

FA Mini Soccer Handbook

Updated May 2008

The Best Introduction to the world's greatest game

September 1999 saw the implementation of Mini-Soccer for all children under 10 years of age.

As a result of nearly three years consultation and co-operation between all bodies involved with children's football, boys and girls are now introduced to the game on smaller pitches with scaled down goalposts and fewer players.

The Football Association deems Mini-Soccer the most appropriate and fun introduction to football by providing quality experiences for all young players.

It allows greater involvement in the game, with more touches, dribbles and passes.

Mini-Soccer: Meeting the needs of children

“The children are more important than the activities in which they are engaged. The game is not the thing, the child is.” (Physical Education for ages 5-16 - Department of Education and Science, August 1991).

The main theme throughout Mini-Soccer is to meet the needs of children. 11-a-side association football does not meet these needs. Children need a modified game that fits their needs; too often children are modified to meet the requirements of a game. Mini-Soccer modifies association football without losing the essence of the game.

Mini-Soccer is the appropriate introduction to football. All available research and observation shows that children will have more fun and learn more playing a game with smaller teams and modified rules. Mini-Soccer is, therefore, 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 soccer they need to:

- Feel success
- Take an active part in the game
- Learn to play as a team
- Understand the Laws
- Develop soccer skills
- Be able to take part whatever their ability
- Develop their fitness

Mini-Soccer sets out to meet those needs. It allows children to succeed and take part in something that is still recognisably football.

Mini-Soccer recognises the fact that younger children perform better in smaller teams with simple Laws.

Mini-Soccer, however, is more than another version of five-or six-a-side football for the following reasons:

1. It recognises that children do not perform as adults and therefore its Laws, researched and piloted by The Football Association, meet the needs of children.
2. It has all the features of 'real' football to children.
3. It doesn't set unrealistic expectations. Many adults do not know what can be expected of children and so emphasise the result at the expense of performance. Mini-Soccer helps by defining the targets for children at different ages.
4. It sets a standard for behaviour on and off the pitch.
5. Mini-Soccer is for all children regardless of their ability. It is intended for girls and boys, and young footballers with disabilities and learning difficulties.

In an age when so much of children's leisure time is as organised as their study, Mini-Soccer offers something special: a game that children can organise themselves! With relatively little instruction, children can play and enjoy a game which is suitable for a wide ability range and gives everyone a chance to take part.

If you find this hard to believe, just set up a game with some children and WATCH!

Guidance for the Laws of Mini-Soccer

The Laws have been piloted and aim to be simple and as near to 'real' football as possible. The games require only a 'game-leader' who is urged to be as flexible as possible with the youngest children.

The children will need the Laws explained to them as the game proceeds (e.g. handball, in/out of play).

It will also be necessary to demonstrate in certain instances how to re-start the game (e.g. throw-ins).

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 with 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.

Make sure the players play by the Laws. The majority of children at these ages will not knowingly infringe the Laws of the game. Finally, work with other adults, not against them, and by so doing reinforce positive attitudes among the children.

Interference from the touch line

Whilst the fun and friendly atmosphere created by Mini-Soccer should keep such instances to a minimum, there may be situations where comments and abuse from adults, parents and managers is made from the touch line.

This could be directed at the referee, but also at the players.

What can be done?

Stay calm; do not get into disagreement; report the matter to relevant club or league officials; set a positive responsible example.

Remember The FA's **RESPECT** campaign.

Referees – Mini-Soccer game leaders

The referee has an important role to play in Mini-Soccer. Carrying out their duties without favour, they should create a playing environment which is fun for all those taking part. The referee should encourage fair play, fun, respect for others, development of skills and team work, and understanding of the Laws of the game.

The Laws of the game should be a guide for the referee in Mini-Soccer with the spirit of the Laws being more important than the letters of the law. Appreciation of the needs of the child is essential.

9v9

During the 2002/03 season a number of leagues approached The FA regarding the possibility of moving to 9v9 at under 11.

The FA organised a number of Regional Mini-Soccer Consultation Meetings to review Mini-Soccer and to discuss ideas for the future development of the game.

The consultation also led to the introduction, within FA rules, for the 9v9 game for children who have reached the age of 10 on 31st August.

The 9v9 option is available from U11-U14.

