



# THE FA GUIDE TO PITCH AND GOALPOST SAFETY

# INTRODUCTION

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The FA receives many enquiries regarding pitch and goalpost sizes that are suitable for specific age groups.

This document explains the various sizes of goalposts recommended and pitch markings for the following forms of the game:

- ⚽ Mini Soccer 5v5 and 7v7
- ⚽ 9v9 Football
- ⚽ Youth Football 11v11
- ⚽ Adult Football 11v11
- ⚽ Football pyramid Steps 1 - 7



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# GRASS PITCH IMPROVEMENT

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The FA has invested a significant amount of funding over the last few years supporting the improvement of grass pitches.

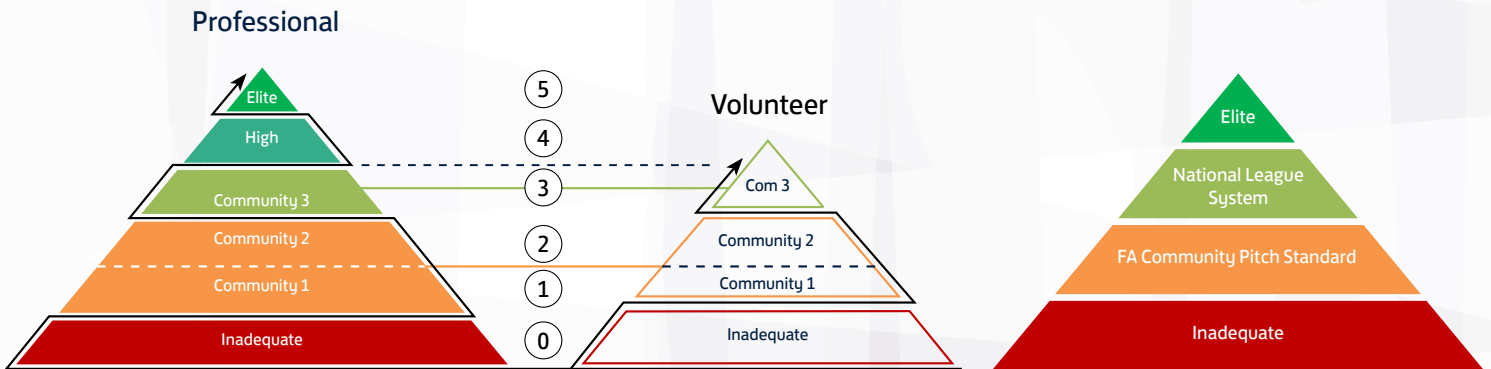
This investment is due to grow further with new and improved objectives that will be delivered over the next 10 years. The FA in partnership with The Premier League, DCMS via Sport England and funding distributed by the Football Foundation want to improve 20,000 grass pitches. We will be introducing a community grass pitch standard that can be implemented by volunteers, will improve pitch quality, provide greater player satisfaction, increase capacity for more games to be played and reduce the number of games cancelled.

The consistent feedback we receive from clubs, players, managers and referees via the FA Grassroots Survey is that grass pitches are of poor quality and affects the game and player retention. The current Pitch Improvement Programme has identified that the majority of pitches inspected (85%) were compacted and by introducing key elements to current maintenance practices we can make a significant difference without adding too much cost.

If you want feedback on how to improve your pitch and to understand what funding, support and guidance is available contact your County FA.

## FA grass pitch standard

The introduction of the FA grass pitch standard will ensure consistency in quality and that any targets are attainable and volunteer proof. We intend to provide information on grass pitch maintenance with guidance on what to do and when to do it. This will be supported via a free to access Groundskeeping Hive – see page 8.



The standard will introduce some key measurements – grass height, root depth, grass coverage, soil composition and percentage of undesirable grasses/weeds. Grounds keepers will be able to upload a free to use digital assessment tool with an easy to follow self-assessment process. The information provided will be sent to a central hub so practical advice can be given and the pitch advisors will be able to monitor progress via further digital submissions. It is envisaged that eventually a link will be provided to a list of contractors, machinery suppliers and material suppliers and will also inform a Football Foundation grant application.



## Guidelines for annual maintenance

To maintain a pitch the timing is essential, even if you know what to do, this knowledge will be useless if the timing is wrong. You need to do each task:

- ⚽ In the right sequence
- ⚽ At the right time
- ⚽ In the right weather conditions
- ⚽ With a full understanding of the effect you want to achieve.

The annual maintenance of football pitches is broken into seasons and it will be dependent on other uses of the surface and weather conditions.

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There is a month by month guide to grounds maintenance contained in the Grounds keeping Hive.





# PITCH DIMENSIONS

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Pitches in the past have been marked out using the maximum and minimum pitches sizes as outlined in the laws of the game.

These sizes vary tremendously, are often adapted to fit the space available and have been open to local interpretation. The FA has consulted widely and has been encouraged to produce national pitch sizes for Mini Soccer, 9v9, Youth football and Adult football.

The FA recommended pitch sizes

Age grouping	Type	Recommended size without runoff (safety area around pitch)		Recommended size including runoff (safety area around pitch)		Recommended size of goalposts	
		Length x width (metres)	Length x width (metres)	Length x width (metres)	Length x width (metres)	Height x width (metres)	Height x width (metres)
Mini Soccer U7/U8	5v5	37	27	43	33	1.83 (6')	3.66 (12')
Mini Soccer U9/U10	7v7	55	37	61	43	1.83 (6')	3.66 (12')
Youth U11/U12	9v9	73	46	79	52	2.13 (7')	4.88 (16')
Youth U13/U14	11v11	82	50	88	56	2.13 (7')	6.40 (21')*
Youth U15/U16	11v11	91	55	97	61	2.44 (8')	7.32 (24')
Youth U17/U18	11v11	100	64	106	70	2.44 (8')	7.32 (24')
Over 18 (senior ages)	11v11	100	64	106	70	2.44 (8')	7.32 (24')

\*If a pitch is to be provided for U13/14 it is recommended that 7 x 21 goalposts are provided. However, it should be noted that 8 x 24 would also be acceptable as not all sites will be able to provide specifically for this age group.

## General considerations

**1**

The run-off area beyond the pitch should be free of any obstacle (including dugouts and floodlight columns) to ensure players and officials do not injure themselves by running into any fixed object. The run-offs should be surfaced with exactly the same surface as the playing area. Tarmac and concrete are not allowed but 3G Football Turf is allowed for match officials run-offs but must be a balls width from the outer edge of the touchline or goal line.

**2**

Clubs participating in the National League System should refer to The FA National Ground Grading Documents (Grade A-G) as there is a minimum of 1.83m (2 yards) required. However it should be noted that a run off of three metres or more is desirable. All new pitches should have a minimum of four metres run off to accommodate any future changes in the National Ground Grading Documents.

**3**

Clubs participating in the National League System should refer to The FA National Ground Grading Documents (Grade A-G) to ascertain the size of dugouts and amount of hard standing required for the level they play at.

