

## SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL

### LAWS OF THE GAME

Revised 2008

#### Introduction

The following laws of the game are the Football Association's recommended laws for use in Small-Sided Football. This includes 5, 6 and 7 a side games but not Mini-Soccer or Futsal, which have their own specific laws. (These are also available from the FA). These laws were revised in 2007 and 2008 based on the following principles;

- A revision of The FA's Laws so that they better reflect the game that it is being played in many venues
- Applying the general principle of the 'normal laws of Association Football with exceptions' and as consequence simplifying the game for both players and referees.
- Improving the technical quality of play in the small-sided game
- To encourage participation and enjoyment in a safe and controlled environment.

Over 4 million people play Small-Sided Football each year (FA 'Football Trends' Survey 2004/2005). As a consequence Small-Sided Football is now the largest form of the recreational game. The laws that people play the game to tend to differ from venue to venue and reflect both traditions of play and the constraints of the facility in which the game is taking place. The set of laws contained in this booklet are those that The FA will use in its own Small-Sided football competitions and we would recommend their adoption by all organisers of Small-Sided Football. However, given the diversity of small-sided facilities and formats in this country use of these laws in all circumstances is not mandatory and these revised laws also allow The FA and the County Football Associations to sanction other formats of Small-Sided Football. The principles of any approval by The FA shall be based upon,

- The normal laws of Association Football apply with exceptions
- The game should take into full account the health and safety of the players and officials

This booklet contains both a full set of laws, suitable for use by competition organisers and match officials and an abridged version that can be used to advise participants of the laws that will be of greatest interest to them.

Further advice on laws of the game and the affiliation of competitions can be obtained from your local County Football Association.

## SECTION ONE

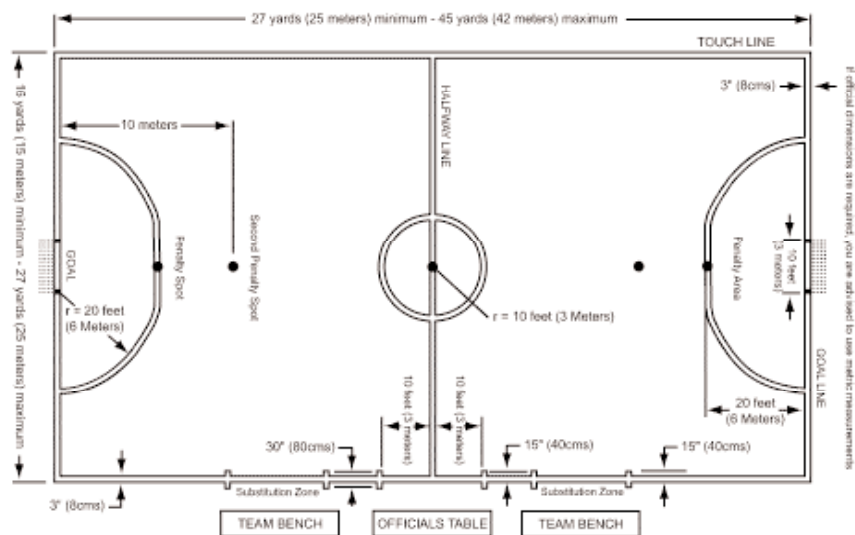
### Small-Sided Football - Laws of the Game

#### LAW 1 - General Principle

The normal laws of Association Football apply with exceptions, notably that there is no offside in small-sided football.

#### The Pitch

Small-Sided Football may be played with or without barriers.



#### Dimensions:

The playing area must be rectangular. The length of the touchline must be greater than the length of the goal line.

Length: minimum 25 m                      maximum 50 m  
 Width: minimum 16.5 m                    maximum 35 m

For 7 a side football the following dimensions are recommended

Length: minimum 50m                      maximum 60m  
 Width: minimum 30m                        maximum 40m

#### Area Markings

The playing area is marked with lines. These lines belong to the areas of which they are boundaries. The two longer boundary lines are called touchlines. The two shorter lines are called goal lines. All lines are 8cm wide.

The playing area is divided into two halves by the halfway line.

The **centre mark** is indicated at the midpoint of the halfway line. A circle with a radius of 3m is marked around it.

If barricades are used to surround the playing area, where possible an opening should be provided at the point of the halfway line and the touchline.

A **penalty area** is defined at each end of the pitch as follows:

A semi circle of 6m radius shall be drawn from the centre of each goal line. The extremities of these semi-circles should reach the goal line, barrier or wall regardless of whether or not the goal posts encroach onto the playing area.