When 9v9 is played The FA recommends the following:

Follow 11v11 laws of the game, except:

- Size of pitch: use junior size pitch 80m x 50m and junior goals 16' x 7'. It has been agreed by The FA that for season 2008/09, the use of any sized goals will be permissible for the 9v9 game, whilst a transitional period continues to exist in this format of the game. However, there is recognition that the 16' x 7' goals are most suitable during matches and as such clubs should be encouraged to make the most of the Football Foundation's funding to gain this size of goal. From season 2009/10, only goals sized 16' x 7' will be permissible.
- Substitutes: Maximum squad of 18 with repeat substitutions allowed
- Playing Time: Maximum 35mins each way
- Anything not covered above, FA standard code of rules for youth leagues apply

The FA hopes that, where facilities allow leagues will make use of the 9v9 option to assist the players' development.

**The Football Association Laws for Mini-Soccer
For Players (Both Boys and Girls over the age of 6 and Under 10)
[Updated by The FA Council on 15th May 2008]**

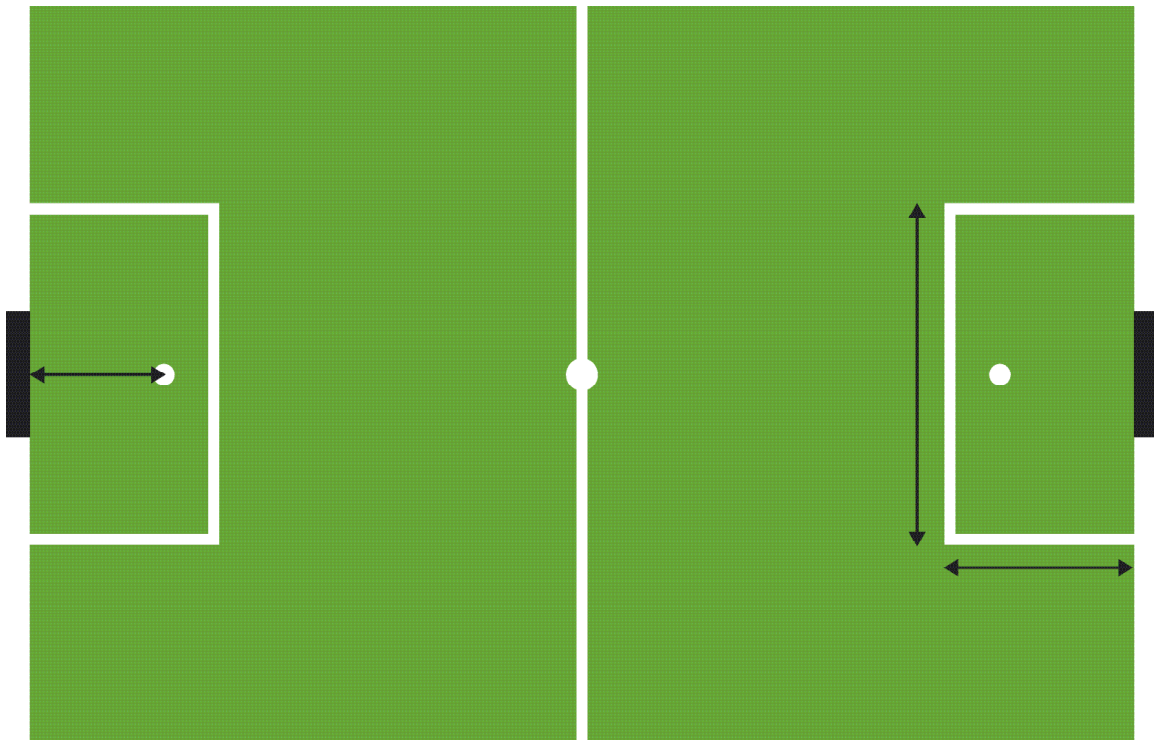
Please note: Where Leagues operate Under 11 Mini-Soccer events, they must follow these Laws.

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. To play in a KO Cup game or a game where points are awarded, or results collected, a player must have achieved the age of 8 on or before 31st August.

Except where other provision, is 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 Football Association.

**Law 1
Playing Area**



WARNING

Please ensure that The FA Goalpost safety guidelines are observed.

Size of Pitch

	Under 10s/9s		Under 8s/7s	
	Metres	Yards	Metres	Yards
Width	Min 27.45	Min 30	Min 18.30	Min 20
	Max 36.60	Max 40	Max 27.45	Max 30
Length	Min 45.75	Min 50	Min 27.45	Min 30
	Max 54.90	Max 60	Max 45.75	Max 50

Penalty Area

Length 9.15m – 10 yards; Width 16.47m – 18 yards

Penalty Mark

The penalty mark is 7.32m (8 yards) from the goal line opposite the centre of the goal.

