupled with team development and focus on the technical development of each child. Players are put in challenging situations and are allowed to compete. We want players to have the competitive fire and the desire to play the game the correct way. As coaches, we do not concern ourselves with winning but instead competing at their highest level. We are focused on playing the game in a way that encourages player development. We feel that players will learn to enjoy and love the game for itself rather than just to win. We are trying to create players that are creative problem solvers and can think through the game intelligently. Players will learn through guided discovery where the coach is the facilitator in a player centered environment.

How old must my child be to participate in the Youth Academy system?

For 2025-2026, CSA's Youth Academy players will include 10U (2016 birth year), 9U (2017 birth year) and 8U (2018 birth year).

How does my child become part of the Youth Academy Program?

All CSA recreational players and players from outside CSA must attend our open evaluations. Details are available on the CSA competitive website. We anticipate accepting approximately 700 players combined in the eight regional CSA Youth Academies. When committing to CSA, it is both for the fall and spring seasons. There are occasional mid-year opportunities, please reach out to the director of the section you are interested in.

When will we know which team our child is placed on?

You will know within 48 hours of the evaluation date whether your child has secured a place in a CSA Youth Academy. Your child will not be placed on a specific team initially. We will assess where your child will be best suited within the tiered structure of the Youth Academy at the pre-season camp in early August and in the first few weeks of training in the fall. If your child is not accepted into one of the CSA Youth Academies, you will be provided with information on the CSA Recreational Program.

How is the weekly schedule structured?

Theme/curriculum based pool training will be the focus of the first training session of the week. In the second session, players will be grouped with their coach. They will train with the Director or coach that will be coaching them on the weekends. In the third, optional, session, players will put into a 4v4/technical environment putting together the skills they have worked on during the week.

Games will be on the weekend. We attempt to keep all game days on a Saturday between the hours of 9 am and 3 pm, however there is the possibility of a few Sunday games- This allows coaches to plan for other teams and also for parents to plan. Tournaments and/or festivals will be held over a Saturday and Sunday during each season (one per season) towards the end of each season. Players are expected to be at all training sessions and games.

Is there much movement of players in this system? If so, how is this communicated to the players and the parents?

The majority of the time players are placed on the correct team (or section in this system). This system does allow us to make adjustments throughout the season if players are either excelling at one level or on the other hand if they are struggling. If players are to be moved between tiers, this will be communicated to the parents and the players ahead of time through the Youth Academy Directors. This is done for the benefit of the player. Players cannot move mid-season from one CSA section to another unless the family moves homes.

Who will CSA Academy teams play?

CSA teams will compete with Youth Academy teams from other clubs in the Greater Charlotte area. Waxhaw SC, Wesley Chapel-Weddington AA, Charlotte Independence SC, CVYSA, GCCSA, FCC, FC Athletico, Fusion and SGSAA.

How far will we have to travel?

Travel is kept as local as possible. Most games will be within the Greater Charlotte area, but you may travel beyond that a couple of times in the fall and then again in the spring. We will travel for fall and spring festival games depending on where they are held.

When will we know the schedule of games?

Our goal is to have the full schedule of fall play dates to parents by mid-August. The season will begin with the pre-season camp (early August). We will then play against other Academy clubs within the region and end the season with a festival or tournament. The spring season schedule will be set in early January. Actual game schedules will be in parent's hands approximately two weeks prior to the play date.

What format do age groups play?

All age groups will play 7v7 throughout the entire season. Each team will play approximately 12-14 7v7 games per season.

Have all the soccer clubs in Charlotte adopted the "Academy" philosophy?

All NCYSA clubs at the 8U-10U ages have now adopted the Academy style philosophy. The great thing from our standpoint is that this will be our twelfth year of having the Academy and we have made tremendous strides each year in many ways.

Why not keep leagues or standings?

Standings promote a win at all cost mentality! We feel that whenever we compete against another club or even within CSA the game will be competitive and both teams desire to win the game. We at CSA strive to put the younger players in situations where fun and development are the primary focus. Where winning is the primary focus, players play with a fear-based mentality rather than a creative mentality.

Will teams enter tournaments throughout the season?

CSA believes in playing in festivals or tournaments where teams are guaranteed a certain number of games twice a year. Each team will participate in CSA's own festival event in the fall and one other event in the spring.

Where are practices held and what days and times?

In the past, practices have been either Monday/Wednesday or Tuesday/Thursday with an additional optional 4v4 evening. Sessions usually are 5:00-6:30pm or 6:30-8:00pm.

When does the CSA season start and finish?

The fall season begins with the pre-season camp in early August. Games on Saturdays begin at the beginning of September and will end mid-November. There is a winter break and then training resumes at the beginning of February. The last game/festival is the last week of April. Open Evaluations for the following season will then be later in May.

What is the cost of the CSA 9U-10U Academy Program?

The cost of the program covers twice-weekly training; an optional weekly 4v4 session; professional, licensed coaches for each team; festival/tournament entry fees for two events; referee fees; field/light costs; registration, insurance, and administrative costs. The fees are available with the tryouts information on the website. Uniforms must be purchased at an additional cost.

Are there any additional costs outside of those mentioned above?

The pre-season camp at the beginning of August is an additional cost. This is not a mandatory event but is highly recommended as the coaching staff will kick off the season and begin assigning players to teams and getting an early look at players.

What does the Youth Academy offer over the rec program that accounts for the increased cost?

The Youth Academy is part of the competitive level of soccer under the United States Youth Soccer structure. There are several factors that are now implemented and included in YA that result in an increase in fees.

~ **Extended calendar.** The recreational program is typically a nine-week season in either the spring or fall. The Youth Academy program typically runs for 14 weeks each season, fall and spring.

~ **Practice frequency.** Recreational teams practice once a week during the season. The YA program has a minimum of two regular practice sessions weekly through the season with an additional optional third session (4 v 4) also available each week. The YA plays 12-14 games per season compared to 7-8 in the recreational program.

~ **Paid licensed Directors.** All CSA YA Directors are highly licensed and are committed to continue to get higher licenses. Seasonal curriculums come directly from the DOCs to their coaches as the long-term education of players is of the utmost importance. They also prepare the match ups for each play date to ensure there are competitive games. All communication to parents emanates primarily from each sectional YA Director. This could be through email and/or Praxis. YA Directors direct and oversee all their coaching staff.

~ **Paid licensed coaches.** Instead of the volunteer parent coaches used in the rec program, every member of the YA coaching staff is a paid coach, and all coaches are licensed under the United State Soccer Federation. All coaches are overseen by full-time YA Directors of Coaching here at CSA. The support staff is like no other in the city and is designed to give your child the best development in soccer at the entry level stages of a competitive program under the USYS structure. In that vein, all CSA YA coaches can coach across age groups and genders within their YA section. The staff in each YA should be thought of as a “team” of coaches working together to make their YA environment the best it possibly can be.

~**Additional events and festivals.** In addition to participating in more regular season games within the YA program, CSA YA teams participate in a festival event in the fall season. In the spring season, teams will participate in either a festival or a tournament that will introduce them to the environment of competing in a tournament format. The entry fees for these two events are included in the yearly YA fee.

If you have additional questions about the Youth Academy program at CSA, please reach out to the appropriate Director listed below.

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