**Penalty Mark**

A penalty mark is drawn 6m from the midpoint between the goal posts and equidistant from them.

**The Corner Arc**

Where barriers do not surround the playing area a quarter circle with a radius of 25cm from each corner is drawn inside the playing area.

**Goals**

Goals must be placed on the centre of each goal line.

They consist of two upright posts equidistant from each corner and joined at the top by a horizontal crossbar.

The distance (inside measurement) between the posts is maximum 5m, minimum 3m and the distance from the lower edge of the crossbar to the ground is maximum 2m minimum 1.20m.

Both goal posts and the crossbar have the same width and depth of 8cm. Nets, made of hemp, jute or nylon, are attached to the posts and crossbars behind the goals. The lower part is supported by curved bars or some other adequate support.

**Safety**

The goals may be portable but they must be anchored securely to the ground during play as per Health and Safety requirements. See Appendix C.

**Playing Surface**

Where natural turf is not used the surface must be smooth and flat and non-abrasive. The use of wood or artificial material is recommended.

**Law 2 - The Ball****Qualities and Measurements**

The ball is:

- spherical
- made of leather or other suitable material
- size appropriate to the age group playing

**Replacement of a Defective Ball**

If the ball bursts or becomes defective during the course of a game:

- the game is stopped
- the game is restarted by dropping the replacement ball at the place where the first ball became defective

If the ball bursts or becomes defective while not in play:

- the game is restarted according to the Laws

The ball may not be changed during the match without the permission of the referee.

### Law 3 - The Number of Players

A game is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eight players, one of whom is the goalkeeper.

#### Substitution Procedure

Substitutes may be used in any game played under the rules of an official competition at FIFA, confederation or national association level.

The maximum number of substitutes permitted is three.

The number of substitutions made during a game is unlimited. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player. Substitutions should take place when there is a break in play or during play if the second official is involved in refereeing the game.

A substitution is one that is made when the ball is in or out of play for which the following conditions must be observed:

- The player entering the playing area may not do so until the player leaving the playing area has passed completely over the boundary line
- Where barricades are used the players must use the opening onto the playing area
- A substitution is complete when the substitute enters the playing area from which moment he becomes a player and the player he is replacing ceases to be a player
- A substitute is subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee whether called upon to play or not

#### Changing Places with the Goalkeeper

Any of the other players, or substitutes, may change places with the goalkeeper. The following conditions must be observed:

- referee must be informed before the change is made
- change may only be made during a stoppage in play
- The replacement goalkeeper must wear a jersey which distinguishes him from all other players

#### Infringements/Sanctions

If, while a substitution is being made, a substitute enters the playing area before the player being replaced has completely left:

- play is stopped
- the player being replaced is instructed to leave the playing area
- the substitute is 'sin binned' for the agreed period
- Play is restarted by an indirect free kick to be taken by the opposing team from the place where the ball was situated when the game was stopped. However, if the ball was inside the penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken on the penalty area line, at the place nearest to the position of the ball when play was stopped

Where barricades are used if, while a substitution is being made, a substitute enters the playing area or a player being replaced leaves it from a place other than the recognised opening in the barricades:

- play is stopped
- the substitute is 'sin binned' for the agreed period
- play is restarted by an indirect free kick to be taken by the opposing team from the place where the ball was situated when the game was stopped. However, if the ball was inside the penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken on the penalty area line, at the place nearest to the position of the ball when play was stopped

**Validity of a Match – Playing Numbers**

A match should not be considered valid if the playing strength of either team is permanently reduced by more than two players for 5 a side, 6 and 7 a side. However, this should only apply when players are permanently excluded or lost through injury rather than within the 'Sin Bin' for a two-minute suspension.

**Law 4 - The Players' Equipment****Safety**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player, including any kind of jewellery. Jewellery should be removed.

**Basic Equipment**

The basic compulsory equipment of a player is:

- A jersey or shirt
- Shorts or track suit trousers
- If thermal undershorts are worn under shorts, they should be of the same main colour as the shorts
- Socks
- Shinguards
- Footwear which is appropriate for the playing surface being used

**Shinguards**

- are covered entirely by the socks
- are made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic or similar substances)
- provide a reasonable degree of protection

**Goalkeepers**

- the goalkeeper is permitted to wear long trousers
- each goalkeeper wears colours which easily distinguish him from the other players and the referees

**Infringements/Sanctions**

For any Infringements of this Law:

- the player at fault is instructed by the referee to leave the playing area to correct his equipment or to obtain any missing item of equipment. The player may not return to the playing area without first reporting to the referee, who then checks that the player's equipment is now correct. The player is only allowed to re-enter the game when the ball is out of play.
- Players can return to play whilst the ball is in play if a second official has checked the equipment. If no second official is present the player must wait for a break in play in order for the referee to check the faulty equipment.