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.

Goal Size

The distance between the posts is 3.6m (12ft) and the distance between the lower edge of the cross bar and the ground is 1.88m (6ft).

Law 2

The Ball

The ball should be size 4 for U9/U10.

Size 3 for Under 8's.

It should be safe and made of leather or another suitable material.

Law 3

Number of Players

Number Per Team (including goalkeeper)	
Under 10s/9s	6v6 or 7v7
Under 8s/7s	4v4, 5v5, 6v6 or 7v7

Where the appropriate facilities are available, The FA would encourage leagues and competitions to use the smaller number of players at the youngest age group.

Players must play with and against players only from their own age range, as per Football Association and Competition rules.

Players should not be allowed to begin to play until the season of their 7th birthday.

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 or game leader. Entry into the field of play will only be allowed during a stoppage in play. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player.

Law 4

Playing Equipment

Players must wear shin guards and goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing strip. Shin guards must be covered entirely by stockings.

Law 5

Referees

The Authority of the Referee

Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the game in connection with the match to which they have been appointed.

Powers and Duties

The Referee:

- Enforces the Laws of the game
- Controls the match in co-operation with the assistant referees/time keeper
- Ensures that the ball meets the requirements of Law 2
- Ensures that the players' equipment meets the requirements of Law 4
- Stops, suspends or terminates the match at their discretion for any infringements of the Laws
- Stops, suspends or terminates the match because of outside interference of any kind
- Stops the match if, in their opinion, a player is seriously injured and ensures that they are removed from the field of play
- Ensures that any player bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play
- Allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage
- Penalises the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time

Referees

- Take disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and/or sending-off offences
- Take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at their discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds

- Ensure that no unauthorised persons enter the field of play
- Restart matches if they have been stopped

Decisions of the Referee

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final.

The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his/her discretion provided that play has not restarted.

Law 6

Timekeeper/Scorer/Assistant Referee

Duties

A person may be nominated to assist the referee to:

- Record goals scored
- Act as timekeeper and signify to the referee by an agreed signal when the time of each half has expired
- Suspend time on an instruction from the referee for all stoppages and add that time to the end of each half
- Supervise the use of rolling substitutes
- Carry out any other duties as prescribed by the referee

If an independent timekeeper/scorer is not nominated, these duties are the responsibility of the referee.

Law 7

Duration of the Game

In any one day, no player shall play more than the stipulated period given below:

- Under 7 & Under 8's-40Minutes
- Under 9 & Under 10's- 60 Minutes

Each league/competition will determine its own playing time within the maximum time permitted. The half time interval must not exceed 5 minutes.

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 4.5m (5 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.

Law 9

Ball In and Out of Play

Ball Out of Play

The ball is out of play when:

- It has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air
- Play has been stopped by the referee

Ball In Play

The ball is in play at all other times, including when:

- It rebounds from a goal or post, crossbar or corner flag post and remains in the field of play
- It rebounds from either the referee or an assistant referee when they are on the field of play

Law 10

Method of Scoring

Goal Scored

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the Laws of the game has been committed previously by the team scoring the goal.

Winning Team

The team scoring the greater number of goals during a match is the winner. If both teams score an equal number of goals, or if no goals are scored, the match is drawn.

Competition Rules

For matches ending in a draw, competition rules may state provisions involving extra time, or other procedures approved by the International FA Board to determine the winner of a match.

Please note this must be included within the maximum participation time.

Law 11

Offside

There is no offside.

Law 12

Fouls and Misconduct

In Mini-Soccer all free kicks are direct.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- Kicks or attempts to kick an opponent
- Trips or attempts to trip an opponent
- Jumps at an opponent
- Charges an opponent
- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences:

- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area)
- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of an opponent
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands
- Commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if any of the above offences is committed by a player inside his/her own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the goalkeeper:

- Takes more than 6 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 team mate

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.