**4**

Where pitches are located alongside each other, a minimum of six metres run off should exist. An additional four metres might be required to accommodate spectator areas.

**5**

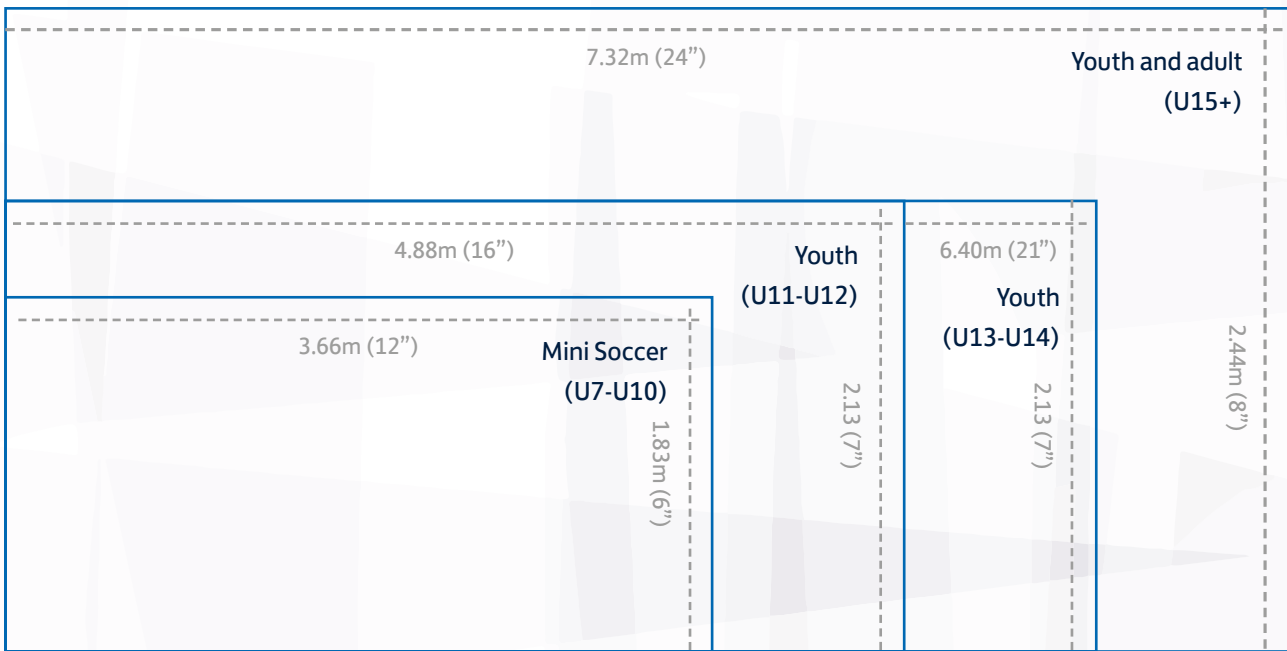
It is recognised that County Football Associations and Leagues may have defined their own rules for their own competitions which are within the maximum and minimum sizes as set out in the Laws of the Game. However, the above pitch sizes should be adopted where possible.

For information around alternative pitch sizes or imperial conversion, please contact your County FA.

# GOALPOST DIMENSIONS



**The FA goalpost sizes**



All goal posts must meet the latest versions of **BSEN748:2004**, **BS8461:2005+A1:2009** and **BS8462:2005+A2:2012** as appropriate.

**Goalpost storage**

Goals not in use should be properly stored.

Stored goals should never be left accessible, upright or unstable. Socketed and folded free-standing goals should not be left leaning or unsecured, rather they should be locked securely and safely; if this is not possible, they should be left lying flat on the ground so they cannot fall over.

**REMOVE NETS AFTER USE**

If goals are left in position nets should be removed to avoid unauthorised use or accidents to young children or wildlife.

# GOALPOST SAFETY

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## Mobile / free - standing goalposts

Free-standing goals need to be appropriately stabilised in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

Stabilisation of goalposts can be significantly affected by poor installation techniques, as well as by poor ground conditions. Consequently, the most reliable methods of stabilising free-standing goals is by attaching the back bar to permanent fixing points via eyebolts and stainless-steel loops set in concrete blocks, suitable attachment points on a permanent fence or wall, or using weights attached to the goal's back bar either in the correct positions as specified by the manufacturer, or integral to the goal. In all circumstances any equipment used to stabilise goals should be kept away from the immediate playing area to protect players and officials.

Due to uncertainty in types of ground and/or ground conditions, the use of pins, pegs, U-staples or screw in anchors on natural turf pitches is not generally recommended. However, if there is evidence that they are effective under the worst predictable ground conditions on the site in question, then they may be considered. Please refer to the goalpost manufacturer guidelines for the most appropriate form of stabilisation method.

### Temporary posts

Slalom poles, corner flags and plastic cones are frequently used to mark goals for training. Clubs and coaches should look at the risks inherent when using any equipment and should follow manufacturers guidelines. All equipment should be maintained appropriately and there should be an emergency action plan in place so that emergency care can reach injured players in a rapid response time. Children should be supervised at all times.



*U peg anchor*



*Handbag weight*



*Ground screw anchor*

## Selecting the right type of goal

### “Football club admits failures after goalpost crushes boy”

BBC Wales July 2014

When selecting portable goals, those responsible for the management of a sports facility should consider the precise types of activity that may take place. A risk assessment is recommended to be undertaken in order to determine whether the chances of an injury occurring are likely to be higher due to a goal falling on to a person when it is being moved or due to the goal tipping or collapsing when it is being misused.

Goals, especially larger sized versions, can be either free standing and therefore easily moved (although it is important to make proper provision for their storage when not in use) or socketed when semi-permanent installation is required.

Socketed goals are normally used on sports fields where the goal is intended to be erected for a long period of time (often the full season) or where trained ground staff with suitable equipment are responsible for the erection, dismantling and movement of the goal, meaning the risk of injury from moving it is low.

Portable goals are designed to allow frequent movement. They are often used on synthetic turf pitches and natural grass training pitches and in indoor sports halls. As the goals are not socketed, they require some other form of restraining mechanism to prevent them from tipping. It is essential that portable goals are always anchored in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. Traditionally, larger goals have been designed to be robust constructions that can withstand the types of misuse that might occur on unsupervised sites (such as people swinging on the crossbar, etc.). To withstand such misuse the goals are normally quite heavy (a full-sized football goal typically weighs over 70 kg).

### “Schoolboy found with bones sticking out of mouth and neck after goalpost crush”

Scottish Metro Feb 2015

Concerns have been expressed that there is actually a greater risk of injury occurring when a portable goal is being moved or when it has not been correctly anchored and it tips and falls on to someone. Recognizing that on secure and well managed sites the chances of misuse are low, lighter-weight goals are also now available. These comply with the relevant laws of the game for the sport being played, but they are not normally as robust as heavier versions of the same-sized goal, meaning they may have a shorter life expectancy.

