

SMALL SIDED GAMES



Seven-a-side
and four-a-side
games for
5-11 year olds



INTRODUCTION

SMALL SIDED GAMES

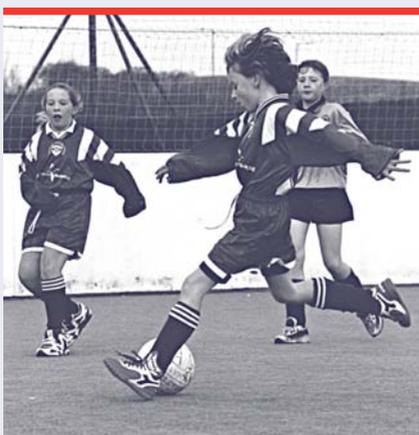
Small sided games are designed to meet the needs of children aged between five and twelve years. These games are the preferred method of training by professional players and are the most appropriate way of acquiring skills and developing young players.

All research into how young people learn about sport, confirms that the well-being of the child, and the good of the game, are served best by the use of modified games and, a sensible approach to competition.

Appropriate sizes of goalposts, ball, and playing field, allied to simple rules and tactics, allow for improved development within the game.

Too often, the focus within children's football has been the result of the game and the winning of the tournament, cup or medal. An ethos which promotes fun and learning and measures success in terms of enjoyment as well as the fostering of skill development, is more likely to interest and motivate a young player and enhance his/her progress.

Small sided games, soccer sevens and four-a-side, offer children an exciting challenge, enhance development and help promote our national game.



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CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL



Skills Development

▶ Reduced numbers and more appropriate size of pitch, lead to more contact, and to a greater chance to develop skills.

More Activity

▶ The ball is more often in the vicinity of the players, which leads to greater involvement, and improved fitness levels.

All Involved

▶ Nobody can improve from the sideline. 'Today's child star' seldom becomes 'tomorrow's star'. So let them all play.

Less Categorisation of Players

▶ Youngsters are learning about the game. They don't yet have a 'best position'. Allow them to try different positions.

Less Tactical Regimentation

▶ Small sided games are simple. Rules are kept to a minimum – children should be encouraged to play.

Success

▶ Winning should not be over-emphasised. Success at this age should be determined by the fun gained through participation.

CHILDREN'S FOOTBALL

Interest

▶ Many children can lose interest and concentration in an eleven-a-side game, because the ball is too far away. Keep it small.

Decision Making

▶ Because of the reduced numbers and pitch size, decision making for the children is easier. Game situations are also repeated regularly (eg attacking and defending) – this leads to a quicker understanding of the game.

Easy to Organise

▶ Any grass area can be adapted quickly to accommodate a large number of youngsters.

Developing Awareness

▶ Children are not young adults. The game must be tailored to meet their needs. Small-sided games help them develop a better awareness of the full game at their own pace.



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ADULT ATTITUDE

Small sided games have their origins in traditional street football. These very competitive games, organised by the children themselves, were motivated by a love of the game and a desire to experiment with skills and tricks. Children should play football for the pleasure it can bring. Today, the excesses of cups and medals bring added pressure to win. An over emphasis on winning can reduce the joy to be gained from taking part.

It is in this context that adults have a very significant role to play.

Adults attending children's games should:

-  Give positive feedback
-  Be patient
-  Ensure evenly matched games
-  Emphasise good behaviour
-  Be supportive of good play from both teams

Adults attending children's games should not:

