

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. Eleven-a-side Association Football does not meet those needs. We need a modified game that fits the needs of children: 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 fitness

Mini-Soccer sets out to meet those needs. It is a game which has been modified from 11-a-side Association Football which keeps all the major features of the game, while allowing 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. It also sets out to give children fun.

Mini-Soccer, however, is more than another version of 5-or 6-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.

4. It sets a standard and a framework for behaviour on and off the pitch which has already been established by other Football Association schemes such as Funweeks, Coaching Centres and the Soccer Star Challenge.
5. Mini-Soccer is for all youngsters regardless of their ability. It is intended for girls and boys, and young footballers with disabilities and learning difficulties.

In an age when so much of children's leisure time is as organised as their study, Mini-Soccer offers something special: a game that children can organise themselves! With relatively little instruction children can play and enjoy a game which is suitable for a wide ability range and gives everyone a chance to take part.

If you find this hard to believe, just set up a game with some children and WATCH!

Guidance for the Laws of Mini-Soccer

The Laws have been piloted and aim to be simple and as near to 'real' football as possible. The games require only a 'game leader' who is urged to be as flexible as possible with the youngest children.

The children will need the Laws explained to them as the game proceeds (e.g. handball, in/out of play.)

It will also be necessary to demonstrate in certain instances how to re-start the game (e.g. throw-ins, corner kicks.)

What can children expect from Adults?

Remember that children are often easily led, anxious to please and prone to over-enthusiasm, and so plenty of praise and positive reinforcement is needed – especially with beginners.

Children find it hard to understand negative instructions and easier to understand positive reinforcement and this can frequently mean playing down the result and playing up the performance. This reduces the child's anxiety and decreases their worry about failing. Remember that children do not mean to make mistakes; we should accept mistakes as a necessary part of learning.

Make sure the players play by the Laws. The majority of children at these ages will not knowingly infringe the Laws of the Game. Finally, work with other adults, not against them, and by so doing reinforce positive attitudes among the children.

Interference from the Touch Line

Whilst the fun and friendly atmosphere created by Mini-Soccer should keep such instances to a minimum, there may be situations which arise where comments and abuse from adults, parents and Managers is made from the touch line.

This could be directed at the Referee, but also at the players. What can be done? Stay calm; don't get into disagreement; report the matter to relevant club or league officials; set a positive responsible example.

Referees – Mini-Soccer Game Leaders

The Referee will have an important role to play in Mini-Soccer. Carrying out their duties without favour they should look to create a playing environment which is fun for all taking part. The Referee should encourage fair play, fun, respect for others, development of skills and team work, understanding of the Laws of the Game.

The Laws of the Game should be a guide for the Referee in Mini-Soccer with the spirit of the laws being more important than the letters of the law. [Appreciation of the needs of the child are essential.](#)

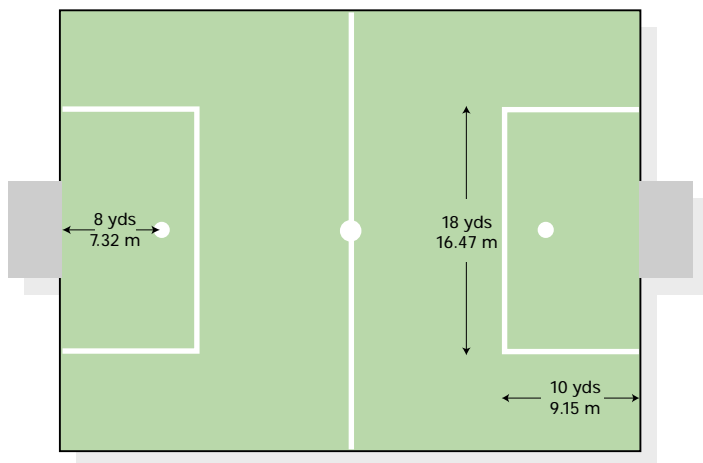


THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION LAWS FOR MINI-SOCCER FOR PLAYERS (BOTH BOYS AND GIRLS OVER THE AGE OF 6 AND UNDER 10)

Please note : Where Leagues operate Under 11 Mini-Soccer events, they must follow these Laws

Except where other provision, in these Laws are made, the Laws of Association Football apply. Each Law is numbered to correspond with the appropriate Law of the Game. These Laws are mandatory unless special permission is granted by The Football Association.