Consideration also needs to be given to the potential for a lighter-weight goal to be damaged sooner due to its less robust construction, meaning that it will require more frequent maintenance inspections and possible replacement.

If a potential purchaser is unsure which type of goal is most appropriate for their facility, they are advised to seek guidance from the FA.

### “A tragic fatality on a sports pitch has implications for health and safety enforces”

Environmental News

Remember to use goal posts safely at all times.



## Goalpost safety guidelines

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 sadly even 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.

Under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb on, swing or play with the structure of the goalposts.

**2** 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.

**3** Goalposts which are “homemade” or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used under any circumstances as they potentially pose a serious safety risk. There is no BS/CEN standard for wooden goals.

**4** 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 748:2013+A1:2018](#) and [BS EN 16579:2018](#). 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](http://www.bsigroup.com)

Funding for goalposts and 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](http://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](http://www.TheFA.com/my-football)

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REMEMBER TO USE GOALPOSTS SAFELY AT ALL TIMES



# RESPECT



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The FA RESPECT Designated Spectators' Areas were introduced in 2008 as a response to concern at some touchline spectator behaviour – particularly in youth football.

The area can be marked using an additional painted line, the use of cones or a roped-off area. The best results have come when use has been made of a temporary spectators' barrier system. The areas draw the line which spectators should not cross. It deters them from standing on the touchline or infringing onto the pitch and creates a clearer distinction between those who are there to spectate and those with a responsibility to coach and manage. As a consequence, the experience of match officials and players has improved.

The recommended arrangement is to mark out a Designated Spectators' Area on the opposite side of the pitch to club officials (manager/coaches etc) for spectators to stand behind. This allows the manager/coaches of both teams to stand on the other side of the pitch, meaning players can better distinguish the advice from their team officials.

The Designated Spectators' Area should ideally start three metres from the touchline. The area should run the full length of the pitch. Ideally no spectators should be watching from behind the goal as this is not a designated spectator area. It is recognised however that the alignment of some public pitches does not allow for this set up in which case other appropriate arrangements should be made to best meet the guidance issued in this document.

An alternative form of marking a Designated Spectators' Area can be used, but you must ensure this is safe for both the spectators, the players and match officials. The FA strongly recommends you obtain formal agreement from the facility/pitch provider about which method of marking is most suitable for the pitch, before beginning any work or buying any new equipment. The safety of the players, officials and spectators is paramount.

Grants are available via the Football Foundation to purchase touchline barriers.

For further guidance, visit [www.footballfoundation.org.uk](http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk)

# APPENDIX 1: LINE MARKING

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## Various practices have been used in the past for the application of white lines to football pitches.

The objectives of such practices has been to both reduce labour and materials costs whilst endeavouring to keep the lines visible for a greater length of time. Some of these practices have lead to injury and subsequent court action being taken against facility providers. You are therefore advised to study the following notes carefully.

### Legislation

The main governing factors for marking out white lines are the same as that for other routine tasks in the workplace.

#### 1. Duty of care

Under the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 every employer has a duty of care to ensure the workplace is safe for their employees, contractors, visitors, players, and spectators.

#### 2. The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)

The Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH) including amendments (e.g. 2004) Regulations to prevent control and prevent exposure to users of any hazardous substances.

#### 3. Risk Assessment

The management of Health and Safety at work regulations 1999. This extends duties within HSWA 1974 and explicitly requires risk assessments to be undertaken. You will need to identify hazards; decide who might be harmed and how; evaluate the risks and decide on precautions; record your significant findings; finally review your assessment and update if necessary.

If all three of the above are addressed satisfactorily this will automatically govern what to use for white line marking, ensure best practice and, above all, safety. It is the duty of all facility providers to ensure that all the regulations are adhered to, as they are ultimately responsible. If line marking is carried out by contractors then a specification should be drawn up to include all the safeguards outlined in these guidance notes. This could also extend to including detailed specifications of all products to be used.

## Suitable line marking compounds

### Permanent paints

Based on pigmented viscous liquid. These “paints” can be applied either in a diluted form or neat.

### Powders

There are various non-toxic whiting powders available which are based on ground natural calcium carbonate and can be used wet or dry. They are safe to use provided COSHH principles are applied. Under COSHH the user would be required to wear gloves and eye protection and to wash off any contact with the skin as a precautionary measure. Most powders are supplied in a fine form.

## Use of other substances to reinforce line marking

Only substances which have been approved for inclusion or mixture with line marking material can be used. It is illegal to use any unapproved substance.

A COSHH risk assessment must be carried out prior to any use of a line marking material with added substance.

All users must have a certificate of competence in the Safe Use of Pesticides in accordance with The Plant Protection Products (sustainable use) Regulations 2012.

## Machines available to mark white lines

Marking machines fall into the following categories:

### 1. Dry line markers

As the name implies, these are for applying dry powder compounds.

### 2. Pressure pump markers

A wheel driven pump forces marking fluid through a jet or spout directly onto the turf surface. Laser guided line markers are capable of marking across natural or artificial turf. They produce a perfectly straight line every time, providing consistent quality allowing sports pitches to be marked in half the time of conventional methods.

### 3. Electric pump markers

These are battery driven to constantly maintain the required pressure and direct the liquid onto the turf surface.

### 4. Belt feed markers

These have a moving belt system which conveys a continual supply of liquid onto the turf surface by contact.

### 5. Wheel transfer markers

These convey the liquid via rotating wheel onto a tray and then via a sponge wheel directly onto the turf surface.





## Multi-line marking on single pitches

Where pitches are over marked the lines should be clearly distinguishable. The FA recommends using blue for the 9v9 pitch.






The FA recommends using different colours for different size pitches so that they can be easily distinguished. Examples of how pitches can be over marked are below.

	White: Main pitch markings
	Red: Training lines and Mini Soccer U7 and U8 (5v5) - 37 x 27m
	Yellow: Mini Soccer U9 and U10 (7v7) - 55 x 37m
	Blue: U11 and U12 (9v9) - 73 x 46m

### Use of coned areas to divide pitches

Sometimes it is difficult to permanently mark out smaller pitches because of the wide range of uses they have. Suitable cones can be used to mark out a pitch in this instance. It is acceptable to mark natural grass pitches for Mini Soccer and 9v9 by using flat cones.

## Hints and tips

-  Use flat markers to highlight the goal area to help the goalkeepers.
-  Move the portable goals to the right place and secure using the manufacturer's instructions.
-  Explore using a 3G Football Turf pitch or commercial provider as a venue.
-  Place the RESPECT barrier for the parents to stand behind.
-  Mark out a small technical area near the halfway line for the coaches and subs to stand within.