**Law 5 - The Referee****The Authority of the Referee**

Each game is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the Game in connection with the game to which he has been appointed, from the moment he enters the locality where the playing area is situated until he leaves.

### Powers and Duties

#### The Referee:

- enforces the Laws of the Game
- allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage and penalises the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time
- keeps a record of the game and provides the appropriate authorities with a match report which includes information on any disciplinary action taken against players, and/or team officials and any other incidents which occur before, during or after the game
- acts as timekeeper
- stops, suspends or terminates the game for any infringement of the Laws or due to any kind of outside interference
- takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and sending-off offences
- takes action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at his discretion, expel them from the playing area and its immediate surrounds
- ensures that no unauthorised persons enter the playing area
- stops the game if, in his opinion upon injury assessment, a player is seriously injured and ensures that he is removed from the playing area
- ensures any player bleeding from a wound leaves the playing area
- allows play to continue until the ball is out of play if a player is, in his opinion, only slightly injured
- ensures that any ball used meets the requirements of Law 2
- makes use of timed suspensions to exclude temporarily players guilty of infringements of the Laws
- In the absence of a second official, the referee should make excluded players aware of the end of their period of suspension

#### Decisions of the Referee

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

### Law 6 - The Match Official

#### Duties

The duties of the Match Official are to assist the referee in the control of the game in the following areas: -

- Control of the substitution procedure, ensuring that the player to be replaced has left the playing area before the substitute is allowed to enter the playing area
- Check the equipment of all the substitutes entering the playing area
- Ensure that a player sent from the playing area by the referee, to replace any missing or defective equipment, is checked before being allowed back on to the playing area
- If a player has been removed from the playing area by the referee to have a 'blood injury' treated, the match official must ensure that the bleeding has stopped before the player is allowed to re-enter the playing area
- Keep a full record of the game details
- Act as the timekeeper for any player who has been given a temporary suspension from the game
- Report to the referee any misconduct by any of the team players or officials in the technical / bench / substitute area
- Carry out any other duties as requested by the referee

**Law 7 - The Duration of the Game**

The duration of the game shall be divided into two equal periods of over five and up to 25 minutes each period subject to the following:

- (a) Allowance shall be made in either period for time lost through stoppages as decided by the referee.
- (b) The duration of either half shall be extended to enable a penalty kick to be taken.
- (c) At half time the interval shall not exceed five minutes except by consent of the Referee.
- (d) Competition rules may allow for a game to be played in its entirety without a half time interval or requirement to change ends. For games 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 the game.

**Law 8 - Start of Play****Preliminaries**

The choice of ends is decided by the toss of a coin. The team winning the toss decides which goal it wishes to attack in the first half of the game.

The other team takes the kick-off to start the game.

**Kick-off**

A kick-off is a way of starting or restarting play:

- at the start of the game
- after a goal has been scored
- at the start of the second half of the game
- at the start of each period of extra time, where applicable

A goal may be scored directly from the kick-off.

**Procedure**

- all players are in their own half of the playing area
- the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least 3m from the ball until it is in play
- the ball is stationary on the centre mark
- the referee gives a signal
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward
- the kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has touched another player

After a team scores a goal, the other team takes the kick-off.

**Infringements/Sanctions**

If the kicker touches the ball a second time before it has been touched by another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred. For any other infringement of the kick-off procedure the kick-off is retaken.

**Drop Ball**

A drop ball is a way of restarting the game after a temporary stoppage.

**Procedure**

The referee drops the ball at the place where it was located when play was stopped, unless it was in the goalkeeper's possession, when the goalkeeper shall, at the referee's signal, return the ball into play by throwing the ball from any point within the Penalty Area.

Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.

Where barricades are in use and a drop ball is required the referee shall drop the ball 2m from the barricade at the appropriate point.

#### **Infringements/Sanctions**

The ball is dropped again:

- if it is touched by a player before it makes contact with the ground
- if the ball leaves the playing area after it makes contact with the ground, without a player touching it

#### **Law 9 - The 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
- when playing indoors, it hits the ceiling

##### **Ball In Play**

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

- it rebounds from a goal post, the crossbar, or the barricades onto the playing area
- it rebounds from the referee when on the playing area

##### **Decisions**

When a game is being played on an indoor playing area and the ball accidentally hits the ceiling, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team to the one which last touched the ball.

