



## **SALA Play Up / Play Down Policy**

The Stillwater Area Lacrosse Association (“SALA”) prioritizes the development, safety, and enjoyment of every player. Our “Play Up / Play Down” policy is designed to ensure these priorities are met while fostering a positive team and competitive environment across our lacrosse association.

### **1. Definitions**

**Playing Up:** “Playing up” refers to a player participating in a higher age level than their designated age group. This is done to challenge the player if they are significantly more skilled or developed than their similarly aged peers.

Playing up is allowed within the sport of lacrosse and making the decision to do so should only be done for the beneficial development of the player.

**Playing Down:** “Playing down” refers a player competing at a younger age level than the level designated by their age.

Playing down is generally not permitted or disfavored in most youth lacrosse leagues, as it often creates an unfair competitive circumstance relative to the other players.

### **2. Level Change Requests**

All level change requests must be received prior to the end of regular registration for the upcoming season (as noted on the SALA website and other association correspondence). Requests must be made in writing to the applicable Boys or Girls Director, who will inform the SALA Board. Submitting a request does not guarantee that a player will be permitted to try out for a play up or play down team in the current or future years.

### **3. Requirements for Playing Up**

Players seeking to play up must meet the following criteria:

- a. Be on the second year of their current age level by USA Lacrosse 12-month age classifications.
- b. Upon completion of tryouts with the higher age level be deemed a “starter” for their designated position / positions at the A level. For example, a full field boys team fields 3 defensive long poles on the field at one time. This player will need to be definitively ranked as a top 3 player at that position within SALA to be deemed a “starter” in this example.

### **4. Requirements for Playing Down**

Players seeking to play down must meet the following criteria:



- a. Be within the 15-month US Lacrosse Age Grouping. This means that the player's birth date must be between June 1st and August 31st making them within 3 months of the September 1st age grouping cutoff. Players outside of this will not be eligible for consideration.
- b. Have extenuating circumstances. These circumstances could include, but are not limited to:
  - safety concerns due to player's relative size;
  - new to the sport of lacrosse; or
  - other physical / emotional developmental concerns.

## **5. Try Out Approval**

Unless previously determined by the SALA Board that "play up" or "play down" will not be permitted for a given age level for the upcoming season due to registrations and projected roster numbers, and apart from any player safety concerns or unfair competitive advantage to other players, anyone submitting a "play up" or "play down" request will be permitted to practice with that applicable age group for preseason clinics.

Unless previously determined by the SALA Board that "play up" or "play down" will not be permitted for a given age level for the upcoming season due to registrations and projected roster numbers, and apart from any player safety concerns or unfair competitive advantage to other players, anyone submitting a "play up" or "play down" request will also be placed in that requested age group for the first day of evaluations. Evaluators will make an assessment, in their discretion, if any player stands out and is in need of an adjustment after the first day of evaluations (i.e., cannot keep up, or is well beyond the skill level for a given group) and may request such player to adjust evaluations groups for the remainder of the evaluations.

In the player's "play down" request, families should provide background information supporting the request, such as explanation around diminished or developing skills relative to their age group, size concerns, or being new to the game.

In the player's "play up" request, families should provide background information supporting the request, such as examples of playing at a higher age group in other sports or for club lacrosse, or a description of skills that exceed those of their current age level.

Note: The ability to practice in the preseason and to try out at a different age group does not constitute approval to "play up" or "play down." The determination for a player to try out at a level that is outside of their age level is solely within the determination of the Boys or Girls Director (as applicable depending on the player) and the SALA Board.

## **6. Try Out Assessment**

For players requesting to "play up", they will only be permitted to do so if they demonstrate their ability to be a definitive starting player at the higher age level (see above definition for a "starter").



During the tryout process, for any age level with any “play up” candidates, the independent evaluators will rank the top 5 players at each position for the highest-level aged team. For example, if tryouts as part of a “play up” request for the 12U boys level, then during tryouts, the evaluators, in determining the roster for the top 12U A team, will also rank the top 5 players at each position (i.e., top 5 attack, top 5 midfield, and top 5 defense). Per the definition of a “starter”, in order for the “play up” request to be granted, the requesting player must be one of the top three players for the position they are trying out for.

For players requesting to “play down”, they will be assessed by evaluators during tryouts with the lower-aged evaluation group to ensure that there is not a significant advantage to the lower-aged team. Players that play down are eligible for a B team based upon the tryout assessments. SALA will avoid all situations that create an unfair position for the players on the team and other teams within the league resulting from the decision to move a player down to a younger age group.

## **7. Other Assessment Criteria**

**7.1 Room at the Desired Level.** The SALA Board seeks to provide appropriately sized teams at each age level. If the request does not align with appropriate team sizes at an age level the Board reserves the right to decline the request.

**7.2 League Waivers.** Players requesting to “play down” may require a waiver from the league (e.g., YLM, GNLL, MSLAX, etc.) and the league’s decision to grant said waiver could impact the ability for a player to “play down.”

**7.3 Tournament Rules.** If a team with a “play down” player registers a roster for a tournament and that player is prohibited from playing due to their age on account of tournament or USA Lacrosse rules, SALA will not provide any refund or reimbursement to the “play down” player for not being able to participate in the tournament.

## **8. Other Limitations**

This policy is not a guarantee of placement on a specific team. Final decisions rest with the tryout evaluators and SALA Board, considering the overall team composition and player development. SALA Board members with family members involved in a given “play up” or “play down” decision should recuse themselves from those discussions and abstain from any decision as it pertains to their family members.

## **9. Additional Dues Assessment**

Accepted invitations to “play up” will require an additional dues assessment to match the age group fee of the player’s new level. Players moving down a level will receive a refund for the player fee level difference.



#### **10. Future Requests**

The player's ability to "play up" or "play down" a level is only valid for the current season of play. Approval granted in one year does not automatically constitute permission to "play up" or "play down" in future years.

#### **11. Falsifying Age Group Information**

Families discovered submitting false age information attempting to have their player compete at an age level that is not consistent with the player's actual age will be subject to a minimum one-year suspension for the entire family, including all family players in either boy or girl programs, without refund. The SALA Board also reserves the right to consider a permanent removal of a family from participation in SALA programming.

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