# APPENDIX 2: PITCH LAYOUTS AND GOALPOST DIMENSION

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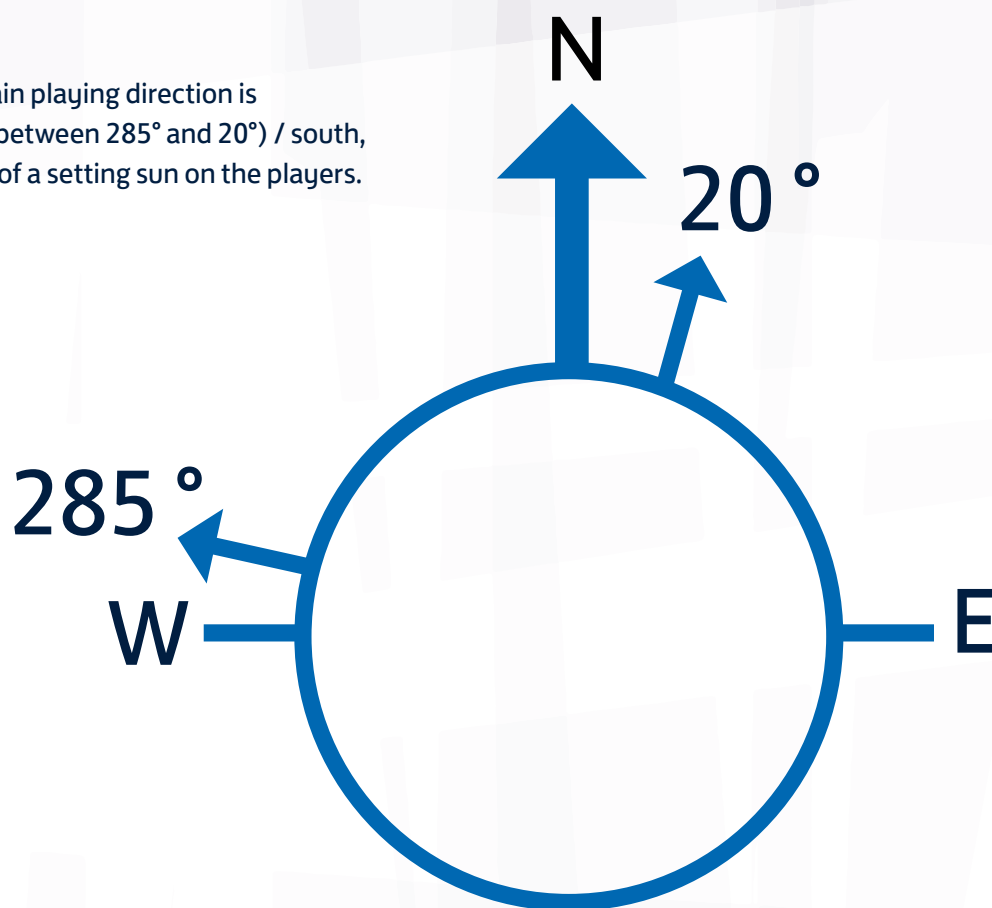


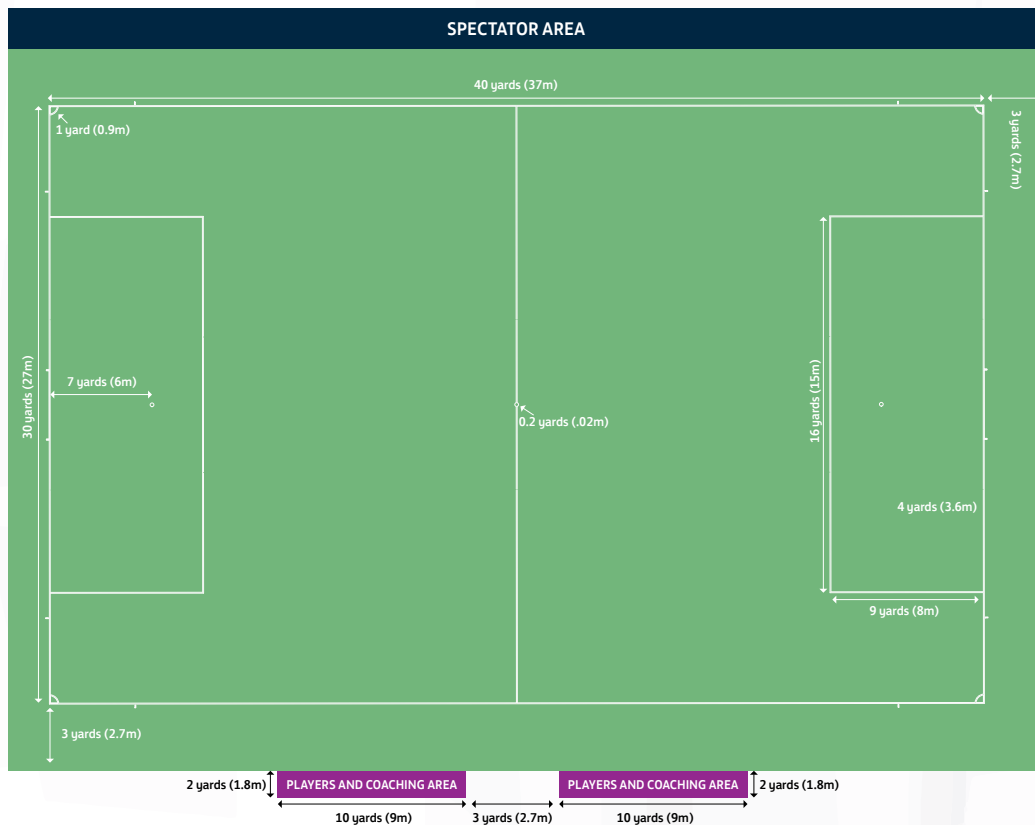
The following pages highlight the pitch layouts for all forms of the game, along with internal pitch markings and goal post sizes.

The spectator area can be marked out by using either a single white line or FA RESPECT logo barriers. The technical area is for use by managers and coaches and should ideally be marked out using either white line marking or cones.

### Pitch orientation

The recommended main playing direction is approximately north (between  $285^{\circ}$  and  $20^{\circ}$ ) / south, to minimise the effect of a setting sun on the players.