The indirect free kick should be taken from the point at which the ball began to rise. Should this occur in the penalty area, the free kick should be taken from the penalty area line nearest to where the offence was committed. The exception to this rule is when the ball hits the ceiling following a deliberate 'save' (as opposed to a clearance) by the goalkeeper. In this case teams should play on.

Height of ball restrictions – If a height restriction is to be introduced, the competition rules should identify the height above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. If a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team, an indirect free kick should be awarded on the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place. The exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance. Should another player then play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction, this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team

#### **Law 10 - The Method of Scoring**

##### **Goal Scored**

Except otherwise provided by these Laws, a goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, unless it has been thrown, carried or intentionally propelled by the hand or arm by a player of the attacking side, the goalkeeper included.

##### **Winning Team**

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



### Competition Rules

For games ending in a draw, competition rules may state provisions involving extra time or other procedures to determine the winner of a game.

### LAW 11 - Free Kicks

#### Types of Free Kicks

Free kicks are either direct or indirect.

For both direct and indirect free kicks, the ball must be stationary when the kick is taken and the kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has touched another player.

#### The Direct Free Kick

- if a direct free kick is kicked directly into the opponent's goal, a goal is awarded

#### The Indirect Free Kick

- a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal

#### Position of Free Kick

- all opponents must be at least 3m from the ball until it is in play
- the ball is in play after it has been touched or played

#### Infringements/Sanctions

If, when a free kick is taken, an opponent is closer to the ball than the required distance:

- the kick is retaken

If, after the ball is in play, the kicker touches the ball a second time before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, taken from the place where the infringement occurred

#### Signals

- Direct Free Kick: the referee keeps one arm horizontal pointing in the direction the kick has to be taken
- Indirect Free Kick: the referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising his arm above his head. He maintains his arm in that position until the kick has been taken and the ball has touched another player or goes out of play

### LAW 12 - Fouls and Misconduct

Fouls and misconduct are penalised as follows:

#### Direct Free Kick

A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following six offences in a manner considered by the referee 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, even with the shoulder
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- pushes an opponent

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

- holds an opponent
- spits at an opponent
- slides in an attempt to play the ball when it is being played or attempted to be played by an opponent (sliding tackle)
- handles the ball deliberately, except for the goalkeeper in his own penalty area

A direct free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred.

#### Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if a player commits any of the aforementioned offences inside his own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball but provided that it is in play.

#### Indirect Free Kick

An indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a goalkeeper commits one of the following offences:

- touches or controls the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate
- touches or controls the ball with his hands after he has received it directly from a kick-in taken by a team-mate
- touches or controls the ball with his hands or feet, in the penalty area, for more than four seconds
- height of ball restrictions (optional modification) – if a height restriction is introduced, the competition rules should identify the height above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team
- if a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team, an indirect free kick should be awarded on the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place
- the exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance unless the ball hits the roof when play should be restarted with a drop ball. However, should another player play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction, this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team

An indirect free kick is also awarded to the opposing team, to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred, if, in the opinion of the referee, a player:

- plays in a dangerous manner
- deliberately impedes the progress of an opponent when the ball is not being played
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands
- commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player

The indirect free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless this was in the penalty area, in which case the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred.

#### Disciplinary Sanctions

The use of temporary time suspensions ('sin bins') and the exclusion of a player arising from the issuing of a red card are the recommended disciplinary sanctions for use in small-sided football. Match officials should employ the use of temporary timed suspensions in all cases traditionally regarded as cautionable offences. Referees shall also have the discretion to use a second 'blue card' and a further period of suspension for a second minor offence rather than a second blue card

automatically resulting in a red card and permanent expulsion.

The options for a match official imposing disciplinary sanctions are therefore:

- player shown a blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- player issued with a discretionary second blue card and temporarily excluded from play
- player issued with a red card and permanently excluded from play

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play.

The period of timed suspension in small-sided football shall be two minutes. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the referee or a match official if one is available.

#### Temporary Timed Suspensions – Procedures

A player temporarily suspended from play will be shown a blue card by the match official and informed that he/she shall be suspended from play for two minutes.

The player is obliged to leave the playing area and remain in a designated 'sin bin' area for the required suspension area. Separate 'sin bin' areas should be identified for each team. If no designated 'sin bin' areas are provided then suspended players should remain in the area where they can be seen by the referee and adjacent to team officials and substitutes.

