

U7 U8

THEIR GAME

Youth **Football** Development



U7 U8

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A GUIDE TO U7 AND U8 FOOTBALL

Football is our national game, one that has the potential to ignite and fascinate millions of people across the world, and this is a young person's first steps on that voyage.

They may become a professional or amateur player, referee, coach or armchair fan of the future but you have the privileged position of being part of that journey.

Mini-Soccer offers an introduction to the game of football at a size and scale that meets the needs of the young people playing – with smaller goals and pitches and less players per team.

Part of The Football Association's National Game Strategy is to develop 'Better Players' and it believes that Mini-Soccer is the most appropriate format to do this within.

This is supported by academic research from around the world on the value of small sided games for improving technique and skills.

OUR CHALLENGE AS ADULTS IS SIMPLE - TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE FALL IN LOVE WITH THE GAME

Mini-Soccer allows children to have a fun, enjoyable introduction to football in an environment that allows them lots of touches, shots, dribbles and ultimately more involvement and enjoyment in the game.

Adults involved in developing the playing environment for children need to recognise their role is to facilitate this; to enable young people to have fun, make new friends and learn the game.

Our challenge as adults is simple - to help young people fall in love with the game.

If they start this journey captivated by the experience, this vastly improves their chances of getting better.

Our job is to create that experience.

MINI-SOCCER: MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

The main theme throughout Mini-Soccer is to meet the needs of children and eleven-a-side football does not meet those needs.

Children need a modified game that fits their age and stage of learning and too often it's the children that are modified to meet the requirements of a game.

Mini-Soccer modifies football without losing the essence of the game, which is important for children and therefore is the appropriate introduction to the game.

All available research and observations show that children will have more fun and learn more playing a game with smaller teams and modified rules. Mini-Soccer is a game children can actually play rather than struggling to understand a game created for adults.

IF CHILDREN ARE TO ENJOY AND TAKE PART IN FOOTBALL THEY NEED TO:

- **Take an active part in the game**
- **Form relationships and work together**
- **Develop their football skills and get better**
- **Be able to take part whatever their ability**
- **Develop personal skills in all 'four corners'**
- **Appreciate and demonstrate good sportsmanship**
- **Understand the laws**
- **Be listened to**
- **Feel success.**

Mini-Soccer aims to set realistic expectations. It focuses on the development of children rather than the result of the match.

For their future lives, children need to learn that co-operation is vital but also the joys that being part of a team can bring and football is a fantastic and exciting game that can teach those skills.





WHY DO CHILDREN PLAY?

Our role as adults is to facilitate a learning environment that enables children to play football and fall in love with the game. However, when you listen to young children about why they play football the reasons they provide are often different from those that adults assume.

The Football Association has conducted research with groups of children across the whole country and the top six reasons why children play football are highlighted below:

- **Trying my hardest is more important to me than winning**
- **I love playing football because it's fun**
- **It helps keep me fit and healthy**
- **I like meeting new friends through football**
- **It's a really good game and I love it**
- **I like playing with my friends.**

Adult values and children's values are quite different about what they want from their football experience.

"I LOVE PLAYING FOOTBALL BECAUSE IT'S FUN"

U8, West Midlands

"I LIKE DOING THE SKILLS"

U8, London

Research from children also indicates that through the primary school age group and up to 11/12 they are not focused on winning the league and they state that trophies and medals are not that important to them.

These six factors are much more important to them in the scheme of the reasons why young people play football.

If trophies and medals aren't that important for children it might be worth thinking about your end of season plans.

Children are getting trophies now for doing something they would have done anyway – turn up and play football!

How equitable is the 'Top Goalscorer' award anyway?

The most important trophy for children is 'Player's Player', voted for by their team mates.

The challenge for spectators and coaches is to ensure the learning environment created for children when they come to football is one that matches their expectations, not the adults' version.

If we get this right it can be a fun, exciting and social experience for all involved!

WHY NOT:

- **Hire a sports photographer to take action shots as a memento of their season**
- **Ensure they all have a football each for training**
- **Buy them a club emblem pencil case they can use at school**
- **Give them a branded bootbag they can use for each game**
- **Present them all with a certificate for their efforts during the year**
- **Ask the players what they think would be a suitable reward.**

WHAT CAN CHILDREN EXPECT FROM ADULTS?

Remember that children are often easily led, anxious to please and prone to over-enthusiasm, and so plenty of praise and positive reinforcement is needed – especially for beginners.

Children find it hard to understand negative instructions and easier to understand positive reinforcement and this can frequently mean playing down the result and playing up the performance.

This reduces the child's anxiety and decreases their worry about failing.

Remember that children do not mean to make mistakes; we should accept mistakes as a necessary part of learning.

ROLE MODELS

As coaches, referees and club officials you become role models to the players you work with.

Over time as your rapport builds with them and their confidence in you grows you are likely to see the improvements both to their game and their enjoyment of it.

It's possible that for some children you might become the most stable and positive influence in their lives at any one time.

Football has much to offer. It's possible too that a young player may choose to tell you when things are not going well for them, or even possibly when someone is behaving inappropriately towards them.