**Mini Soccer  
U7 and U8 (5v5)**

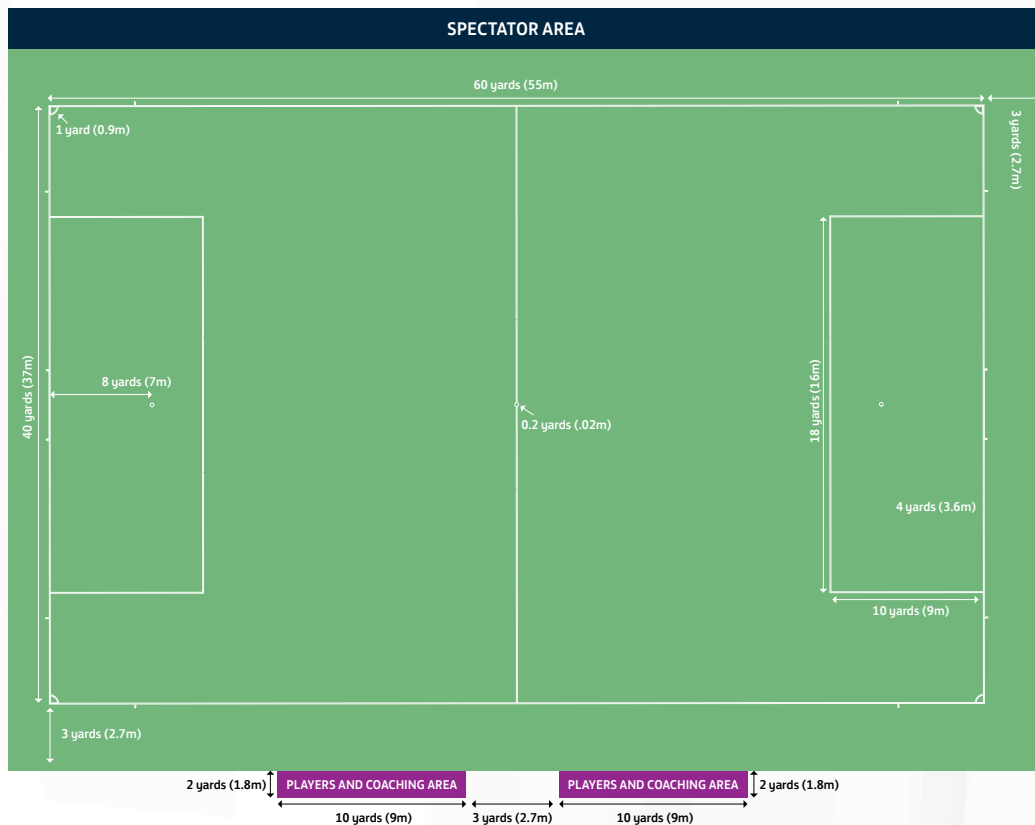
Recommended pitch size:  
40 x 30 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
6 x 12 feet

Note: The halfway line is also used as the retreat line when restarting play with a goal kick

**Metric**

- Length 37M
- Width 27M
- Box 15M x 8M
- Penalty Spot 6M
- Centre .02M



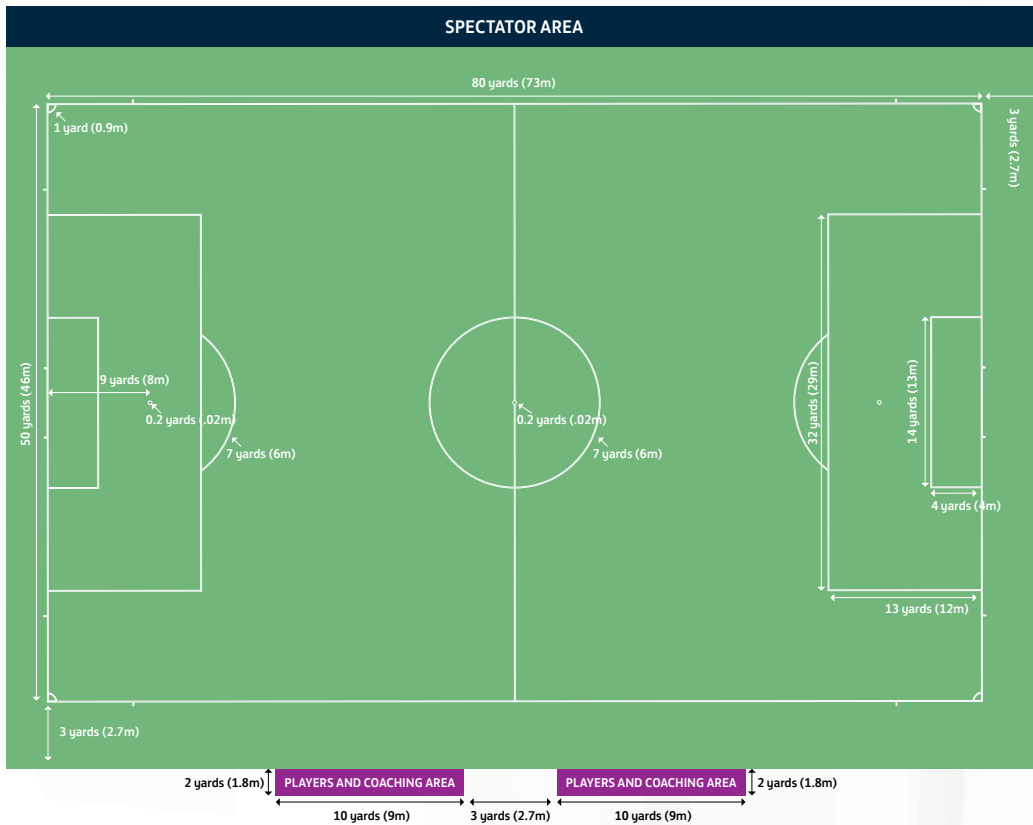
**Mini Soccer  
U9 and U10 (7v7)**

Recommended pitch size:  
60 x 40 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
6 x 12 feet

