

Game Format (7s)

PLAYER JOURNEY - SMALL SIDED GAMES FORMAT OPTIONS 5-12 YEARS									
YEAR 2026	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2015 FROM AUG	2014	2014 FROM MAY
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Focus on in-house, club based games. Mixed age groups and formats to encourage fun, social interaction, and skill exploration. Some local festival activity permitted				Clubs should continue to provide a variety of activity, enabling players to play in club-based activity sessions and/or more regular festivals or fixture-based football.				
1v1, 2v2, 3v3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4v4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5v5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7v7				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9v9						✓	✓	✓	
11v11									✓

For young players the small-sided game has been proven through research to be the best format to develop their love for the game along with the opportunity to maximise involvement and help with player development.

The game format described below is the MAXIMUM format that players of this age should play. It is entirely acceptable that players at this stage play any smaller format of the game, involving fewer players but should not play any larger format games

Games should, where possible, be organised on a round robin festival basis and be trophy free.

Teams will comprise 6 outfield players plus a goalkeeper. Team squads may consist of up to 10 players with rolling substitutions used throughout the game. Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary. All team members should receive equal playing time where possible.

- All team members should receive equal playing time.
- A Game Supervisor must be a club official, will officiate from the side of the field and will not be allowed to coach either team.
- At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands with each other and the officials.
- It is unacceptable for a league and/or club to post results from development games on to any website or publish in any newsletter, newspaper or social media.

Playing Area

The Scottish FA promote the use of small sided games festival formats to maximise participation and inclusion. For children, playing the game in a festival format provides a great way to ensure everyone is engaged, involved and having fun.

Recommendation

The field of play shall be approximately 36 to 45 metres wide and 55 to 65 metres long.

Goalposts should be no more than 4.9 metres x 1.8 metres (16ft by 6ft).

The penalty area is defined at each end of the field as follows:

Two lines are drawn at right angles to the goal lines 20 metres apart from each other. These lines extend into the field of play for a distance of 10 metres and are joined by a line drawn parallel with the goal line.

Within each penalty area a penalty mark is made 9 metres from the midpoint between the goalposts and equidistant to them.

A centre mark at the midpoint of the halfway line.

Alternative

Field and goalposts as supplied by the local authority may be used. Leagues/Clubs should adapt the recommendations according to the venue specifications.

Equipment

- Goalposts should be no more than 4.9 metres x 1.8 metres (16ft by 6ft).
- A size 4 ball should be used.
- All players must wear shin-guards.
- Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only.
- Players must wear the appropriate clothing dependent on weather.
- Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

The Duration of the Game

The maximum duration of a 7s game shall be 2 periods of 25 minutes with a 5 minute interval. (In their first year of 7s, 2 periods of 20 minutes should be played.)

Games can be organised on a festival basis or as weekly fixtures and shall be trophy free. Festival format may require some flexibility in timing dependant on the venue and booking times.

Alternative

The duration of the game may be 3 periods of 15 minutes with 5 minute intervals. Games can be organised on a festival basis or as weekly fixtures and shall be trophy free. Festival format may require some flexibility in timing dependant on the venue and booking times.

Flexibility should prevail. The team leaders have joint discretion to alter this in the event of poor weather conditions, pitch conditions or an obvious mismatch.

The Start and Restart of Play

On scoring a goal, the team that scores will retreat to the halfway line. The team conceding the goal will restart the game with a kick off at the centre of the pitch. Opponents should be 6 metres away from the ball.

Fouls and Misconduct - Normal rules apply except in relation to a deliberate pass to the goalkeeper, commonly known as 'pass back'.

Pass Back - The pass-back rule does not apply.

The Ball in and out of Play

Retreating Line – There will be a 13-meter retreating line to be use for player developmental purposes. All opposition players will retreat if the goalkeeper has the ball in hands and the game is considered to have stopped. Please note if a goalkeeper wishes to make a 'quick' pass' to ensure the game follows this would be permitted. Note – Please ensure that all coaches agree on the correct implementation of the retreating line prior to the start of the game and this is communicated to players.

Kicking From Hand – Goalkeepers should throw the ball out, or pass it from the ground. Long kicks from hand are not allowed.

Free Kicks - Normal rules apply except that the distance an opposing player must be is 6 metres from the ball. All free kicks are indirect.

The Throw In - In the event of the ball going out of play, a kick-in will be awarded. All opposition players must be six metres from the ball. The player taking the kick-in must use a short pass.

The Goal Kick - There will be a 13 metre retreating area. When the goalkeeper has the ball in his/her hands the opposing team must retreat behind the retreating area (marked by cones, flat markers, poles or the games supervisor can be used to take a line) until the ball has been played to a member of his team. No player from the opposition is allowed into the retreating area until the outfield player has touched the ball.

The Corner Kick - Normal rules apply except that the distance an opposing player must be is 6 metres from the ball. It is recommended that short corners should be encouraged. Please refer to heading section for further information.

7v7 to 9v9 Transition -The transition from 7-a-side to 9-a-side football can only commence on 1st June. No 9-a-side matches can be played BEFORE this date.

Teams must complete their current fixture programme before moving to the new format. Clubs are also strongly encouraged, where possible, to attend one of the 9v9 transition workshops to help players, coaches and parents understand the changes and support a smooth transition.

Results

It is unacceptable for a league and/or club to post results from development games on to any website or publish in any newsletter, newspaper or social media.

Required Coach Education

Required Coach Education level is Children Coaching Certificate of the Scottish FA Children's Pathway.

[Click here](#) for further information on the coach education pathway

Recommended Coach in Service

All coaches should attend 'Transition to 7's Workshop

Heading Guide for Coaches, Teachers, Leaders and Parents

For guidelines on heading, please [click here](#).