Remember you have the support of your Club Welfare Officer and if a child tells you something that raises a concern about their welfare it's not your role to decide if this is happening but it is your responsibility to refer the concern on to the Club Welfare Officer.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and no action is not an option. If you would like more information go to **www.TheFA.com/safeguarding** or speak with your CFA Welfare Officer.

REMEMBER THAT CHILDREN DO NOT MEAN TO MAKE MISTAKES; WE SHOULD ACCEPT MISTAKES AS A NECESSARY PART OF LEARNING

BUILD CONFIDENCE:

- Positive encouragement – providing this really helps the kids!
- Learning from mistakes – no mistake is done deliberately so see them as an opportunity to learn
- Reward effort rather than ability – this helps build confidence and self-esteem
- Model appropriate behaviour – children will often copy the way the coach behaves
- Constructive feedback – try and put these comments between some positive feedback.

RESPECT THE GAME:

- Play by the Laws
- Respect opponents, officials and all others involved in the game
- Work together as a team and cooperate.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUCCESS:

- Success through effort
- New skill development
- Making and learning from mistakes
- Set players individual targets.



WORKING WITH PARENTS

The most influential people in terms of a child's psychological and sociological development are his or her parents. A child's beliefs, values, perceptions, attitudes and goals are shaped by their home influences and have a profound effect in later life.

Evidence suggests that interest and support from the home are vital in a child's overall development. With this evidence, engaging parents in the learning experience of their children, if guided and educated correctly can lead to positive effects in reinforcing messages of support you offer to the players during the sliver of time you have with them.

Working with parents should be seen as a three-way process, between you, the player and the parent.

Just as you will involve them in creating a clear and robust philosophy, by creating a learning environment for the child and parent it will provide them both a much greater understanding of what the common goal is.

Longer term the parents will begin to hopefully become powerful reinforcers and ultimately see the time the child is with you as more than just football, but as a vital learning experience. A good way to reinforce this is by referring them to the 'FA Four Corner' model.

WHY NOT:

- **Organise a pre-season meeting for players and parents**
- **Talk to the parents before/after coaching and explain what you are doing and why you are doing it; explain the benefits**
- **Use a questionnaire to get the views from the parents, what else can be improved**
- **Hold a Parents' Evening – hold evenings when parents can come along with their child and discuss how they are getting on**
- **Set them basic tasks – this could be asking for support around setting out equipment or keeping a record of playing time for you**
- **Direct them towards FA online courses to help develop their knowledge too!**

One big piece of evidence from the research from children was that they don't like being embarrassed by adults.

So you know that moan you often have, the flailing arms and negative body language when they make a mistake – they see that!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

With player development in mind, if 'we' would like children to develop an understanding of the game as well as an ability to problem solve, then 'we' have a duty to let them think for themselves from time to time.

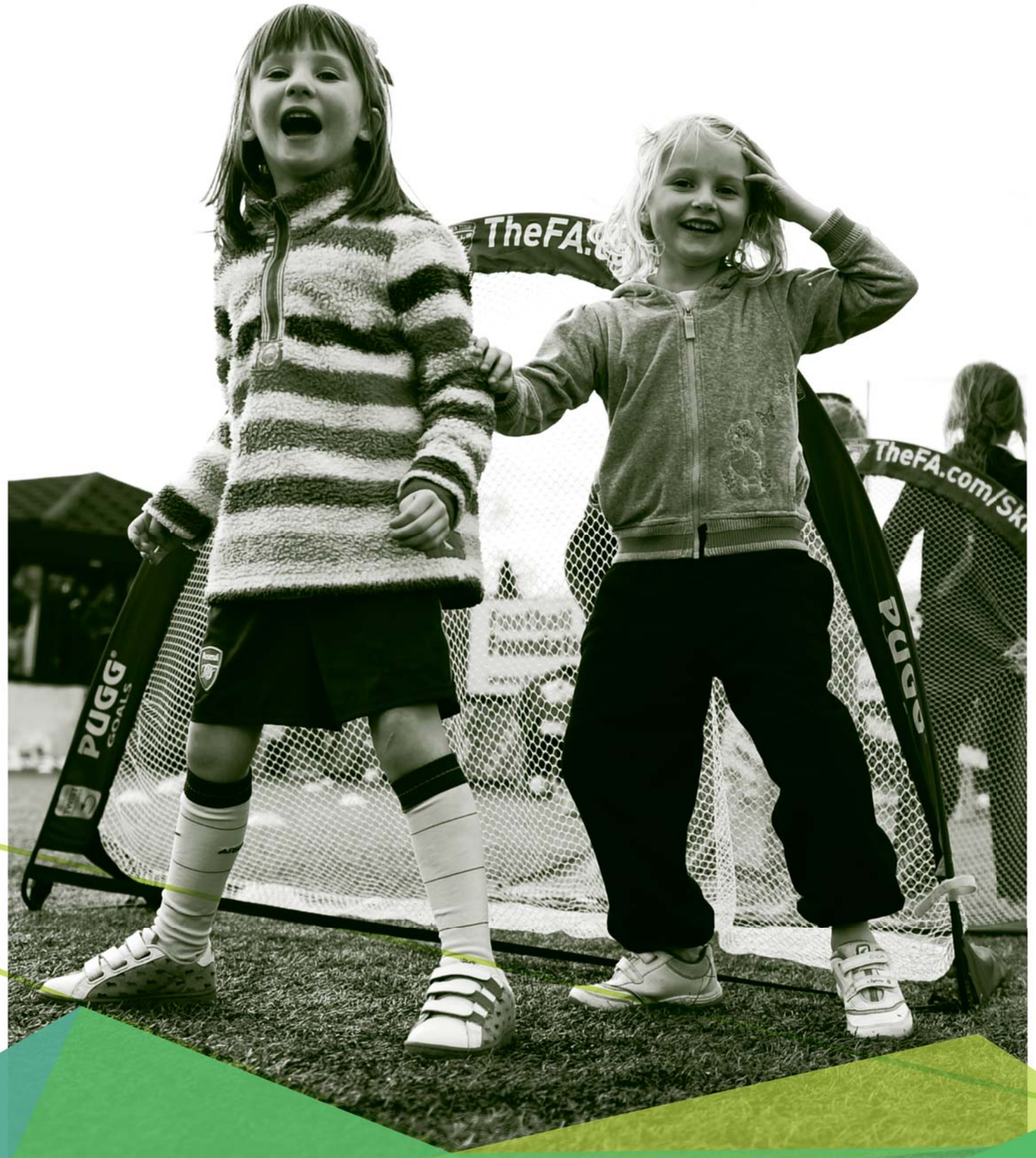
Less input from the sidelines = more thinking time for the players.

