



Minnetonka Youth Lacrosse Association Play Up & Play Down Policy

The Minnetonka Youth Lacrosse Association (MYLA) prioritizes the development, safety, and enjoyment of every player. Our "Play Up & Play Down" policy is designed to ensure all participants have the best possible experience while promoting skill development and appropriate competition.

Playing Up:

Playing up refers to the opportunity for a player to participate in a higher age or skill level than their designated age group. This is done to challenge the player if they are more skilled or developed than their similarly aged peers. Playing up is within the rules of the sport of lacrosse and making the decision to do so should only be done if it's truly beneficial for the player.

Playing Down:

Playing down refers to allowing a player to compete at a lower age or skill level than the level designated by their age. This is generally against the rules in most youth sports leagues, as it often creates an unfair position to the other players. It's possible for this option to be considered in cases where a player's physical, emotional, or developmental needs require a more supportive environment. However, playing down will be approached cautiously, ensuring that the player's safety, development, and the competitive balance of the teams are not compromised.

The following addresses the MYLA policy regarding processing requests for players to "play up" or "play down" in the sport of lacrosse.

Level Change Requests

All level change requests must be received prior to the first tryout or evaluation session. A request is nothing more than an ask to have your player assessed. An assessment will then be done to ensure that their skill level remains challenged and appropriate with their desired level. Submitting a request does not guarantee that a player will be granted that request in the current or future years.

Age Level Consideration

The MYLA has assessed the various levels of play, and at this time only sees benefit in moving a player up between the following levels:

- 8U to 10U
- 10U to 12U
- 12U to 14U (Girls)

Moving players down will be considered at all age levels but carries a higher level of scrutiny, including a potential waiver process, to ensure no unfair situations being created.

Theory Behind Leveling Players Up or Down at Various Age Groups

The **8U** level is viewed as an intro to lacrosse. In addition to passing, catching, and cradling, players will be introduced to shooting the ball and to the format of game play. Many players at this age level will be learning these skill sets for the first time and most players will not be able to consistently catch or pass the ball with accuracy. Moving players from 8U to 10U would be done with intent to continue to provide challenges that will benefit the development of the player.

The **U10** level continues development of skills and plays a full season using modified rules. At this age level, there can be a large disparity between kids who are still just getting introduced to the sport and learning new skill sets vs. kids who have been playing lacrosse for 4 or more years at the association level and multiple years at a club level. Moving players from 10U to 12U would be done with intent to continue to provide challenges that will benefit the development of the player.

The **12U** level is the start of what becomes full field non-modified lacrosse. Most kids coming out of 10U will be exposed to the non-modified rules for the first time and will experience a shift in game concepts that comes with position specific roles. There are no differences between how the game is played between 12U and 14U in youth lacrosse, and in rare circumstances the board might consider allowing a player to "play up" from 12U to 14U to balance out teams and make the playing experience better for the whole.

Requirements for Moving Players Up or Down

1. Try Out Approval

The player will be assessed during the preseason clinics for consistency in skills appropriate for their level, playing their position and their knowledge of how to move on the field in relation to the other players.

A request for a player to "play down" must be supported by a lack of skills that unless matched by a group of players with similar skill sets would create a counter-productive environment for the development of the player. If a skills assessment supports a request for a player to "play down", the player will be able to try out with the lower-level age group.

Note: The ability to try out does not constitute approval to "play up" or "play down."

2. Try Out Assessment

If the level requested has sufficient room, and the player has passed their level's try out, then the player will be assessed a second time at the higher level's try out. For players requesting to "play up", they must be at a skill level that is sufficient to meet requirements of an "A" team player. Players will not be permitted to move up to a new age group if they make a "B" team following the try-out period.

For players requesting to "play down", there is no requirement to make an "A" team or a "B" team. However, the player will be assessed with the lower-level team's try-outs to ensure that there is not a significant advantage to the lower-level team. MYLA will avoid all situations

that create an unfair position to 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.

3. Adequate Room at the Desired Level

The MYLA board considers the following to constitute a full team and therefore does not allow room for additional players from other age groups:

- U10 – Roughly 16 players on a team is considered full.
- U12 & U14 – Roughly 21 players on a team is considered full.

League Approval

Players requesting to “play up” generally do not require additional approval from the league. Players requesting to “play down” may require a waiver from the league (YLM, GNLL, MSLAX, etc.) and the league’s decision to grant said waiver could impact the ability for a player to “play down.”

Limitations

This policy is not a guarantee of placement on a specific team. Final decisions rest with the evaluators and MYLA board, considering the overall team composition and player development.

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.

Future Level Up Requests

The child’s ability to “play up” or “play down” a level is only good for the current season in play. Approval granted in one year does not automatically grant permission to “play up” or “play down” in future years. Players must re-submit a request to be assessed for leveling up or down at the beginning of the season in play.

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 the following actions:

- A minimum one-year suspension for the entire family, including all family players in either boy or girl programs, without refund. The MYLA board also reserves the right to consider a permanent removal of a family in violation from participation in MYLA programming for future years.

By implementing this Play Up & Play Down Policy, we aim to create an inclusive and supportive environment where every player can thrive, grow, and enjoy the game of lacrosse.