-  Shout abuse
-  Emphasise results
-  use technical terms

RULES AND GUIDELINES

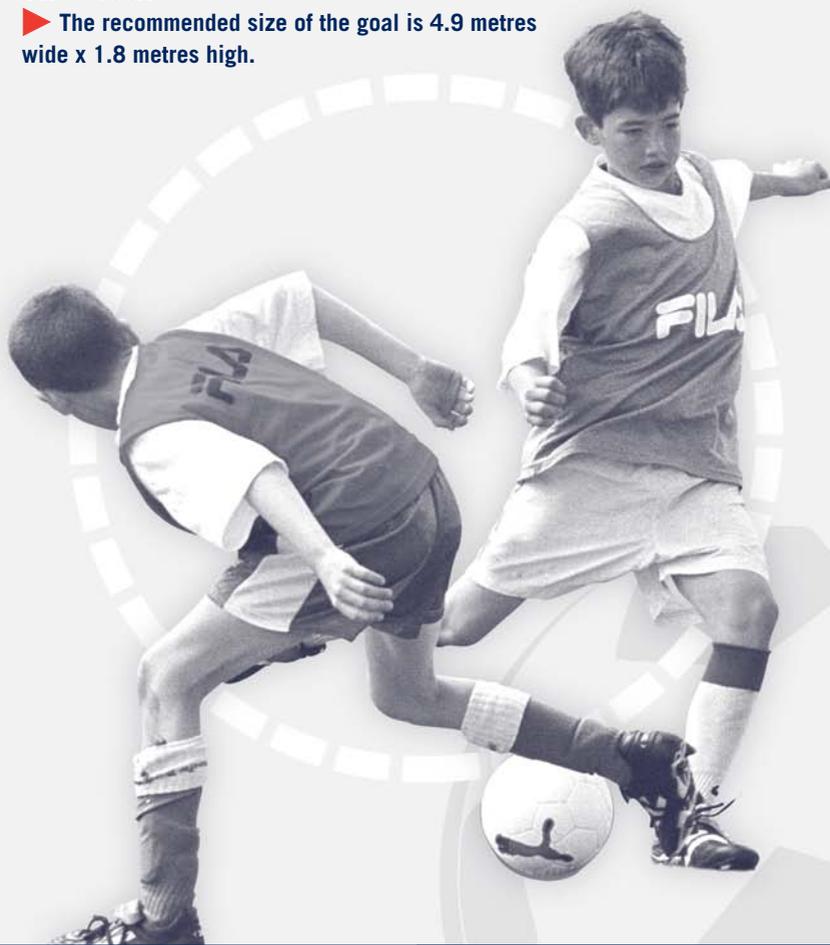
The rules for small sided games should be kept to a minimum.

Match Supervisor

▶ In an effort to educate the children with regard to Fair Play, there are no referees in small sided games. Instead, a match supervisor is appointed, whose function is to offer guidance on rules and attitudes. The supervisor, who will be responsible for all final decisions, should observe from the touchline.

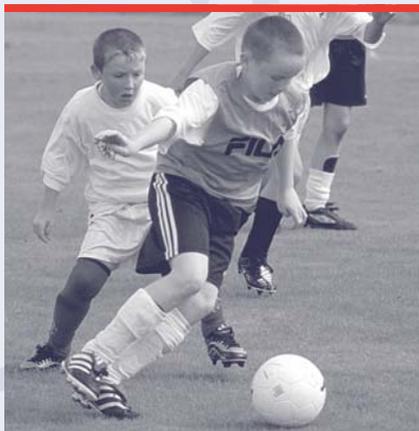
The Goal

▶ The recommended size of the goal is 4.9 metres wide x 1.8 metres high.



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RULES & GUIDELINES



SCORING

▶ In any game in which the goal difference between the teams reaches 5, eg, if the score becomes 5-0 or 7-2 etc, the activity session should be re-started from 0-0, and the remainder of the game played.

▶ The ball is re-centred every time a goal is scored in soccer sevens. The ball is centred only at the beginning of the game in four a side. Play re-starts following a goal, with a kick-in from the side of the goal, on the goal line. A goal cannot be scored from the re-start, either from the goal line, or touchline.

▶ In small sided games, goals can be scored from any area of the pitch.

SUBSTITUTIONS

▶ Players can be substituted, at any stage, with the consent of the match supervisor. Substituted players can re-enter the game at any time. The aim is to give each player equal playing time. The pool of players involved, should be a maximum of ten for soccer sevens, and, six in the case of four a side.