Cautionable Offences

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he/she commits any of the following seven offences:

- Is guilty of unsporting behaviour
- Shows dissent by word or action
- Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game
- Delays the restart of play
- Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick or free kick
- Enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission
- Deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission

Sending Off Offences

A player is sent off and shown the red card if he/she commits any of the following seven offences:

- Is guilty of serious foul play
- Is guilty of violent conduct
- Spits at an opponent or any other person
- Denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity, by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area)
- Denies an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or penalty kick
- Uses offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
- Receives a second caution in the same match

Law 13

Free Kicks

For all free kicks opponents must be 4.5m (5 yards) from the ball.

Law 14

Penalty Kicks

A penalty kick is awarded for offences, as described in Law 12.

Position of the Ball and the Players

All players except the defending goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and at least 4.5m (5 yards) from the penalty mark.

The ball must be kicked forward.

Infringement/Sanctions

If a player or players commit an offence at the taking of a penalty kick his/her team shall not be allowed to gain an advantage (i.e. the kick is retaken or the goal is disallowed depending on which team offended).

If a player of both the defending and the attacking teams offend, the kick shall be retaken.

Law 15

Throw-in

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

A throw-in is awarded:

- When the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air
- From the point where it crossed the touch line
- To the opponents of the player who last touched the ball

Procedure

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- Faces the field of play
- Has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line

A throw-in:

- Uses both hands
- Delivers the ball from behind and over the player's head
- The throw-in is awarded to the opposing team if any of these requirements are not carried out

The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he/she does, a free kick will be awarded against them. The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play.

Law 16

Goal Kick

Procedure

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

Opponents must remain outside the penalty area and at least 4.5m (5 yards) from where the kick is taken until the ball is in play.

Law 17

Corner Kicks

The opposing players must remain at least 4.5m (5yards) 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.

The Responsible Football Coach/Manager

Code of Conduct for Football

1. Coaches/Managers must respect the rights, dignity and worth of each and every person and treat each equally within the context of the sport.
2. Coaches/Managers must place the wellbeing and safety of each player above all other considerations, including the development of performance.
3. Coaches/Managers must adhere to all guidelines laid down within the Constitution and the Rules of The Football Association.
4. Coaches/Managers must develop an appropriate working relationship with each player based on mutual trust and respect.
5. Coaches/Managers must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.
6. Coaches/Managers must encourage and guide players to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance.
7. Coaches/Managers must ensure that the activities they direct or advocate is appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players.

8. Coaches/Managers should, at the outset, clarify with the player (and where appropriate, their parents) exactly what is expected of them and also what they are entitled to expect from their coach.

9. Coaches/Managers must co-operate fully with other specialists (e.g. other coaches, officials, sports scientists, doctors, physiotherapists) in the best interests of the player.

10. Coaches/Managers must always promote the appropriate Code of Conduct and positive aspects of the sport (e.g. fair play) to players, parents and spectators alike. Never condone violations of the Laws of the game, behaviour contrary to the spirit of the Laws of the game or relevant rule and regulations or the use of the prohibited substances or techniques.

11. Coaches/Managers must consistently display high standards of behaviour and experience and be a role model for players, parents and spectators.

Goalpost Safety

Remember to use all equipment, not just goalposts, safely at all times

It has been agreed by The FA that for season 2008/09, the use of any sized goals will be permissible for the 9v9 game, whilst a transitional period continues to exist in this format of the game. However, there is recognition that the 16' x 7' goals are most suitable during matches and as such clubs should be encouraged to make the most of the Football Foundation's funding to gain this size of goal. From season 2009/10, only goals sized 16' x 7' will be permissible.

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. Too many 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.
2. Portable goalposts must be secured as per the manufacturers' instructions.
3. Under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb on, swing or play with the structure of the goalposts.
4. Particular attention should be drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may overturn.

5. Regular inspections of goalposts must be carried out to check that they are properly maintained.
6. Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be dismantled and removed to a place of secure storage.
7. Nets should only be secured by 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 that cannot be replaced.
8. Goalposts which are “home made” or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used. These have been the cause of a number of deaths and injuries.
9. There is no BS/CEN or PAS standard for wooden goals and it is unlikely that wooden goals will pass a load or stability test. The FA recommends that wooden goals should be replaced when necessary with compliant goalposts.

For reference, you should note that The FA and BSI developed a standard for future purchases of mini-soccer goalposts – BS8462 (2005). Copies of this standard are available from BSI.

The FA together with representatives from the industry, sports governing bodies and Government have prepared guidelines for pitch users and pitch providers together with technical parameters for goalpost manufacturers. It is anticipated that details of these will feature on the FA’s website - www.TheFA.com