SOME QUESTIONS YOU COULD ASK YOUR PARENTS:

Do your actions on game day...

- **demonstrate trust in the coach?**
- **centre around the players' needs?**
- **help or confuse the player(s)?**





FACILITIES

An important aspect of helping young people to learn about playing football is to ensure the size of the pitch is appropriate to their age and stage of development.

Whilst we may not have existing 5v5 pitches permanently marked out at the right size it is worthwhile adults gaining a perspective on the issue.

This is a game of football for six and seven year old children, not the World Cup Final!

All the Premier League teams play within coned off areas every day in training so if it works for them then it is fine for the children to learn the game within.

The pitch doesn't have to be perfectly marked out like Wembley and adults need to try and move away from that mindset.

In an ideal world and wherever possible, this would be marked out with lines and fixed goals but if the pitch needs to be organised using cones/flat markers and portable goals, or drawn within another pitch area, then great!

If you are having trouble with finding pitches or grass space, please contact the County Development Manager at your local County FA.

It is their job is to come out and help you with these kind of challenges, support you with finding funding streams to go towards the cost of developing facilities and broker relationships with local pitch providers such as local authorities, schools and other agencies.

Not having the right size pitch might be a challenge in the short-term when implementing something new but this is about the future of English football for the next fifteen to twenty years, the long-term game!

HINTS AND TIPS:

- Find a piece of grass the appropriate size
- Use flat markers to highlight the goal area to help the goalkeepers
- Move the portable goals to the right place
- Maybe look at using a 3G pitch or commercial provider as a venue
- Put up the Respect barrier for the parents to stand behind
- Mark out a small technical area for the coaches and subs near the halfway line to stand within.

MANAGING THE MATCH DAY ENVIRONMENT



Football is a passionate game and all of us can get swept up in the moment. However it is possible for leagues and clubs to manage the match day environment in such a way as to clearly signpost which behaviours are acceptable and unacceptable.

A TEAM/CLUB PHILOSOPHY

Establishing a team/club philosophy is a good way to agree with the players, coaches and parents how you are going to work together to ensure that there is harmony within.

By doing this when things 'go wrong' you can refer back to what was agreed at the start and use this as a mediator when a situation arises.

Depending upon age, maturity and local considerations your philosophy may differ from that of another team/clubs, however, the key should be putting the child at the centre of the philosophy.

You may wish to consider the following:

- **Communication channels**
- **Time keeping**
- **Playing time**
- **Substitutions and who starts the game**
- **Sharing responsibilities**
- **Winning at all costs v development of the players**
- **Agreeing a philosophy against The FA's Four Corner LTPD model**
- **The Respect Programme codes of conduct.**

"PARENTS EMBARRASS ME WHEN THEY SHOUT AND JUST CONFUSE ME"

U8, Yorkshire

Why not stage parents' meetings where you can provide guidance on the practicalities of playing for the club but also agree a meaningful and shared code of conduct? Your local County FA will have resources to support you to hold a parents' meeting. It's a great opportunity to also introduce the clubs officials such as the Welfare Officer.