A player will be informed as to the end of a period of suspension by the referee or match official and invited to rejoin the game. Where barricades are used the players must use the opening onto the playing area.

#### Temporary Timed Suspensions

A player is shown the blue card and temporarily excluded from play 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, kick-in, 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

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. If the offence was committed within the penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

#### Exception to the use of 'Blue Cards' and Temporary Timed Suspensions

The only exception to the use of 'Blue Cards' and Temporary Timed Suspensions is in facilities where if a player is excluded for two minutes they are unable to take up a position which is still in the eye line of the Referee but outside the boundaries of the playing area. This might be the case in an enclosed sports hall or in a complex of caged pitches. In such circumstances safety considerations requires the Referee to employ the use of yellow cards, with all players remaining on the playing area unless excluded permanently. In this situation normal disciplinary sanctions will apply after the game as per the competition rules. If two yellow cards are given to an individual, the player will be shown a red card and dismissed.

#### Sending-Off Offences

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

- S1. is guilty of serious foul play
- S2. is guilty of violent conduct
- S3. spits at an opponent or any other person
- S4. 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 own penalty area)
- S5. denies an obvious goal-scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or a penalty kick
- S6. uses offensive, insulting or abusive language
- S7. receives a second blue/yellow card in the same match

If play is stopped for a player to be sent from the playing area, without having committed any additional infringement of the Laws, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick, awarded to the opposing team, to be taken at the place where the infringement occurred. However, if the offence is committed in the penalty area, the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

#### Decisions

A player who has been sent off may not take any further part in the game nor may he sit on the substitutes' bench, where provided.

#### Law 13 - The Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded against a team which commits any of the offences for which a direct free kick is awarded, inside its own penalty area and while the ball is in play.

A goal may be scored directly from a penalty kick.

Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken at the end of each half or at the end of each period of extra time.

#### Position of the Ball and the Players

The ball:

- is placed on the penalty mark

The player taking the penalty kick:

- is properly identified

The defending goalkeeper:

- remains on his goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball has been kicked

The players other than the kicker are located:

- inside the pitch
- outside the penalty area
- behind or to the side of the penalty mark
- at least 5m from the ball

#### Procedure

- the player taking the penalty kicks the ball forward
- he may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player
- the ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward

When a penalty kick is taken during the normal course of play, or time has been extended at half-time or full time to allow a penalty kick to be taken or retaken, a goal is awarded if, before passing the goalposts and under the crossbar:

- the ball touches either or both of the goalposts, and/or the crossbar and/or the goalkeeper

**Infringements/Sanctions**

If any of the following situations occur:

A player of the defending team infringes this Law:

- the kick is retaken, only if a goal is not scored
- the kick is not retaken if a goal is scored

A team-mate of the player taking the kick infringes this Law of the Game:

- the kick is retaken if a goal is scored
- the kick is not retaken if a goal is not scored

The player taking the kick infringes this Law of the Game after the ball is in play:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, the kick to be taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless this was in the penalty area, in which case the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

**Law 14 - The Kick-In**

A kick-in is a method of restarting play.

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

A kick-in is awarded:

- when the whole of the ball passes over a touch line, either on the ground or in the air, or hits the ceiling
- from the place where it crossed the touch line or 2m into the playing area adjacent to where the ball left the playing area when barricades are in use
- to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball

**Position of the Ball and the Players**

The ball:

- has to be stationary on the touch line; or 2m into the playing area from the barrier where barricades are in use
- is kicked into play in any direction

The player taking the kick-in:

- has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line at the moment of kicking the ball; or
- must stand between the ball and the barricade where in use

The players of the defending team:

- are at least 3m from the place where the kick-in is taken

**Procedure**

- the player taking the kick-in may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player
- the ball is in play immediately after it is kicked or touched

**Infringements/Sanctions**

The kick-in is retaken by a player of the opposing team if:

- the kick-in is taken incorrectly
- the kick-in is taken from a position other than the place where the ball passed over the touch line or where indicated by the referee where barricades are in use
- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposition if the player taking the kick-in plays the ball a second time before it has been played by another player

**Law 15 - The Goal Clearance**

A goal clearance is a method of restarting play.

A goal may not be scored directly from a goal clearance.