LAW 1. Playing Area



Recommended Size of Pitch

	Under 10s/9s		Under 8s/7s	
	Metres	Yards	Metres	Yards
Width	Min. 27.45	Min. 30	Min. 18.30	Min. 20
	Max. 36.60	Max. 40	Max. 27.45	Max. 30
Length	Min. 45.75	Min. 50	Min. 27.45	Min. 30
	Max .54.90	Max. 60	Max. 45.75	Max. 50

Penalty Area

Length 9.15m – 10 yards; Width 16.47m – 18 yards

Penalty Mark

The penalty mark is 7.32m (8 yards) from the Goal Line opposite the Centre of the Goal.

Halfway Line

The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The centre mark is indicated at the mid-point of the halfway line.

LAW 1. Goal Size

The distance between the posts is 3.6m (12ft) and the distance between the lower edge of the cross bar and the ground is 1.88m (6ft).

Warning

In view of a number of accidents that have occurred, it is necessary to ensure that portable goals of any size are either pinned or weighted to prevent them from toppling forward.

LAW 2. The Ball

The ball should be no larger than size 4. Size 3 is recommended for Under 8's. It should be safe and made of leather or another suitable material.

LAW 3. Number of Players

	Number per Team, including Goalkeeper
Over 6 and Under 8s	4 v 4 and 5 v 5
Over 8 and Under 10s	6 v 6 and 7 v 7

Players must play with and against players only from their own age range – within a two year age band. Players should not be allowed to begin to play until the Season of their 7th birthday.

Each team must not have a squad greater than double the size of the team per age.

Any number of substitutes, without being named, may be used at any time with the permission of the referee or game leader. Entry into the field of play will only be allowed during a stoppage in play. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player.

LAW 4. Playing Equipment

Players must wear shinguards and goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing strip.

Shinguards must be covered entirely by the stockings.

LAW 5. Referees

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 match to which they have been appointed.

Powers and Duties

The Referee:

- Enforces the Laws of the Game
- Controls the match in co-operation with the assistant referees / time keeper
- Ensures that the ball meets the requirements of Law 2
- Ensures that the players' equipment meets the requirements of Law 4
- Stops, suspends or terminates the match, at their discretion, for any infringements of the Laws
- Stops, suspends or terminates the match because of outside interference of any kind
- Stops the match if, in their opinion, a player is seriously injured and ensures that they are removed from the field of play
- Ensures that any player bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play
- 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
- Takes disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and/or sending-off offences.
- Takes action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at their discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surrounds
- Ensures that no unauthorised persons enter the field of play
- Restarts the match after it has been stopped

Decisions of the Referee

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

The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his/her discretion provided that play has not restarted.

LAW 6. Timekeeper/Scorer/Assistant Referee

Duties

A person may be nominated to assist the referee to: -

- (a) Record goals scored;
- (b) Act as timekeeper and signify to the referee by an agreed signal when the time of each half has expired;

- (c) Suspend time on an instruction from the referee for all stoppages and add that time to the end of each half;
- (d) Supervise the use of rolling substitutes.
- (e) Carry out any other duties as prescribed by the referee;

If an independent timekeeper/scorer is not nominated, these duties are the responsibility of the referee.

LAW 7. Duration of Game

In any one day, no player shall play more than the stipulated period outlined below. Within this maximum the recommended duration of games is provided.

	Recommended Number of Minutes each half	Maximum duration of participation per day per player
Over 6 and Under 8	10 minutes	45 minutes
Over 8 and Under 10	15 minutes	60 minutes

Each league/competition will determine its own playing time within the maximum time permitted. The half time interval must not exceed 5 minutes.

LAW 8. Start and Restart of Play

Procedure

A kick-off is taken at the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored, opponents must be 4.5m (5 yards) away from the ball, and in their own half of the field. The ball must be played forward.

Special Circumstances

A dropped ball to restart the match after play has been temporarily stopped inside the penalty area takes place on the penalty area line parallel to the goal line at that point nearest to where the ball was located when the play stopped.

LAW 9. 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

Ball in Play

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

- It rebounds from a goal post, crossbar or corner flag post and remains in the field of play
- It rebounds from either the referee or an assistant referee when they are on the field of play

LAW 10. Method of Scoring

Goal Scored

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the Laws of the Game has been committed previously by the team scoring the goal.