- **Display the Club's Code of Conduct for everyone attending to see**
- **Pass a laminated version down the line of spectators for all to read**
- **Put up a Respect sign on the clubhouse so people can see this is what you believe in**
- **Designate an area for the spectators to stand and watch the game**
- **This should be three yards from the touchline on both sides of the pitch and run the full length of the pitch**
- **No spectators should be allowed behind the goal – it puts off the goalkeeper**
- **Put the coaches' technical areas on the opposite side to the spectators**
- **Mark out a technical area for the coach to stand within three yards either side of the halfway line – there is no need for coaches to run up and down the touchline too!**
- **Let the subs play a little 2v2 match if there is some spare grass next to the pitch.**

To help implement the Designated Spectators' Area, The FA has endorsed a **Respect** Barrier Kit which is available from **www.Touchlinelogos.com**

PUT UP A RESPECT SIGN ON THE CLUBHOUSE SO PEOPLE CAN SEE THIS IS WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN

DEALING WITH DIFFICULT SPECTATORS

Clubs should consider the use of a touchline manager - someone known to club members designated to help maintain a supportive playing environment.

Some clubs have equipped touchline managers with a **Respect** bib which has increased their visibility and assisted them when required to intervene. They are there to deal with small scale incidents and to reduce and diffuse problems.

It is not the role of the touchline manager to replace the referee or the normal league sanctions and they should never place themselves or others in danger.

Remember: your role as a manager or coach is to set a good example to all others involved in the game.

Whilst the referee, sometimes a younger referee learning the game too, will make mistakes and there may be decisions that you disagree with, try not to lose sight of the whole experience and ethos.

Talk to your players/parents about referees and explain that:

- **They are learning the game and will make unintentional mistakes**
- **Playing to the whistle is part of the game**
- **Not shouting at the referee helps make it more enjoyable for everyone**
- **Being polite when talking to the referee is important**
- **Shaking hands after the game, regardless of the score, is the right thing to do.**



MATCH DAY TIPS FOR COACHES

Most importantly, ensure that you don't overload your players with lots of information.

Before the game you may just want to set a couple of basic targets for the players to achieve.

Just before the kick off remind the players what they were again and possibly ask the substitutes to watch the game and see if they are achieving them.

The focus at half time can now be on whether the players have completed the tasks.

Get the substitutes to help feed this back.

It will almost certainly be a more powerful message coming from them rather than you.

After the game, think of the different ways that you can use to debrief the players.

Once again refer back to the targets you set the players and link these into what actually happened during the game.

You may want to arrange the players into small groups and ask them to debrief amongst themselves then feedback to other small groups.

Things to consider when talking to players:

- **Use age appropriate language**
- **Get the attention of your players before speaking**
- **Keep it simple**
- **Be positive at all times**
- **Focus on the most important aspects**
- **Give clear instructions to your players**
- **Always finish with a positive**
- **Don't forget they are just children, not professional footballers!**

TECHNICAL

Play players in different positions during different periods of the game if they are happy to do so.

Allow players to learn as much of the game for themselves as they can but be prepared to support their learning needs when necessary.

Play different formations and sometimes allow the children to help picking these.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

Allow the players to learn from their mistakes and their successes.

Let the players experiment, practice and compete while making their own decisions.

Ensure that you cater for different learning styles during your team talk – try using a white board or get players to stand in the formation.



PHYSICAL

Incorporate generic movements (agility, balance and coordination) into your warm up.

Allow players to play on different sides of the pitch, sometimes on the left and sometimes on the right.

Use tag and chase games, handball and 2v2/3v3 games as part of your warm up.

Avoid having the children standing in lines or waiting, try and get them active as much as possible.

SOCIAL

Allow the players to be involved in decision making processes.

Give the players ownership, trust and responsibility.

If the players do something well, praise them. If they make a mistake, they didn't do it on purpose, so offer some words of encouragement or help.



DEVELOPING TALENTED PLAYERS

As coaches and parents, we would all love our child to become the next top England player, to have a career as a professional footballer and no doubt when they start playing, most children have that same dream!

Sometimes adults build the pressure on young players much too soon without understanding the environment that is needed to foster talent.

The following factors are the research, principles and tools upon which high quality talent development is built.

BEING 'PLAYER CENTRED'

A coach that is totally focused on talent development puts the player first; their needs are paramount. Too many competition structures, training programmes, coaching methods and practice schedules have been set to suit those who administer and run them rather than those who participate.

For talent to be truly nurtured these systems require review, players needs assessed and changes made to ensure that every player has the best network of people supporting them as they attempt to achieve their potential.

USING 'THE 'C' SYSTEM' TO DEVELOP THE WHOLE CHILD

Developing talent should be about developing the whole player not just their skills and techniques.

Using the 'C' system can help coaches, parents and organisers to keep their eyes on the progress of all aspects of their development.

Core aspects of the 'C' system include:

COMPETENCE
Developing the players' abilities in all aspects of their sport.

CONFIDENCE
Sport develops confidence if delivered well. A confident player performs better so this is an area that should always be referred to when developing young players.

CREATIVITY
The players should be in charge of their own development and should be allowed to come up with their own solutions. Children have been shown to be more creative than adults but often their creativity is stifled through well meaning adults wanting to show them the 'proper' way.

CONNECTION AND CARING
Players should be encouraged to be competitive but they should also be taught to look after each other. Getting players to be in touch with one another needs helps to develop teamwork and leadership skills.

CHARACTER
Sport can develop a player's character and teach them valuable life lessons that will be important to their future development.