The goal clearance is awarded when:

- the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the attacking team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored in accordance with Law 10

**Procedure**

- opponents remain outside the penalty area
- the goalkeeper does not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player
- the ball is in play when the ball is thrown or kicked from any point within the penalty area by the goalkeeper of the defending team

**Infringements/Sanctions**

If the ball is not thrown or kicked directly beyond the penalty area:

- the goal clearance is retaken

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper touches the ball, before it has touched another player:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team from the penalty area line from the place nearest to where the infringement occurred

If, after the ball is in play, the goalkeeper picks the ball up after it has been deliberately kicked to him by a team-mate:

- an indirect free kick is awarded to the opposing team, to be from the penalty area line from the place nearest to where the infringement occurred

**Law 16 - The Corner Kick**

A corner kick is a method of restarting play.

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick, but only against the opposing team.

A corner kick is awarded when:

- the whole of the ball, having last touched a player of the defending team, passes over the goal line, either on the ground or in the air, and a goal is not scored in accordance with Law 10

**Procedure**

- the ball is placed inside the corner arc at the nearest corner
- opponents remain at least 3m from the ball until it is in play
- the ball is kicked by a player of the attacking team
- the ball is in play when it is kicked or touched
- the kicker does not play the ball a second time until it has been played by or touched another player

**Infringements/Sanctions**

An indirect free kick is taken by the opposing team if:

- the player taking the corner kick plays the ball a second time before it has been played by or touched another player. The indirect free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred

For any other infringement:

- the corner kick is retaken

Where the playing area is surrounded by barricades the corner kick is replaced by a kick-in at a point 2m inside the playing area at the corner nearest the point where the ball left the playing area.

### Kicks From The Penalty Mark Procedure

Taking kicks from the penalty mark is a method of determining the winning team where competition rules require there to be a winning team after a match has been drawn

#### Procedure

- the referee chooses the goal at which the kicks will be taken
- the referee tosses a coin and the team whose captain wins the toss decides whether to take the first or second kick.
- the referee keeps a record of the kicks being taken
- in principle each team takes five kicks, depending on the circumstances described hereafter
- the kicks are taken alternately
- the names of the players taking the kicks are announced to the referee by the captains of each team before the kicks from the penalty mark are taken and must be among those included on the list of players submitted before the match. Only those players on the pitch at the completion of the game are eligible to take part in Kicks from the Penalty Mark
- where a player(s) has been sent off by the referee the opposing team must reduce the number of players to equalise the participants in each team prior to the Kicks from the Penalty Mark commencing
- if, before both teams have taken five kicks, one has scored more goals than the other could score, even if it were to complete its five kicks, no more kicks are taken
- if, after both teams have taken five kicks, both have scored the same number of goals, kicks continue to be taken in the same order until one team has scored one goal more than the other from the same number of kicks
- any player who has been sent off may not take part in the kicks from the penalty mark
- any eligible player may change places with his goalkeeper
- only the eligible players and match officials are permitted to remain on the pitch when kicks from the penalty mark are taken
- all players, except the player taking the kick and the two goalkeepers, must remain in the opposite half to that where the kicks are being taken
- if a goalkeeper is injured during the Kicks from the Penalty Mark Procedure, he may be replaced by a substitute

#### Procedures to Determine the Winner of a Match

To determine the winner of a match, tied after fulltime the following procedures or a combination of these procedures may be used:

- Extra time
- Kicks from the penalty mark

Use of these procedures should be detailed in the competition rules.

#### Appendix A: Notes on the Laws for Small-Sided Football - Modifications

Provided the principles of these laws are maintained, the laws may be modified in their application for matches, including for players with disabilities as outlined below.

Any or all of the following modifications are permissible:

- size of the playing area
- size, weight and material of the ball
- width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- the duration of the periods of play

- substitutions
- height of ball restrictions – if a height restriction is to be introduced the competition rules should identify the height above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. If a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team, an indirect free kick should be awarded on the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place. The exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should continue in this circumstance. Should another player then play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team

#### **Other formats of Small-Sided Football**

The Football Association has the ability to sanction other formats of Small-Sided Football. The principles of any approval by The FA shall be based upon:

- The normal laws of Association Football apply with exceptions
- The game should take into full account the health and safety of the players and officials

#### **Appendix B: Advice to Referees – Affiliated Competitions**

To ensure they are covered by their County FA Public Liability Insurance referees should ensure that all games they officiate in are sanctioned by the appropriate authority (The FA or County FA). If in doubt, contact your County FA for clarification.

#### **Disciplinary Process**

Referees should ensure that all offences for which they have dismissed players with a single red card are reported to their County FA within 48 hours of the game being played. Likewise any disciplinary issues with team officials should be reported within the same timescales.

