

The FA 
FUTSAL.

Benefits of Futsal



1) WHAT IS FUTSAL?



Futsal is an exciting, fast-paced small sided football game that originates from South America in the 1930s. It is widely played across the world, and is the small sided football format that is officially recognised by both UEFA and FIFA. The nature of the game places a large emphasis on technical skill and ability in situations of high pressure, and is subsequently an excellent breeding ground for football competencies that can be translated into the 11-a-side format of the game. Many of the top world class footballers played Futsal in their youth and credit it with supporting their footballing development. Players of the calibre of Pele, Zico, Ronaldinho, Kaka, Lionel Messi to name but a few of the South American legends all played and enjoyed Futsal. But Futsal has not just helped produce South American football stars, on the European stage Cristiano Ronaldo, Iniesta, Xavi, Fabregas amongst many others have played Futsal to develop their skills.

Futsal began in Uruguay and Brazil where the large crowded cities and a shortage of playing pitches forced a football mad populace to play small sided football and in 1936 the first rules emerged. Futsal was the name chosen by FIFA, which is simply a combination of the Spanish words for 'hall' (Sala) and 'football' (Futbol): hence 'Futsal'.

Futsal is a five-a-side game, normally played on a flat indoor pitch with hockey sized goals and a size 4 ball with a reduced bounce. It is played to touchlines and all players are free to enter the penalty area and play the ball over head-height. Games are 20 minutes per half, played to a stopping clock (similar to basketball) with time-outs permitted.

There are a number of differences to our traditional version of small sided football, but the dominant elements are the absence of rebound boards and amendments in the laws that encourage and foster skilful, creative play above the physical contact that tends to be a feature of English five-a-side.

"Futsal is an extremely important way for kids to develop their skills and understanding of the game. My touch and my dribbling have come from playing Futsal."

Ronaldinho, FIFA World Footballer of the Year 2004 & 2005

"As a little boy in Argentina, I played Futsal on the streets and for my club. It was tremendous fun, and it really helped me become who I am today"

Lionel Messi, FIFA World Footballer of the Year 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012

2) WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF PLAYING FUTSAL?

Although Futsal is very much a game in its own right, there are also a number of benefits for football by encouraging young people to play Futsal as part of a balanced training programme to improve their overall technical development. The game of Futsal creates an environment that allows young people to simulate and develop many skills and proficiencies that are transferrable to the 11-a-side game.

The nature of Futsal with the smaller confines of the pitch that makes it harder to find space, the line markings that prevents easy escape from tight situations (such as in traditional 5-a-side where players can play the ball off the wall), and the smaller heavier ball which supports closer ball control and manipulation supports the technical development of young players in a multitude of ways.

Research indicates that individual's playing Futsal receive the ball six times more often than they would do when they are playing 11-a-side football, allowing players to perform more individual

techniques such as passes, controls, fakes, feints, dribbles and runs with the ball (Liverpool John Moores University, 2001). As well as touching the ball more often, players will often receive the ball under pressure from opponents developing their confidence on the ball particularly in pressurised environments. Futsal as a game naturally brings players into regular one-on-one situations with their opponent, encouraging players into quick decision-making as to how they overcome these scenarios; this could be through beating the opponent with a skill, or through clever passing to a team-mate. But one of the core attributes Futsal teaches young players is the importance of ball retention due to the threat of an immediate counter-attack.

Confidence on the ball, receiving a pass under pressure, decision-making in 1v1 situations, and ball retention are all important fundamental skills that we look to develop in young football players that are practiced regularly within a game environment in Futsal.





“No time plus no space equals better skills. Futsal is our national laboratory of improvisation.”
– **Dr Emilio Miranda, Professor of Soccer at University of Sao Paulo, Brazil**

Futsal also supports young player development in other ways. The speed and fluidity of the game supports players in understanding and improving their skills in the transition (counter-attacking) phase. In Futsal, teams are often either defending a counter-attack or in the process of launching one after breaking down their opponents. This is recognised in modern football as a vital component for young players to understand and apply. This ebbing and flowing of the game also results in all players being required to feel comfortable in both a defending and attacking situation.

Due to the limited space on a Futsal court, the game intrinsically encourages movement and rotation from players as well as a sense of innovation and creativity to unlock defences and to create some space for yourself or team-mates. In many ways it replicates what is required from attacking midfielders and forwards in the 11-a-side game when trying to break through opposition in and around the 18 yard box.

The emphasis in Futsal is very much on skill and technique over physicality, and this is particularly reinforced by the 5 foul rule (committing 6 fouls

results in a penalty). But Futsal is also fun for young players who get to touch the ball with greater frequency in a variety of different positions. The fact it is played indoors means that it is a perfect alternative in the winter months when outdoor matches are regularly cancelled due to inclement weather.

