

THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
THE FA CUP, THE FA TROPHY, THE FA VASE AND THE FA YOUTH CUP
SEASON 2026-27

ENTRY CRITERIA

THE FA CUP

- Clubs to be automatically accepted subject to the ground fully conforming to the minimum standard
- Clubs in The Premier League, English Football League and in Steps 1–5 of The FA National League System.
 - Clubs at Steps 1–5 must also be participating in either The FA Trophy or The FA Vase Competitions, in season 2026-27.
 - **Clubs currently at Step 6 of The FA National League System should NOT apply to enter The FA Cup.**

Clubs promoted from Step 6 to Step 5 for season 2026-27 will be invited to participate in the Competition and automatically accepted once National League System allocations for season 2026-27 have been confirmed.

Clubs relegated from Step 5 to Step 6 for season 2026-27 will NOT be accepted to participate in the Competition.

In the event there are places available in the Competition for Step 6 Clubs, these will be determined by The FA based on a Clubs points per game at Step 6 of The FA National League System in the previous season.

The FA will notify any successful Step 6 Club(s) and invite them to participate in the Competition once National League System allocations for season 2026-27 have been confirmed.

THE FA TROPHY

- Entry is restricted to Clubs participating in Steps 1-4 of The FA National League System subject to the ground fully conforming to the minimum standard.

A Club moving between Step 4 and 5 of The FA National League System will be moved accordingly by The FA between The FA Trophy and The FA Vase Competitions.

Clubs moving between EFL League 2 and Step 1 of The FA National League System will be automatically included/not included in The FA Trophy Competition accordingly.

THE FA VASE

- Entry is restricted to Clubs participating in Steps 5 & 6 of The FA National League System subject to the ground fully conforming to the minimum standard.

A Club participating below Step 6 of The FA National League System in season 2025-26 shall only be permitted to apply for entry if it has applied for promotion to Step 6 for season 2026-27. However, acceptance into the Competition will be subject to such Club receiving promotion to Step 6 for season 2026-27.

A Club moving between Step 4 and 5 of The FA National League System will be moved accordingly by The FA between The FA Trophy and The FA Vase Competitions.

THE FA YOUTH CUP

- Clubs to be automatically accepted subject to the ground fully conforming to the minimum standard:
- Clubs in The Premier League, English Football League and in Steps 1–5 of The FA National League System.
 - Clubs at Steps 1–5 must also be participating in either The FA Trophy or The FA Vase Competitions, in season 2026-27.
 - Clubs participating in a recognized Youth League or suitable Competition in season 2026-27 that is sanctioned by The Association or an affiliated Association.
 - Youth Teams representing a Club must be properly integrated, in the opinion of The Association, with the Club.

MINIMUM GROUND STANDARDS

THE FA CUP

Clubs must have a ground where all home first team League matches are played, which fully conforms to a Grade **5** of The FA's Stadium Accreditation criteria (appropriate to Step **5** of The FA National League System) or higher.

THE FA TROPHY

Clubs must have a ground where all home first team League matches are played, which fully conforms to a Grade **4** of The FA's Stadium Accreditation criteria (appropriate to Step 4 of The FA National League System) or higher.

(save where a Club is in its first season after promotion to Step 4, with a Grade 5 being acceptable in those circumstances)

THE FA VASE

Clubs must have a ground where all home first team League matches are played, which fully conforms to a Grade **7** of The FA's Stadium Accreditation criteria (appropriate to entry to Step 6 of The FA National League System) or higher.

Any Club with a ground which does not fully conform to the minimum ground standard, as referenced above, WILL NOT be permitted entry into a Competition by nominating an alternative ground solely for the purpose of being used in FA Competitions.

THE FA YOUTH CUP

Clubs must have a ground where all home first team League matches are played, which fully conforms to a Grade **5** of The FA's Stadium Accreditation criteria (appropriate to Step **5** of The FA National League System) or higher.