

# 36 - FLEXIBLE FOOTBALL

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## THE FORMAT OF FLEXIBLE FOOTBALL

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The Association has introduced "Flexible Football" as a new format to provide players with an additional way to participate in 11 a side football. The objective is to provide a more flexible framework within which 11 a side competition can be organised that is entirely separate to the normal football pyramid.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLE

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The IFAB Laws of the Game and the Rules and Regulations of The Association shall apply at all times, save for where indicated below.

## COMPETITION ORGANISER AND TEAM INFORMATION

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1. Competition organisers must affiliate the league and its teams with the relevant County Football Association.
2. Each competition should last no longer than 20 weeks of fixtures in total.
3. Flexible Football is for male only or female only competitions. For a temporary period to be determined by the Sanctions and Registrations Committee of The Association, mixed gender open age football competitions may also be permitted as a pilot project, subject to the prior approval of the Sanctions and Registrations Committee.
4. Competitions can run concurrently throughout the year.
5. There is no link between Flexible Football and the National League System and Women's Pyramid in relation to promotion and relegation.
6. The competition organiser is responsible for devising the competition format, dealing with any issues regarding scheduling and communicating the features of the competition to the teams prior to commencement.

## PLAYER INFORMATION

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7. All players must be at least 16 years of age and must be registered in order to play.
8. Players register by completing a registration form which shall be provided by the competition organiser. A player may cancel their registration with a team at any time by giving written notice to the competition organiser. Players may register with a new team provided all financial liabilities to the previous team have been discharged.
9. There is no limit on how many players can be registered for each team, but a player may not be registered for more than one team at the same time, in any competition.
10. A squad of no more than 15 players per team is permitted for each game.
11. A team shall require a minimum of seven players to participate in a match.
12. If a team has less than seven players at any time the match will be abandoned.
13. A team sheet setting out the name of each member of the squad must be provided to the competition organiser before each game.
14. Shin pads are mandatory for all players, including goalkeepers.
15. Players must wear appropriate footwear. This is at the discretion of the Referee and as permitted by the venue.
16. A team found to have played an ineligible or suspended Player in a match shall have any points gained from that match deducted. If the opposing team did not win the match, it will be awarded the points for a victory.
17. No refunds of match fees or other charges will be provided to players or teams, as a result of contravention of the competition rules.

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### MATCH INFORMATION

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18. The duration of a match is at the discretion of the competition organiser. Each match in an individual competition must be played for two halves of the same duration. The half time interval shall be a minimum of five and no longer than 10 minutes.
19. Unlimited repeat substitutions are permitted.

### DISCIPLINARY

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20. Competition organisers and the Referee administer the disciplinary system for the competition, save for where indicated below.
21. In the event a player receives a yellow card during a match that player will be subject to a "Temporary Time Suspension". A Temporary Time Suspension will result in the player being excluded from play for a period six minutes, or until the conclusion of the match (whichever is earlier).
22. The release of players from a Temporary Time Suspension shall be at the direction of the Referee.
23. The options for Referees when imposing disciplinary sanctions are therefore;
  - Player shown a yellow card and temporarily suspended from play for six minutes.
  - Player issued with a second yellow card, followed by a red card and excluded from play.
  - Player issued with a red card and excluded from play.

For the avoidance of doubt, a first yellow card offence should always be accompanied by a Temporary Time Suspension.

24. Temporary Time Suspensions – Procedure
  - A player will be shown a yellow card by the Referee and informed that he/she shall be suspended from play for six minutes.
  - The player is obliged to leave the playing area and remain in the area where they can be seen by the Referee and adjacent to his or her own team officials and substitutes.
  - A player will be informed as to the end of a period of suspension by the Referee and invited to re-join the game.
  - A player shall re-join the game from the half-way line.

#### 25. Temporary Time Suspensions - Offences

A player is shown a yellow card and made subject to a Temporary Time Suspension if he commits any of the following offences:

- C1 Is guilty of unsporting behaviour.
- C2 Shows dissent by word or action.
- C3 Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game.
- C4 Delays the restart of play.
- C5 Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick, free kick or goal clearance.
- C6 Enters or re-enters the playing area without the Referee's permission or infringes the substitution procedure.
- C7 Deliberately leaves the playing area without the Referee's permission outside of a substitution.

For any of these offences, an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred.

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26. Where a red card has been issued a copy of the Disciplinary Report should also be sent to the County Football Association within 48 hours of the end of the match. Suspensions arising from “Standard Red Card Offences” imposed by the County Football Association are only applicable within the competition and not to other formats of Association Football. The suspension is to commence 14 days from the date the player was dismissed.
27. Suspensions arising from ‘Serious Misconduct Red Card Offences’ imposed by the County Football Association are applicable to all formats of Association Football.

Management of Cautions, Standard Dismissals and Serious Misconduct Offences in Flexible Football

The table below summarises the management of the disciplinary process in Flexible Football.

SANCTION	OFFENCES	RESPONSIBILITY FORADMINISTERING	TARIFFS
Caution (Yellow card)	As per the normal Laws of Association	Referee	Temporary Time Suspension
Dismissal - Standard Red Card Offences	A second yellow card offence. Denying an obvious goal scoring opportunity. Use of offensive, insulting or abusive language/gesture (including at the referee). Serious Foul Play	County Football Association	As determined by the relevant FA Disciplinary Process
Dismissals - Serious Misconduct Offences to be managed by the County Football Association *	Violent conduct or behaviour causing injury, including any form of assault. Spitting. Any offences where the offender has also acted in a discriminatory manner for reasons of ethnic origin, colour, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability. Any other offence not covered above including offences comitted after the match or after being dismissed.	County Football Association	As determined by the relevant FA Disciplinary Process

\*In addition to imposing the relevant standard penalty, the County Football Association retains the discretion to take additional disciplinary action, depending upon the seriousness of the offence.