‘DELIBERATE PLAY’ AND ‘TEACHING GAMES FOR UNDERSTANDING (TGFU)’

There has been research which suggests that ‘Deliberate Play’ and ‘Teaching Games for Understanding’ (TGfU) should be a big part of a child’s sporting experience.

Both Deliberate Play and TGfU involves fun semi-competitive games and challenges that stretch the child’s skills and require them to make rapid adaptations to succeed at the activity.

Both approaches require the players to make decisions and develop skills in a game-like context which has been shown to develop their skills more effectively than the traditional ‘drill based’ approach alone.

The Football Association has adopted game forms with reduced numbers at younger ages to encourage youngsters to get a lot of touches of the ball and develop their skills more effectively in line with these approaches.

‘SPECIALISATION’ – VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE

Specialisation is the point at which a player is encouraged to focus attention on a specific sport and begin the process of developing the skills of that sport over others.

Often children are encouraged by competition organisers, parents, coaches, talent scouts and others to specialise in a specific sporting domain too early. Sport is particularly prone to this phenomenon. Young children who display ability at a young age are encouraged to play and practice to the exclusion of other activities.

Specialising too early in sports has been shown to contribute to:

- **Athletic deficiencies**
- **Overuse injuries**
- **Early burnout and dropout**
- **Unhappy children**

Adults need to be patient with children and recognise they all grow and learn at different rates. Don’t forget, little children today won’t always be little and some may appear ‘excellent’ today because of a short-term physical advantage. Can you spot and foster the development potential?

‘PHYSICAL LITERACY’ – NOT TRYING TO RUN BEFORE WE CAN WALK!

Physical Literacy is best described as ‘the building blocks of movement’. By this we mean a series of fundamental movements and skills that underpin all sporting activity in one way or another. Examples of these movements include:

OBJECT CONTROL SKILLS

Sending
Kicking, rolling a ball, striking an object, throwing

Receiving
Catching, stopping, trapping

Travelling with
Dribbling with either feet, hands or stick

Receiving and sending
Striking a moving ball with bat or stick, volleying

TRAVELLING SKILLS

Climbing, hopping, jumping, running, skipping

BODY MANAGEMENT SKILLS

Balancing/centering, dodging, stopping, stretching, twisting and turning



Without these basic movement skills, a young person’s capacity to fully develop their skills may be affected. Many elite performance programmes are working hard to try and rectify physical or technical problems in players which could have been solved earlier in the player’s athletic life by the development of sound physical literacy.

(Talent development information courtesy of Stuart Armstrong, Lead Development Officer for Talent at Sportscoach UK)



THE FA LAWS FOR MINI-SOCCER

This guide provides the Laws for Under 7 and Under 8 versions of the game, with children playing a maximum of 5v5.

Please remember:
Under 7's or Under 8's are not permitted to play in leagues where results are collected or published or winner trophies are presented. This is deemed to be detrimental to the development of the player and the game and will not be sanctioned.

From season 2013/14, Under 7's and Under 8's can play in a maximum of three trophy events during the season, lasting a maximum of two weeks each.

These are short-term experiences helping children learn about winning and losing in an appropriate environment. The winners of these events can be published and trophies can be presented.

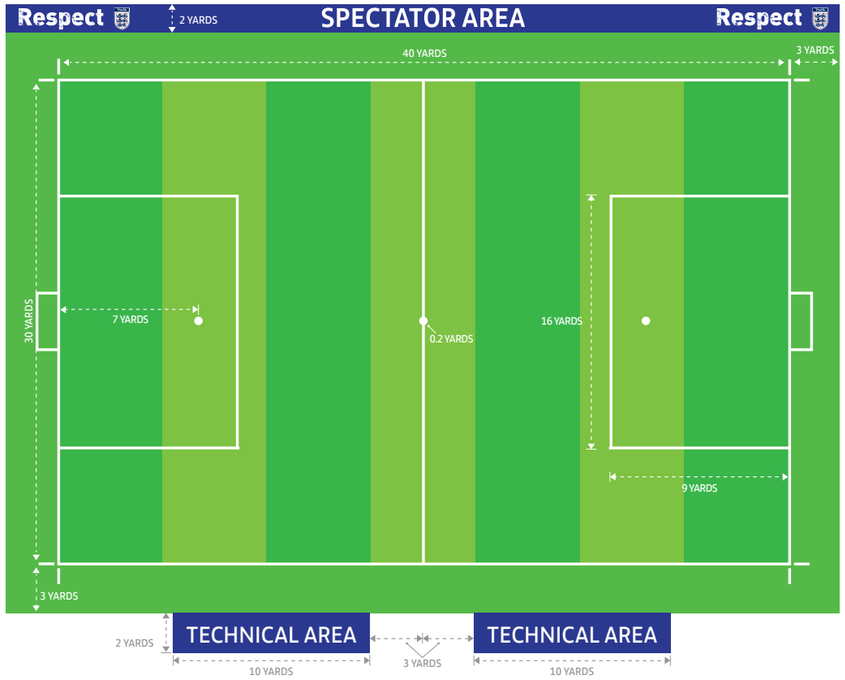
Except where other provision in these Laws are made, the Laws of Association Football apply. Each Law is numbered to correspond with the appropriate Law of the Game. These Laws are mandatory unless special permission is granted by The FA.