THE BALL

▶ The appropriate ball for children is a size 4.

FREE KICKS

▶ The opposition should be at least two metres away at free kicks. All free kicks in four a side are indirect.

RULES & GUIDELINES

OFFSIDE

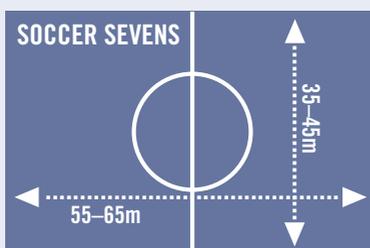
- ▶ The offside law does not apply.

KICK-INS

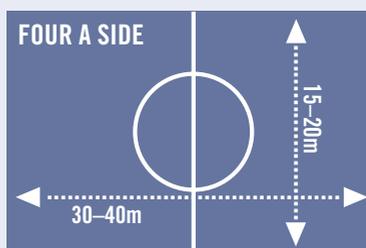
- ▶ The option exists to use kick-ins or throw-ins to re-start the game. When the kick-in is chosen, it is played from the point on the touchline where it went out of play.
- ▶ Goals cannot be scored directly from a kick-in and the opposition must be at least 2 metres from the ball.
- ▶ Goalkeepers are encouraged to restrict goal kicks to their own half.

THE FIELD OF PLAY

- ▶ The dimensions of small sided pitches are:



55-65m x 35-45m (approximately)



30-40m x 15-20m (approximately)

- ▶ In both these cases, the measurements are given approximately, because the sizes of the pitches should vary according to the age of the children.
- ▶ The aim is to provide a pitch which is large enough to allow children to be involved in the game, but not too small that skill development is being hindered.

DURATION OF THE GAME

- ▶ Games vary in time depending upon the age of the players and the number of games to be played in any session.
- ▶ Children should not be playing for more than one hour.
- ▶ Soccer sevens are generally 10-15 minutes each way. Four a side games are generally 10-15 minutes in total.

RULES & GUIDELINES

Penalty Kicks

- ▶ Soccer Sevens – penalty kicks are taken seven metres away from the goal line. The goalkeeper on the line.
- ▶ Football Fours – penalty kicks are taken 15 metres away from the goal line. No goalkeepers.

Soccer Sevens Team Structure

- ▶ Soccer Sevens. Younger children, still having a fascination for the ball, must be given the opportunity to play freely and, should not be assigned set positions in the team.
- ▶ Depending upon skill and motivation level, children should be given a gradual introduction into a three line game of:



Defence

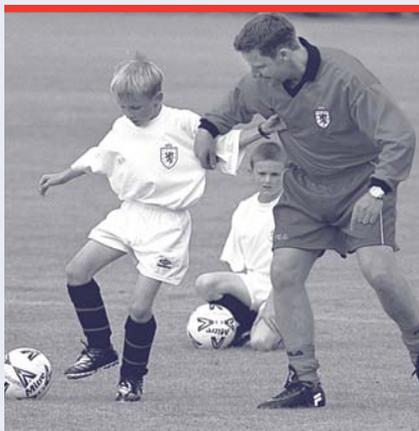


Midfield

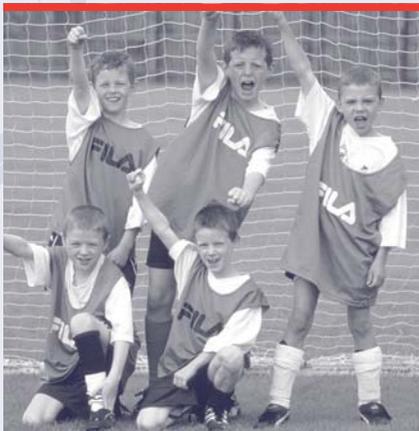


Attack

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RULES & GUIDELINES



Four-A-Side Team Structure

- ▶ As with soccer sevens, the four a side game aims to replicate the format of street football. It gives children a very clear insight into the technical and tactical requirements of the game.
- ▶ Permanently changing game situations ensure a match full of action. There are many more touches of the ball within the four a side game than both the seven and eleven a side games. Attacking and defending in close proximity to the goal creates competitive and motivating learning experiences for children. The repetitive nature of the game, allied to the children's eagerness to participate, helps to improve performance and promote success and fun.
- ▶ As the young players progress and their skill level improves, they can be introduced to the concept of the diamond formation.
- ▶ This structure helps children more readily understand concepts such as width, depth, support etc. Because of the smaller numbers and clear formation, the four a side game is an excellent vehicle for coaching young players.
- ▶ By playing the small sided game, children can be given the opportunity to play football for enjoyment, without any coaching. This phase is vital to the development of young players.

RULES & GUIDELINES

Tactics

Children should not be burdened with tactics. However, the skilled coach can promote, in a discreet fashion, the following points:

- ▶ Play with head up
- ▶ Go forward when possible, either dribbling or passing
- ▶ Shoot at every realistic opportunity;
- ▶ Be available for a pass by losing opponents with quick changes of speed and direction;
- ▶ Avoid clumsy tackles.

Effective Team Play

Effective team play requires:

- ▶ The group to avoid crowding round the ball
- ▶ Players to use the width and length of the field to create space
- ▶ Movement behind and in front of the player with the ball
- ▶ Players to switch from attack or defence the moment the ball is won or lost

Code of Conduct

Children should be encouraged to:

- ▶ Display fair play and sportsmanship at all times
- ▶ Shake hands with the opposition after the game
- ▶ Accept the supervisor's decision
- ▶ Play to the best of their ability

PREPARATION

- ▶ In recent times, the circumstances in which children experience play have changed dramatically. Rapid changes, both to our environment, and to the way children's leisure pursuits have evolved, have restricted the physical nature and the amount of unhindered play young people are exposed to.
- ▶ Consequently, children are now entering the world of football having had fewer opportunities to develop aspects of physical development such as co-ordination, balance and speed.
- ▶ The exercises on the following page have been devised to develop these abilities further. However, they must only be done for short periods of not more than ten minutes per session, always following the warm-up, and, never when the players are tired. Children are at an appropriate age for developing these abilities and therefore it is important that this process is attended to carefully.



EXERCISES

Exercise 1

▶ Straight running between evenly spaced canes. Then repeated with high knee raising.



Exercise 2

▶ Side stepping through the canes. Sprint to finish.



Exercise 3

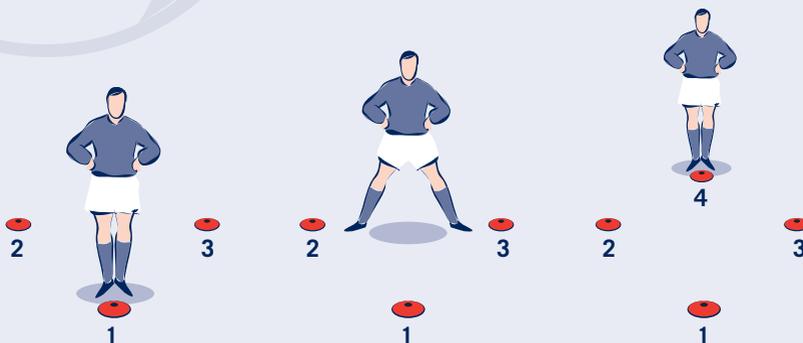
▶ Colour coded canes. Run forward over blue, backwards over red.



EXERCISES

Exercise 4

▶ Four markers in a diamond shape. Stand with feet together at 1., then jump backward, bringing feet out at markers 2 and 3. Jump back, bringing feet together at 4. Repeat sequence, using all of the markers, in turn, as the starting marker.



Exercise 5

▶ Starting at the centre, two footed jumps in between the markers as shown. Repeat in the opposite direction.



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These games are the preferred method of training by professional players and are the most appropriate way of acquiring skills and developing young players.

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