Futsal is by no means the magic cure for developing a more technically competent football player, but as illustrated above Futsal can support and play an important role in improving the technical qualities of the future generation of 11-a-side players. Futsal aligns closely to The FA Future Game Coaching Strategy which provides a blueprint for how The FA would like to see young English players being developed in England in order to succeed at the highest level. The Future Game outlines the need to embrace more small sided games at younger age groups for many of the reasons as mentioned in this document. Futsal can play an integral part in helping to realise the aims and ambitions of developing more proficient young football players through the delivery of the FA Future Game Strategy.



“Futsal was important in helping to develop my ball control, quick thinking, passing.... also for dribbling, balance, concentration.... Futsal was very, very important, no doubt”
Pele, World Cup Winner: 1958, 1962 & 1970

“During my childhood in Portugal, all we played was Futsal. The small playing area helped me improve my close control, and whenever I played Futsal I felt free. If it wasn't for Futsal, I wouldn't be the player I am today.”
Cristiano Ronaldo, 106 games & 43 goals for Portugal

“Football & Futsal have a lot in common ... There are different tactics and moves, but there is the same essence of mastering the ball, combining and making quick decisions.”
Andres Iniesta, 6 x winner of La Liga, 3 x winner of UEFA Champions League, 2010 FIFA World Cup Winner

3) WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 5-A-SIDE AND FUTSAL?

At first glance it may not necessarily be apparent what the difference is between traditional English 5-a-side football and Futsal. Of course both formats of the game have five players on the pitch at any one time, but there are a number of fundamental differences that separate these two small sided games ranging from the equipment to the laws of the game. The diagram below helps to illustrate some of the main differences:

FUTSAL vs 5-a-Side – What’s the difference?	
Played to lines. Ball is returned to play with a ‘Kick In’. Controlled by 4 seconds to re-start play	No ‘by’ or ‘Goal’ lines – uses rebound boards or walls so ball is constantly in play.
Use of established pitch dimensions	Pitch size dictated by halls & facilities so no consistency
All players are allowed to enter each penalty area	Only the Goalkeeper is permitted to enter penalty area
No height restriction on ball	Use of restrictions on height of ball – e.g: head height
Use of indoor goals goals (3m x 2m).	Use of rectangular goals unique to British 5-a-side (4m x 1m)
Use of Futsal ball (size 4, 30% reduced bounce)	Uses a standard size and regulation bounce football – hard to control and less player contact
5 Foul Limit – a ‘penalty’ for every infringement after 5th Foul	Unlimited Fouls
Matches are played to a ‘stopping clock’ – the time stops everytime the ball is out of play.	Matches are played to a non-stopping clock
Coaches can call one time-out each half to discuss tactics with the players.	No time-outs – non-stop for the duration of the game.



4) IDEAS FOR INCORPORATING FUTSAL INTO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



“In Futsal players have to use both feet and it helps to develop their speed of thought and reactions. It also helps the players develop in transitional moments of the game.”
U9s Head Coach at English Professional Club

The FA are not suggesting that Futsal should supersede any of the existing football training and match programmes that clubs, schools and leagues may currently organise for young people, but where possible we would encourage you to consider ways for introducing Futsal as part of a mixed and varied football provision for your young players. This could look very different from area to area, but below are some ideas that you may wish to consider.

in a warm friendly environment, in a different format where they get to touch the ball more frequently. For the coaches and teachers, they no longer need to worry about the prospect of cancelling matches and they are providing a different format of the game to support the technical development of their young players. And for the parents they welcome not standing on the touchline in the freezing cold!

Winter Futsal League Provision: during the winter months you’ll be more than familiar with outdoor matches facing regular postponement due to waterlogged or frozen pitches, resulting in young players frequently not playing for a number of successive weeks. And even when they do play during these months, often the cold and wet conditions make it less enjoyable for the players, coaches and parents. An alternative that a number of youth leagues around the country have experimented with over recent seasons is temporarily stopping their outdoor football leagues during the worst of the winter months and forming a winter Futsal league for the clubs or schools to play indoors. This has been met with enthusiasm by clubs, coaches, parents and most importantly the young players themselves. For the young people they get to continue playing through the winter,



This approach has been adopted by the Premier League Academies, where from January through to March the academies arrange friendly Futsal fixtures and tournaments at a range of different ages every weekend.

Pre-Season / End of Season Festivals: clubs may wish to consider using Futsal during the pre-season or at the end of the season to offer a varied competition programme to young players to maintain enthusiasm, enjoyment and to simply offer them a different challenge and experience. Arranging friendly matches, mini-tournaments or festivals where Futsal is played is a relatively simple way of gradually introducing Futsal to young players, as well as helping all involved (other clubs, parents and coaches) to get to grips with the game and become familiar with the benefits it offers.