Winning Team

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

Competition Rules

For matches ending in a draw, competition rules may state provisions involving extra time, or other procedures approved by the International F.A. Board to determine the winner of a match.

Please note this must be included within the maximum participation time.

LAW 11. Offside

There is no offside.

LAW 12. Fouls and Misconduct

In Mini-Soccer all free kicks are direct.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered 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

- Strikes or attempts to strike an opponent
- Pushes an opponent

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

- Tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball
- Holds an opponent
- Spits at an opponent
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his/her own penalty area)
- Plays in a dangerous manner
- Impedes the progress of an opponent
- Prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his/her hands
- Commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player

Penalty Kick

A penalty kick is awarded if any of the above offences is committed by a player inside his/her own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the goalkeeper:

- Takes more than 6 seconds to release the ball from his/her hands
- Touches the ball again with his/her hands after it has been released from his/her possession and has not touched any other player
- Touches the ball with his/her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him/her by a team mate
- Touches the ball with his/her hands after he/she has received it directly from a throw in taken by a team mate

For all of these offences, the free kick should be taken from the penalty area line, parallel with the goal line, at the nearest point to the offence.

Cautionable Offences

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he/she commits any of the following seven offences:

1. Is guilty of unsporting behaviour
2. Shows dissent by word or action
3. Persistently infringes the Laws of the Game

4. Delays the restart of play
5. Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick or free kick
6. Enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission
7. Deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission

Sending Off Offences

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

1. Is guilty of serious foul play
2. Is guilty of violent conduct
3. Spits at an opponent or any other person
4. 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/her own penalty area)
5. 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
6. Uses offensive or insulting or abusive language and/or gestures
7. Receives a second caution in the same match

LAW 13. Free Kicks

For all free kicks opponents must be 4.5m (5 yards) from the ball.

LAW 14. Penalty Kicks

A penalty kick is awarded for offences, as described in Law 12.

Position of the Ball and the Players

All players except the defending goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and at least 4.5m (5 yards) from the penalty mark.

The ball must be kicked forward.

Infringement/Sanctions

If a player or players commit an offence at the taking of a penalty kick his/her team shall not be allowed to gain an advantage (i.e. the kick is retaken or the goal is disallowed depending on which team offended).

If a player of both the defending and the attacking teams offend, the kick shall be retaken.

LAW 15. Throw-in

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

A throw-in is awarded:

- When the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air
- From the point where it crossed the touch line
- To the opponents of the player who last touched the ball

Procedure

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- Faces the field of play
- Has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line
- Uses both hands
- The throw-in is awarded to the opposing team, if any of these requirements are not carried out
- Delivers the ball from behind and over their head

The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he / she does a free kick will be awarded against them. The ball is in play immediately it enters the field of play.

LAW 16. Goal Kick

Procedure

A player of the defending team kicks the ball from any point within the penalty area.

Opponents must remain outside the penalty area and at least 5 yards (4.5m) from where the kick is taken until the ball is in play.

LAW 17. Corner Kicks

The opposing players must remain at least 4.5m (5 yards) from the ball until it is play.

The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he / she does a free kick is awarded against them.

The ball is in play immediately it enters the field of play.

The Responsible Football Coach/Manager

Code of Conduct for Football

1. Coaches/Managers must respect the rights' dignity and worth of each and every person and treat each equally within the context of the sport.
2. Coaches/Managers must place the well being and safety of each player above all other considerations, including the development of performance.
3. Coaches/Managers must adhere to all guidelines laid down within the Constitution and the Rules of The Football Association.
4. Coaches/Managers must develop an appropriate working relationship with each player based on mutual trust and respect.
5. Coaches/Managers must not exert undue influence to obtain personal benefit or reward.
6. Coaches/Managers must encourage and guide players to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance.
7. Coaches/Managers must ensure at the activities they direct or advocate is appropriate for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players.
8. Coaches/Managers should, at the outset, clarify with the player (and, where appropriate, their parents) exactly what is expected of them and also what they are entitled to expect from their coach.
9. Coaches/Managers must co-operate fully with other specialists (e.g. other coaches, officials, sports scientists, doctors, physiotherapists) in the best interests of the player.
10. Coaches/Managers must always promote the appropriate Code of Conduct and positive aspects of the sport (e.g. fair play) to players, parents and spectators alike. Never condone violations of the Laws of the Game, behaviour contrary to the spirit of the Laws of the Game or relevant rules and regulations or the use of prohibited substances or techniques.
11. Coaches/Managers must consistently display high standards of behaviour and experience and be a role model for players, parents and spectators.