**Metric**

Length 55M  
Width 37M  
Box 16M x 9M  
Penalty Spot 7M  
Centre .02M



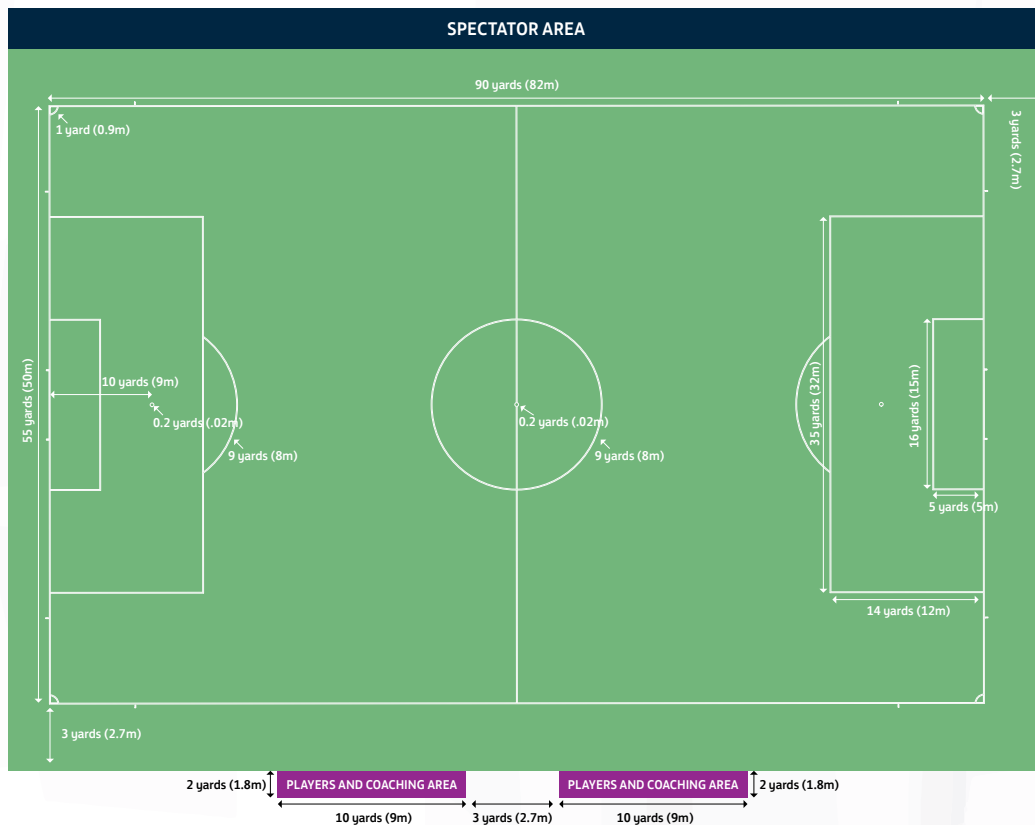
**U11 and U12 (9V9)**

Recommended pitch size:  
80 x 50 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
7 x 16 feet

**Metric**

- Length 73M
- Width 46M
- Box 29M x 12M
- 13M x 4M
- D 6M
- Penalty Spot 8M
- Centre Circle 6M
- Penalty Spot and Centre spot - .02M



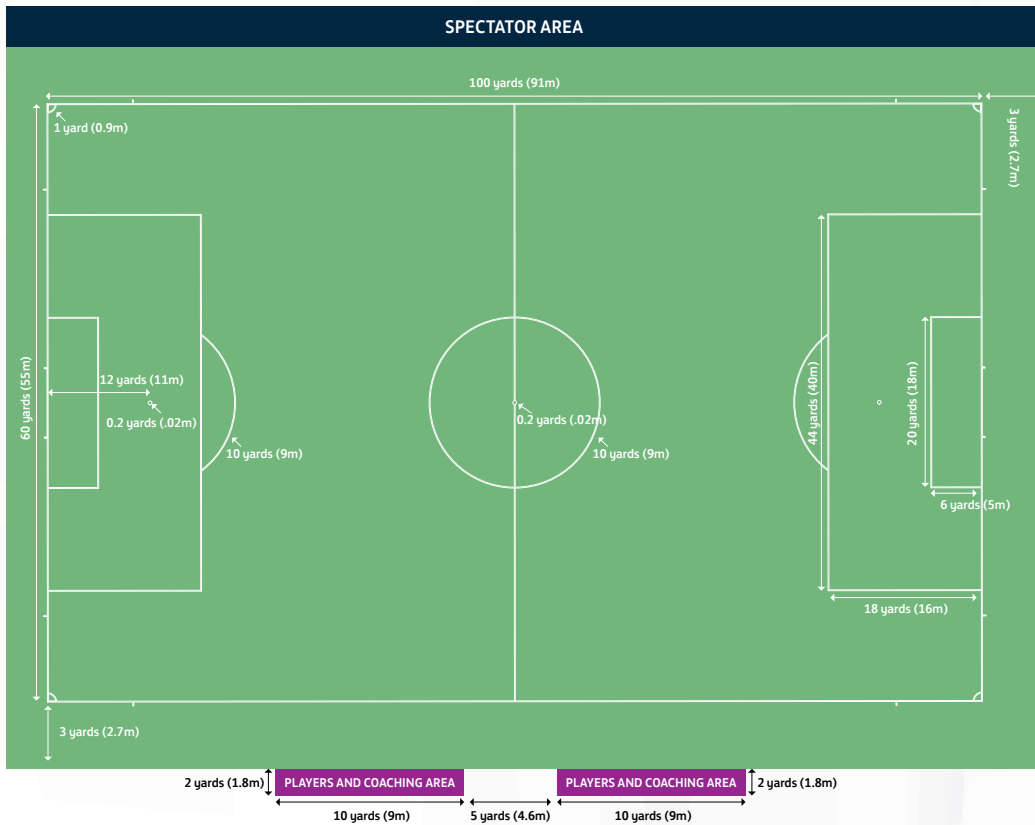
**U13 and U14 (11v11)**

Recommended pitch size:  
90 x 55 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
7 x 21 feet or  
8 x 24 feet  
(please refer to the table on page 12)

**Metric**

- Length 82M
- Width 50M
- Box 32M x 12M  
15M x 5M
- D 8M
- Penalty Spot 9M
- Centre Circle 8M
- Corner 0.9M
- Penalty Spot and Centre spot - .02M



**U15 and U16 (11v11)**

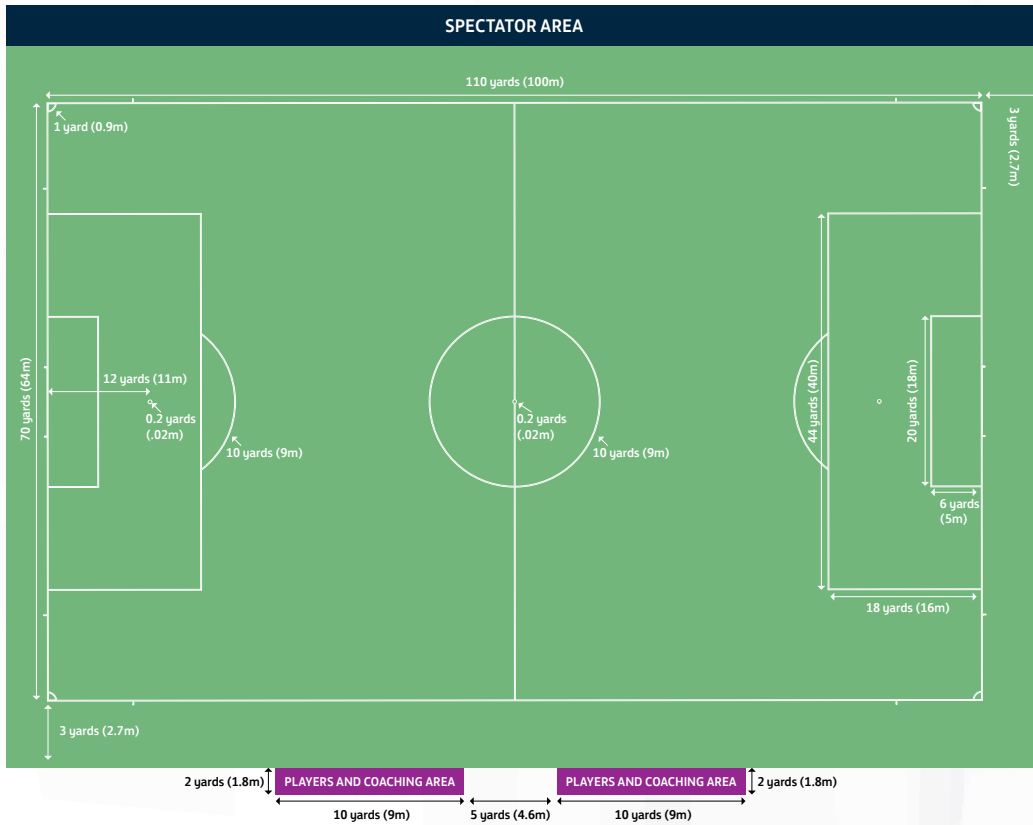
Recommended pitch size:  
100 x 60 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
8 x 24 feet