Training Sessions: many football clubs and schools hold their midweek training sessions in an indoor sports hall (particularly during the winter) and often resort to playing 5-a-side football. This is an ideal opportunity for coaches to introduce Futsal as a regular weekly training tool to aid their player's development. Using Futsal ball's, marking out the court (either permanently with tape or with flat marker discs) and using Futsal goals (improvising by putting tape on the walls to mark out the goals could be enough to get started) will enable the coach and the players to initiate a game that at least resembles Futsal.

If the coach or teacher has yet to attend an FA Futsal coaching course, without too much difficulty a coach can adapt some of the sessions and games that are taught on the FA Football Level 1 and Level 2 coaching courses, where much of the focus is on small sided games. Many of these games and sessions would be suitable on a Futsal court as a starter.



"First and foremost the kids absolutely love it. They get so much repetition of touches with the ball. There are so many attributes to Futsal: constant decision making, ball manipulation under pressure and in tight areas, developing spatial awareness, and the game almost forces the players to give appropriate support to team-mates."

Head of Academy at English Premier League club

Comments from Young People about Futsal (boys aged 9 – 11yrs old):

- *"Great because it tests your touch."*
- *"Fun because it is different."*
- *"It helps decision making because the ball moves really quick."*
- *"You have to deal with the ball in tight areas, which helps improve your touch and movement."*
- *"It's fun because you get loads of touches of the ball."*
- *"It's helped my confidence on the ball."*
- *"You need fast feet and you need to be able to use different parts of the foot in tight spaces."*

"Futsal puts players in situations where they have got to adapt and be creative to get out of tight areas. It encourages basic off-the-ball movement to help develop combination play."

U11's Grassroots Coach



5) THE WORLD OF FUTSAL

Futsal is the dominant form of small sided football across the world with over 100 countries entering the FIFA Futsal World Cup held in Thailand in 2012. Along with a World Cup for Futsal, there is a UEFA European Futsal Championship for international teams to enter every two years and there is an annual UEFA Futsal Cup which acts as the “Champions League” for Futsal with national domestic club champions entering. The rapid growth and development of Futsal is acknowledged by FIFA who claim that it is the “fastest growing indoor sport in the world.”

FIFA, UEFA and The FA are keen to support the development of Futsal for a number of reasons, but primarily for the recognised benefits that Futsal offers for the technical development of football players. Many countries that we admire for the technical skills of their players use Futsal as an aspect of their youth development. Ball retention, quick and skilful play, and tactical awareness are all major assets that the game of Futsal helps to promote.



Since 2003 The FA have been supporting the introduction of Futsal in England and during that time the game has grown rapidly. From humble beginnings within this country, with limited awareness and even more limited structures, The FA has established a framework for promoting and developing the sport. The FA has developed and supported the following to drive the growth of Futsal in England:

- **England Senior Men's Team** that enters the FIFA Futsal World Cup and UEFA European Futsal Championships as well as playing a number of international friendly matches each season. Beneath the England team is the England Development Squad and eight Regional Centres of Futsal Excellence for 16 -19 year olds supporting the identification and development of talented Futsal players.
- **FA National Futsal Leagues** were established in 2008 and are comprised of two divisions with each division divided into three regional leagues (North, Midlands and South) that play throughout the season. The top teams in Division 1 at the end of the season progress into the FA National Super League and on to the Grand Finals to contest for the title of National Futsal Champions. The National Champions progress into the UEFA Futsal Cup to represent England.
- **British Universities & English Colleges Futsal Championships** are two competitions that have been going from strength-to-strength over recent years with a large number

of colleges and universities across Britain entering male and female teams. The growth of university and college Futsal is significantly important for the ongoing development of the game.

- **The FA National Youth Futsal Festival** has been running since 2007 to encourage young people to participate in Futsal. Boys and girls teams from across the country between the ages of 10 – 16 years old progress through regional festivals to reach the National Youth Futsal Festival. This event is hugely popular and is helping to promote the game within schools and youth clubs. In 2013 over 2,000 teams participated in this competition.
- **The FA U19s National Futsal Championships** is the most recent competition to be introduced by The FA. The competition acts as a bridge helping to support young players in making the transition between youth Futsal and the adult game.
- **The FA Futsal Fives** are local recreational Futsal leagues that The FA have established across the country to help provide local opportunities for participants to play the game.
- **Coaching & Refereeing** The FA have established a number of courses to support the development and learning of both coaches and referees within Futsal.