THESE ARE SHORT-TERM EXPERIENCES HELPING CHILDREN LEARN ABOUT WINNING AND LOSING IN AN APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENT

LAW 1
PLAYING AREA

Halfway Line
The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The centre mark is indicated at the mid-point of the halfway line. This is also used as the retreat line when restarting play with a goal kick.

Goal Size
The distance between the posts is 12ft and the distance between the lower edge of the cross bar and the ground is 6ft.



LAW 2
THE BALL

The ball should be size three for U7 and U8. It should be safe and made of leather or other suitable material.

LAW 3
NUMBER OF PLAYERS

Maximum number per team, including goalkeeper	
Under 7 and Under 8	5v5

The above table indicates the maximum number of players per team at that age group. If the competition would like to have smaller numbers, e.g. 4v4 at U7 or U8, this is allowed within this framework.

A match may not START if either team consists of fewer than four players. The minimum number of players in a team required for a match to CONTINUE is also four. Matches can begin with 5v4 but the importance and ethos of Mini-Soccer should be upheld wherever possible and the development of the children should come before the score line.

Players must play with and against players only from their own age range, as per Football Association and Competition rules. Each team must not have a squad greater than double the size of the team per age.

Any number of substitutes, without being named, may be used at any time with the permission of the referee. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player.

All team members should receive equal playing time where possible, with a best practice recommendation of at least 50% per player for each game.

LAW 4
PLAYING EQUIPMENT

Players must wear shin guards and goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing top. Shin guards must be covered entirely by the socks. Players must wear the appropriate clothing dependant on the weather.

Correct footwear must be worn for the surface of the pitch e.g. no metal studs on artificial grass pitches.

LAW 5
REFEREES

The Authority of the Referee
Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws for Mini-Soccer in connection with the match to which they have been appointed.

Furthermore, referees should also recognise their role is to facilitate the learning of the players, for example, allow young children to take a second attempt at a throw-in if the first is not within the Laws.

LAW 6
ASSISTANT REFEREE

Assistant referees are not required.

LAW 7
DURATION OF THE GAME

In any one day, no player shall play more than 40 minutes. It is the responsibility of the parent/carer or organisation to ensure the child does not exceed this. Each league/ competition will determine its own playing time within the maximum time permitted, however, the maximum duration will be two halves of 20 minutes.

It is permitted during development matches that the periods of play can be split into equal quarters. The half time interval must not exceed five minutes.

Please refer to the Standard Code of Rules for Youth Competitions.

LAW 8
START AND RESTART OF PLAY

Procedure
A kick-off is taken at the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored. Opponents must be five yards away from the ball and in their own half of the field. The ball must be played forward. In Mini-Soccer a goal cannot be scored directly from a start or restart of play.

Special Circumstances
A dropped ball to restart the match, after play has been temporarily stopped inside the penalty area, takes place on the penalty area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when the play stopped. No goal can be scored direct from a dropped ball.



LAW 9
BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY

Normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football.

LAW 10
METHOD OF SCORING

Normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football.

LAW 11
OFFSIDE

There is no offside.

LAW 12
FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football. However, in Mini-Soccer all free kicks are direct. A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the goalkeeper:

- takes more than six seconds to release the ball from his/her hands
- touches the ball again with his/her hands after it has been released from his/her possession and has not touched any other player
- touches the ball with his/her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him/her by a team mate
- touches the ball with his/her hands after he/she has received it directly from a throw in taken by a teammate.

For all these offences, the free kick should be taken from the penalty area line, parallel with the goal line, at the nearest point to the offence.

LAW 13
FREE KICKS

For all free kicks opponents must be five yards from the ball.

"I MUCH PREFER A CLOSE GAME AS THERE IS MORE TO DO THEN"
U8, Yorkshire



LAW 14
PENALTY KICKS

Normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football.

Position of the Ball and the Players
All players except the defending goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and at least five yards from the penalty mark. The ball must be kicked forward.

LAW 15
THROW IN

Normal rules apply, as per Laws of Association Football.

In addition, U7 and U8 children are permitted to roll the ball underarm with one or both hands into the field of play.

The role of the referee is to also allow young players to learn the game. This may involve letting players take throw-ins again, if incorrect technique is used. The referee should ensure the same player attempts a second time, with guidance and help from the match official.

LAW 16
GOAL KICK

Procedure
A player of the defending team kicks the ball from any point within the penalty area.

Opponents must retreat to their own half until the ball is in play.

The defending team does not have to wait for the opposition to retreat and has the option to restart the game before should they choose to.

The ball is in play when it is kicked directly out the penalty area.

LAW 17
CORNER KICKS

The opposing players must remain at least five yards from the ball until it is in play.