**Metric**

- Length 91M
- Width 55M
- Box 40M x 16M  
18M x 5M
- D 9M
- Penalty Spot 11M
- Centre Circle 9M
- Corner 0.9M
- Penalty Spot and Centre spot - .02M





**Over 18 and adult football**

Recommended pitch size:  
110 x 70 yards

Recommended goalpost size:  
8 x 24 feet

For both Over 18/adult and national League

**Metric**

Length 100M

Width 64M

Box 40M x 16M

18M x 5M

D 9M

Penalty Spot 11M

Centre Circle 9M

Corner 0.9M

Penalty Spot and Centre spot - .02M



# APPENDIX 3: LAYOUTS FOR MULTI - PITCH SITES

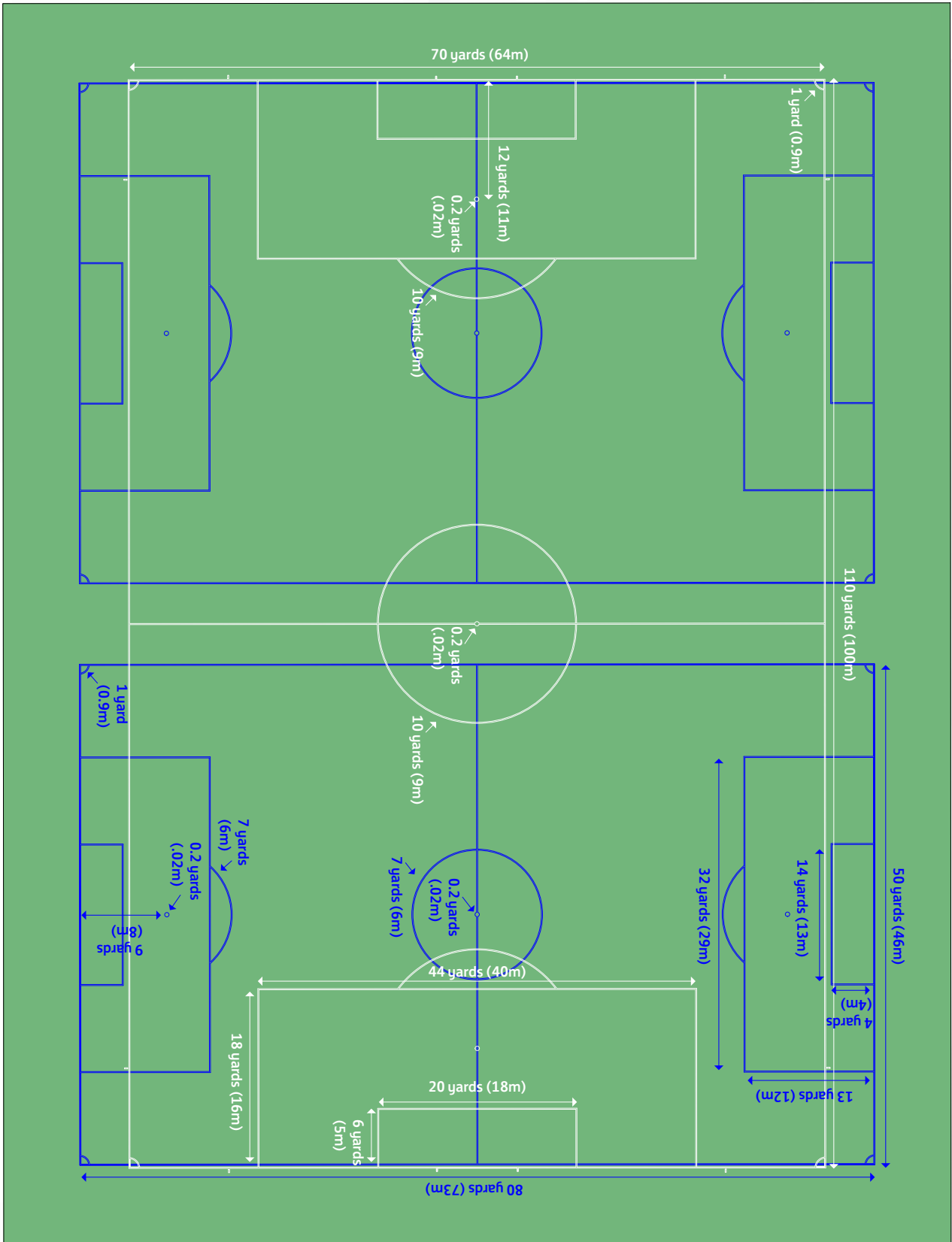
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## Natural Turf Pitch

9v9 and 11v11

The layout below illustrates how to mark 9v9 pitches over a full size adult pitch.



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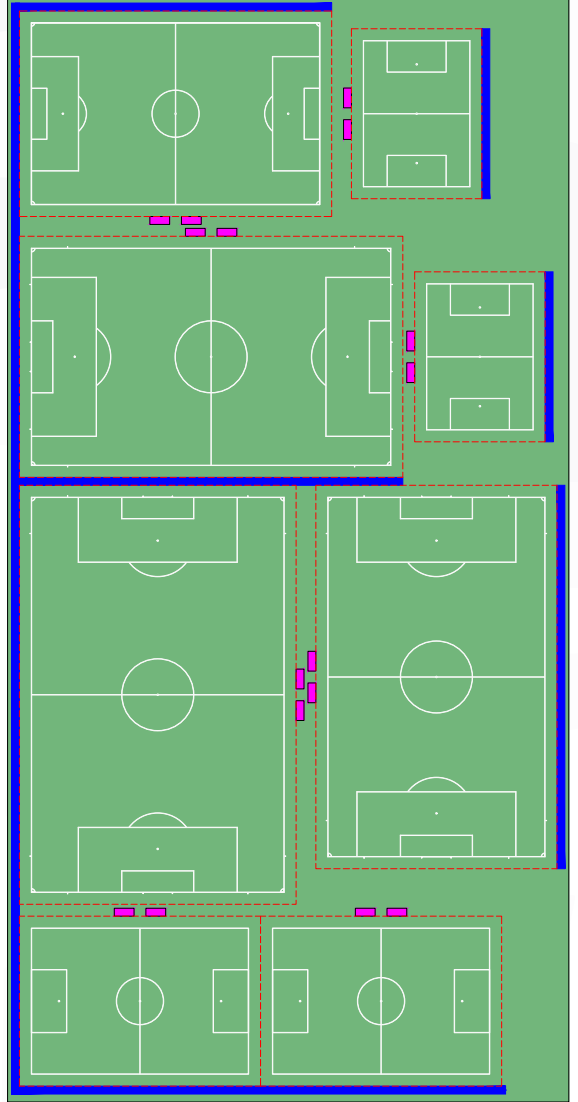
## Many pitches operate alongside each other.