#### **Appendix C: Goalpost Safety Guidelines**

Up-to-date advice to be included.

#### **Appendix D: The FA Small-Sided Award**

Up-to-date advice to be included.

## **SECTION TWO**

Small-Sided Football Laws of the Game

Players' Guide

1. The players' equipment
2. The Referee
3. Duration of play
4. Playing the match
5. Making Substitutions and Changes
6. Fouls and free kicks
7. Discipline Process
8. Returning the ball back into play
9. Modifications to the Laws



*The normal laws of Association Football apply with exceptions:*

**1. The Players' Equipment**

A player must not use equipment or wear anything that is dangerous to himself or another player. All jewellery should be removed. Plain wedding bands must be taped if they cannot be removed. Shinguards must be covered entirely by the socks, made of a suitable material (rubber, plastic or similar substances) and provide a reasonable degree of protection.

Goalkeepers are permitted to wear long trousers and must wear colours, which easily distinguish him from the other players and the referees.

**2. 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 game to which he has been appointed, from the moment he enters the locality where the playing area is situated until he leaves.

**3. The Duration of the Game**

The game shall be divided into two equal periods of over five and up to 25 minutes each period subject to the following:

- (a) Allowance shall be made in either period for time lost through stoppages as decided by the referee.
- (b) The duration of either period shall be extended to enable a penalty kick to be taken. The half-time interval shall not exceed five minutes except by consent of the Referee.
- (c) Competition rules may allow for a game to be played in its entirety without a half time interval or requirement to change ends.

- 4. Kick-off** is a way of starting or restarting play: at the start of the game, after a goal has been scored, at the start of the second half of the game, and at the start of each period of extra time, where applicable. A goal may be scored directly from the kick-off. All players must be in their own half of the field; the opponents of the team taking the kick-off are at least 3m from the ball until it is in play. The ball must be stationary on the centre mark until the referee gives a signal. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward. The kicker may not touch the ball a second time until it has touched another player

**Drop Ball** is a way of restarting the game after a temporary stoppage. Play restarts when the ball touches the ground.

**Ball Out of Play**

The ball is out of play when: it has wholly crossed the goal line or touchline, whether on the ground or in the air, when the referee has stopped play, or when playing indoors, the ball hits the ceiling.

**Ball In Play**

The ball is in play at all other times including when: it rebounds from a goal post, the crossbar, or the barricades onto the playing area, or if it rebounds from the referee when on the playing area. When a match is being played on an indoor playing area and the ball accidentally hits the ceiling, the game is restarted by an indirect free kick awarded to the opposing team to the team, which last touched the ball.

**Height of ball restrictions**

If a height restriction is to be introduced the competition rules should identify the height above which an indirect free kick shall be awarded to the opposing team. If a height infringement occurs within the penalty area and is committed by the defending team, an indirect free kick should be awarded on the penalty area line nearest to where the offence took place. The exception to this rule shall be when the ball rises above the designated height restriction resulting from a save or block performed by a goalkeeper. Play should

continue in this circumstance. Should another player then play the ball whilst it is at a height above the designated height restriction this will result in an indirect free kick to the opposing team.

#### **Offside**

There is no offside.

#### **Areas of Play**

All players, both attackers and defenders, are permitted to play within the penalty area. Goals can be scored within the penalty area.

#### **5. Substitution Procedure**

The maximum number of substitutes permitted is three.

The number of substitutions made during a game is unlimited. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player. Substitutions should take place when there is a break in play or during play if the second official is involved in refereeing the game.

#### **Changing Places with the Goalkeeper**

Any of the other players, or substitutes, may change places with the goalkeeper. The following conditions must be observed: the referee must be informed before the change is made; a change may only be made during a stoppage in play, the replacement goalkeeper must wear a jersey, which distinguishes him from all other players and the referee.

#### **Viability of a game – Playing Numbers**

For 5, 6 or 7 a side if a team loses at any time more than two members of their team the game should be abandoned. However, this should only apply when players are permanently excluded or lost through injury rather than within the 'Sin Bin' for a two-minute suspension.