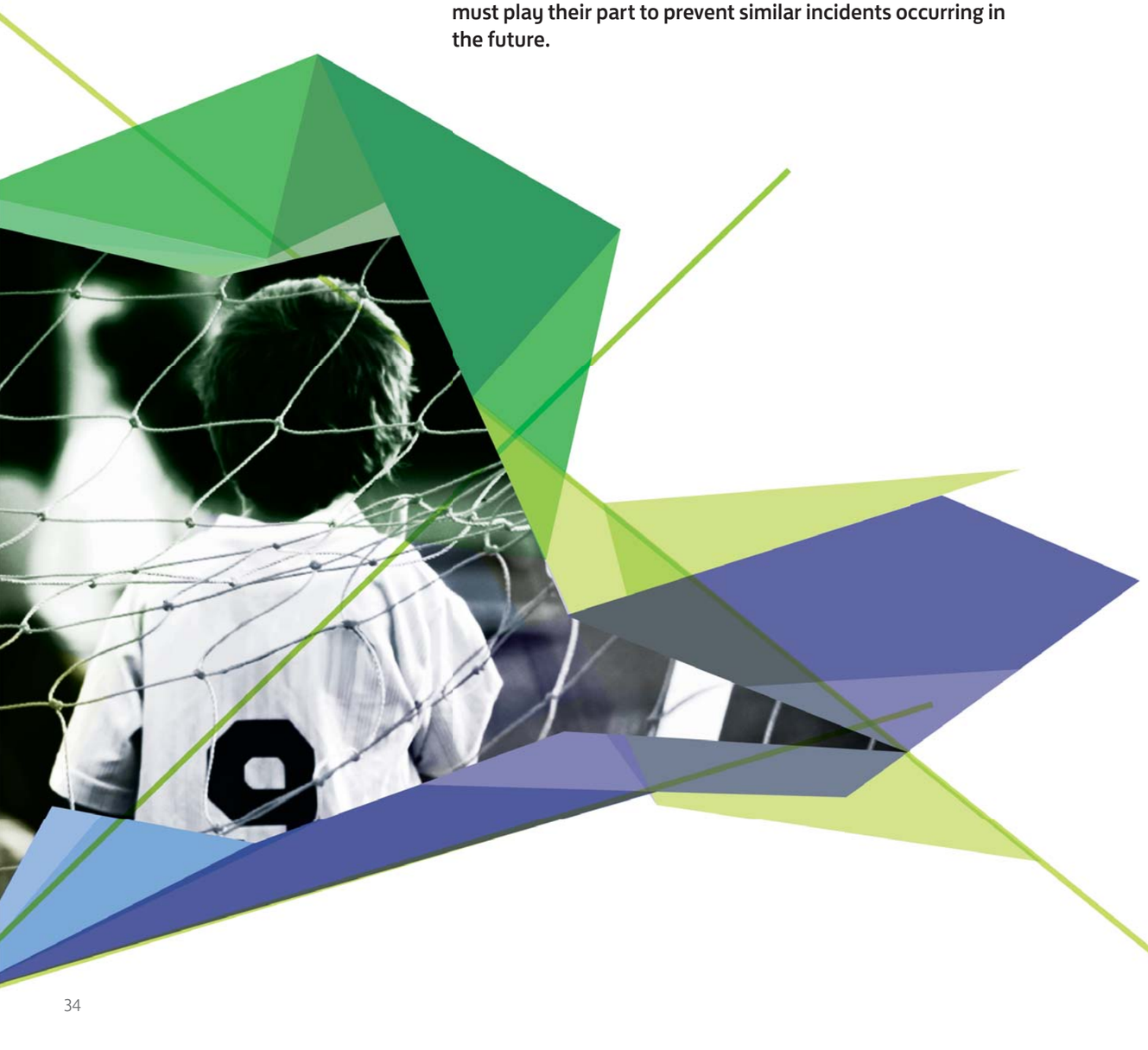
The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he/she does, a free kick is awarded against them.

The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play.

GOALPOST SAFETY

The Football Association, along with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Health and Safety Executive and the British Standards Institution, would like to draw your attention to the following guidelines for the safe use of goalposts.

Several serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in recent years as a result of unsafe or incorrect use of goalposts. Safety is always of paramount importance and everyone in football must play their part to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.



1. For safety reasons goalposts of any size (including those which are portable and not installed permanently at a pitch or practice field) must always be anchored securely to the ground or have a weighted back bar.

- Portable goalposts must be secured as per the manufacturer's instructions; this is also a requirement for the Laws of the Game
- Under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb on, swing or play with the structure of the goalposts
- Particular attention is drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may overturn
- Regular inspections of goalposts must be carried out to check that they are properly maintained.

2. Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be either dismantled or removed to a place of secure storage, or placed together and suitable fixings applied to prevent unauthorised use at any time.

3. The use of metal cup hooks on any part of a goal frame was banned from the commencement of season 2007-08 and match officials have been instructed not to commence matches where such net fixings are evident for safety reasons. Nets may be secured by plastic fixings, arrow head shaped plastic hooks or tape and not by metal cup hooks. Any metal cup hooks should be removed and replaced. New goalposts should not be purchased if they include metal cup hooks.

4. Goalposts which are "homemade" or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used under any circumstances as they potential pose a serious safety risk.