It is important that there is a minimum of six metres of clearance (three metres run-off from each pitch) between the two pitches to avoid player injuries. If a Respect spectator area is added, then this two-metre area is in addition to this six metres. It is recommended that Respect areas are not placed between pitches where possible, and should be on the opposite side of where the coaching staff and players reside.

If the pitches are marked out in the same place year on year, consideration should be given to some type of ground re-enforcement so that wear of this area in the winter months can be managed. This area, if wide enough, could also be used as an access road for grounds maintenance equipment which is required to maintain the pitches.

Multiple layouts

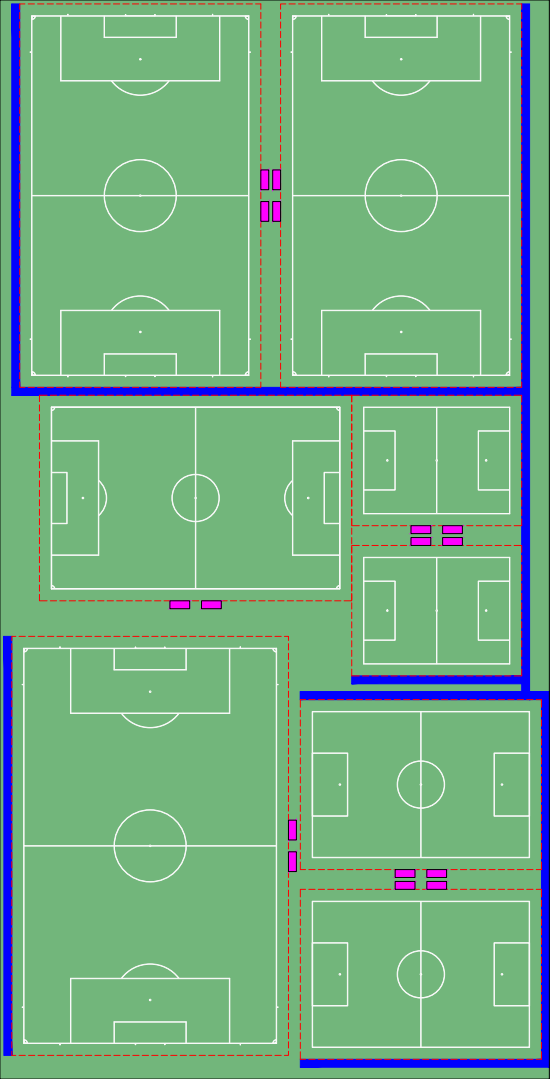
Option A



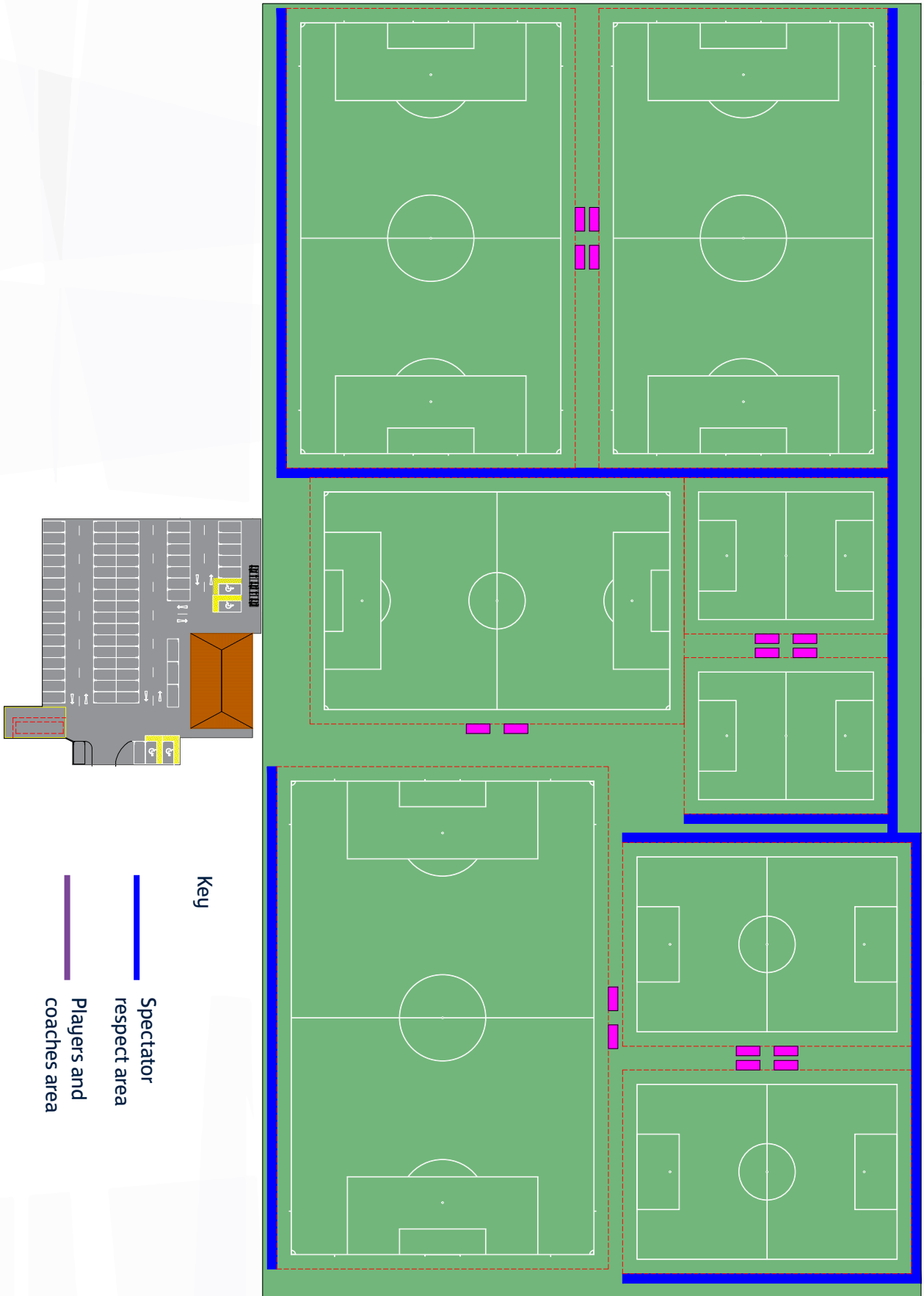
Key

- Spectator respect area
- Players and coaches area

Option B



Multiple layouts with car parking



## Further advice and information

For further information or guidance regarding any of the issues covered in this document, please contact your local County FA facility and investment lead officer. Alternatively, visit

[www.TheFA.com](http://www.TheFA.com)