#### **6. Fouls and Misconduct**

Fouls and misconduct are penalised as follows:

##### **A Direct Free Kick**

A direct free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred and can be kicked directly into the opponent's goal to score a goal. The referee keeps one arm horizontal pointing in the direction the kick has to be taken. A direct free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered by the referee to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- attempts to kick or trip an opponent
- jumps at, pushes, holds or charges an opponent (even with the shoulder)
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- spits at an opponent,
- slides in an attempt to play the ball when it is being played or attempted to be played by an opponent (sliding tackle), except when the match is being played on a natural or artificial grass playing surface,
- handles the ball deliberately, except for the goalkeeper in his penalty area

**A Penalty Kick** is awarded against a team, which commits any of the offences for which a direct free kick is awarded, inside its own penalty area and while the ball is in play. Additional time is allowed for a penalty kick to be taken at the end of each half or at the end of each period of extra time.

### Position of the Ball and the Players for a Penalty Kick

The ball is placed on the penalty mark; the player taking the penalty kick is properly identified. The defending goalkeeper must remain on his goal line, facing the kicker, between the goalposts, until the ball has been kicked. The players other than the kicker are located: inside the pitch, outside the penalty area, behind or to the side of the penalty mark, at least 5m from the ball. The player taking the penalty must kick the ball forward; they may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves forward.

### Indirect Free Kicks

An indirect free kick is taken from the place where the infringement occurred, unless this was in the penalty area, in which case the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the point nearest to where the infringement occurred. An indirect free kick is awarded for the following offences:

- a Goalkeeper touches or controls the ball with his hands after it has been deliberately kicked or thrown to him by a team-mate
- a Goalkeeper touches or controls the ball with his hands or feet, in the penalty area, for more than four seconds
- the ball exceeds the height of ball restrictions (optional modification)
- if, in the opinion of the referee, a player: plays in a dangerous manner, deliberately impedes the progress of an opponent when the ball is not being played, prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his hands, commits any other offence, not previously mentioned for which play is stopped to administer a temporary timed suspension or dismiss a player

From an Indirect Free Kick a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal. For an Indirect Free Kick: the referee indicates an indirect free kick by raising his arm above his head. He maintains his arm in that position until the kick has been taken and the ball has touched another player or goes out of play.

### Position of Free Kick

All opponents must be at least 1m from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play after it has been touched or played.

## 7. Disciplinary Sanctions

The use of temporary time suspensions ('sin bins) and the exclusion of a player arising from the issuing of a red card are the recommended disciplinary sanctions for use in small-sided football. Match officials should employ the use of temporary timed suspensions in all cases traditionally regarded as cautionable offences. Yellow cards are no longer to be used in small-sided football, unless the use of temporary timed suspensions is impractical due to the nature of the venue, i.e. referees cannot supervise players who have been dismissed. In these cases yellow cards may continue to be used.

The options for a match official imposing disciplinary sanctions are therefore:

- player shown a blue card is temporarily suspended from play
- player issued with a discretionary blue card and temporarily suspended from play
- player issued with a red card and permanently excluded from play

A blue card offence should always be accompanied by a temporary suspension from play of two minutes in duration. The release of players from a temporary suspension should be at the direction of the Referee or a Match Official if one is available.

### Temporary Timed Suspensions

A player is shown the blue card and temporarily excluded from play if he commits any of the following 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, kick-in, free kick or goal clearance. Enters or re-enters the pitch without the referee's permission or infringes the substitution procedure, deliberately leaves the pitch without the referee's permission.

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. If the offence was committed within the penalty area the indirect free kick is taken from the penalty area line at the place nearest to where the infringement occurred.

#### **Sending-Off Offences**

A player is sent off and shown the red card if he commits any of the following 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 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 a penalty kick. Uses offensive, insulting or abusive language. Or if a player receives a second blue card in the same match.

#### **Decisions**

A player who has been sent off may not take any further part in the match nor may he sit on the substitutes' bench, where provided.

8. **The Kick-In** is a method of restarting play. A goal cannot be scored directly from a kick-in. A kick-in is awarded if, the whole of the ball passes over a touch line, either on the ground or in the air, or hits the ceiling. A Kick-in is taken from the place where it crossed the touchline or 2m into the playing area adjacent to where the ball left the playing area when barricades are in use. The kick is awarded to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball.

The player taking the kick-in may not play the ball a second time until it has touched another player. The ball is in play immediately after it is kicked or touched. The players of the defending team must be at least 1m from the place where the kick-in is taken. The feet of the player taking the kick-in must not cross the line.

#### **The Corner Kick**

A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

9. **Modifications to the Laws**

Any or all of the following modifications are permissible:

- size of the field of play
- size, weight and material of the ball
- width between the goalposts and height of the crossbar from the ground
- the duration of the periods of play
- substitutions
- height of ball restrictions

Modifications to the laws should be detailed in the competition regulations.

**FA MINI-SOCCER**

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.