5. There is no BS/CEN standard for wooden goals and it is unlikely that wooden goals will pass a load or stability test. All wooden goals previously tested by independent consultants have failed strength and stability tests. The FA recommends that wooden goals should be replaced with compliant metal, aluminium or UPVC goalposts (this was updated in March 2012).

For reference, you should note that The FA and BSI, in conjunction with the industry, have developed standards for goalposts – **BSEN 748 (2004)** and **BS8461:2005+A1:2009**. **BS 8462:2005+A2:2012** was updated in March 2012. It is strongly recommended that you ensure that all goals purchased comply with the relevant standard. **A Code of Practice BS 8461** has also been completed and copies of all of these standards are available from the BSI via their website at **www.bsigroup.com.**

Funding for the replacement of unsafe goals is available via the Football Foundation and eligibility criteria and further details can be obtained from their website at **www.footballfoundation.org.uk.**

The FA together with representatives from the industry, sports governing bodies and Government have prepared guidance notes for pitch users and pitch providers, which summarise the key priorities of the BSI's Code of Practice and provide further details on the information included above. These details are featured within the facilities section of The FA's website at **www.TheFA.com/my-football**

THE FUTURE GAME

The FA Coaching Philosophy and Vision

The launch of The Future Game, The FA Technical Guide for Young Player Development, in 2010, outlined a philosophy and vision for player development in English football.

Central to the message are the principles of creativity and innovation, for both coaches and players, and a vision for playing the game based on quality passing, possession and building play through the three-thirds of the pitch.

The guide, the first of its kind since The Football Association's Coaching Book of Soccer Tactics and Skills published in 1991, provided a response to widely agreed opinion that at the highest level of the men's game. English players had fallen behind their global counterparts with regards to technical competence and decision-making capability.

Statistics backed up this notion. Other than success at the U17 and U18 European Championships in 2010 and 1993, England had not won an international competition, at any level, since the World Cup in 1966.

Other factors also contributed to the necessity of a refreshed vision.

With the onset of the Premier League and the significant influence of foreign coaches and players, the landscape and culture of English football changed dramatically since the early 1990s. European and International football – the arena in which young English players must compete - had accelerated too.

Addressing this cultural shift, The Future Game champions the development of better coaches.

Each layer of the game, from the grassroots to the elite, must be populated with excellent teachers of the game who possess the appropriate attributes to positively affect the players and teams with which they work.

Dedication to specialisation is central. Players who are learning the game require support and guidance at each step along the player pathway, with coach effectiveness judged by the ability to make the game relevant and realistic to the age and stage of the players or team.

IN SUMMARY

The Future Game headlines:

- **The value of technique**

  English coaches must add a greater importance and value to the development of technique and skill.

- **A clear playing philosophy based on:**
  - A possession-based approach
  - Playing through the three-thirds of the pitch
  - Quality of passing
  - Intelligent movement and support off the ball
  - Penetrative/incisive attacking play
  - Counter-attacking.

- **Innovative teachers of the game**

  The best coaches are the best teachers. Effective coaches understand the individuals in their care and have an understanding and awareness of their age, stage of development/ learning and their abilities.

- **One strand: a view through the whole game**

  To develop players that can perform at the highest stage, coaches at all levels of the game should understand what characteristics lead to high-class performance.

The Future Game philosophy underpins the content of all future FA course provision and will be brought to life with the opening of St George's Park, The FA National Football Centre, in late summer 2012.

*The original Future Game document had a clear and defined target audience: the boys'/men's professional game.

However, to prompt change at the top of the pyramid, a fresh approach was also required at the grassroots.

As a result, The Future Game grassroots guide followed the elite version in December 2010. The grassroots version of the document had a wider appeal providing guidance for both male/female players aged 5-21.



JOIN THE FA LICENSED COACHES' CLUB

Raise the standards for your players

In a society where expertise commands prestige, position and creditability, skilled dentists, doctors and financial advisors are highly desired services. Why therefore isn't the suitability of those entrusted to 'coach' our children or the players at your club, afforded the same scrutiny?

They are after all, in a position of authority and influence, playing a part in shaping experience and behaviour.

Through commitment to continued professional development, up-to-date learning, and adherence to good practice, an FA Licensed Coach stands for reliance, trust and credibility within the game.

Clubs, players and parents will have the assurance that their coach is suitably qualified and trained to manage a coaching programme suitable for the need of their players, and that they have undertaken the continuous training necessary to handle the growing demands of the game at every level.

To join The FA Licensed Coaches' Club, please visit: **www.TheFA.com/LicensedCoachesClub** or call **0844 980 8212**

THE FA LICENSED COACHES' CLUB

An FA Licensed Coach holds:

- A valid FA/UEFA Coaching Qualification
- An in date FA Safeguarding Children Qualification
- An in date Emergency First Aid Qualification (FA or HSE)
- An FA CRB check
- A commitment to CPD each season.

As a FA Licensed Coach you can access:

- Official FA Licensed Coach Photo Licence
- The FA Licensed Coaches Club website
- Ballot entry for 100 pairs of free tickets to all England Senior and U21s home matches
- 10% discount on FA Learning National Courses
- Exclusive FA Licensed Coaches Continuous Professional Development Events
- UEFA's 3D animation tool, TactX.



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