Goalpost Safety

The Football Association and the British Standards Institution would like to draw your attention to the following guidelines for the safe use of goalposts. Too many serious injuries and 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.
 - Portable goalposts must be secured by the use of chain anchors or appropriate anchor weights to prevent them from toppling forward.
 - It is essential that under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb, swing on or play with the structures of the goalposts.
 - Particular attention is drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may topple over.
2. Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be dismantled and removed to a place of secure storage.
3. It is strongly recommended that nets should only be secured by plastic hooks or tape and not by metal cup hooks. Any metal cup hooks should if possible be removed and replaced. New goalposts should not be purchased if they include metal cup hooks which cannot be replaced.
4. Goalposts which are “home made” or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used. These have been the cause of a number of deaths and injuries.
5. Guidelines to prevent toppling:
 - i. Follow Manufacturer’s guide-lines in assembling goalposts.
 - ii. Before use, adults should:
 - ensure each goal is anchored securely in its place
 - exert a significant downward force on the cross bar
 - exert a significant backward force on both upright posts
 - exert a significant forward force on both upright posts

These must be repeated until it is established that the structure is secure. If not, alternative goals/pitches must be used.

Mini-Soccer Formats

Introduction

Mini-Soccer embraces the concept of fun and enjoyment which is vital if children are to develop a lifelong love for football.

Mini-Soccer is now recognised as the mandatory introduction to football for all Under 10's in England. All Leagues and Clubs who affiliate to The Football Association and offer opportunities to the Under 10 age groups are required to play to the Laws of Mini-Soccer.

Mini-Soccer is played in a number of formats across England. Many Leagues operate on a traditional 'home' and 'away' basis, other Leagues bring a number of teams to a single venue and play a number of games on the same day. Some Leagues play on a 'friendly' basis with no league champions, others offer cup competitions. The format offered by individual Leagues is determined by the League and it's members within the Laws of Mini-Soccer.

Other formats of Mini-Soccer are also encouraged. Traditionally Mini-Soccer has been used by Clubs, Schools, Local Authority Schemes and others as a 'turn-up-and-play opportunity', possibly for those children who may not be part of a team and for those who just love to play. Traditionally these opportunities operated as the old Mini-Soccer Centres' and took place after school, on the weekends or in school holidays. Such schemes are now required to affiliate to the relevant County Football Association and operate to the requirements detailed here.

Festivals has long been played as an end of season event, and during holiday periods. The format for Under 10's must be Mini-Soccer and guidelines for such events are also included.

Pre-requisites to operating Mini-Soccer

- All games must comply with the Laws of Mini-Soccer
- Each game must be under the control of a Referee who must be over 14 years of age
- There must be opportunities for boys and girls to participate. Organisers should also be aware that Mini-Soccer provides an excellent introduction to football for disabled children.
- The facility must have no unnecessary hazards. It must be safe and include the following:
 - A safe playing surface (including goalpost, see Goalpost Safety)
 - The use of toilets for both sexes
- An adult with a minimum of an F.A. Emergency First Aid qualification must be on site at all times
- High standards of behaviour are expected from all spectators, coaches, officials and players.
- Appropriate Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance must be acquired.

Minimum / Maximum duration of play in any one day

<i>Age</i>	<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
Up to and including Under 8	20 minutes	45 minutes
Up to and including Under 10	30 minutes	60 minutes

The basic premise is that children under 10 years of age should not play more than one hour in any one day. The maximum time must also include any provision for extra time, as per Law 7 of the Laws of Mini-Soccer.

Weather Conditions

Mini-Soccer for Under 7s and Under 8s in particular is not recommended during periods of inclement weather.

Recommendation for operating club festivals and traditional turn up and play Mini-Soccer Centres

A programme of 6-10 sessions is recommended and the most popular periods are September, October, November, March, April and May.

Saturday and particularly Sunday mornings have proven to be the most popular times for operating.

Football Clubs, Schools, Youth Clubs, Sports Centres or similar venues can all be affiliated providing the pre-requisite criteria are met.

If you require further information contact your local County Association.

Equipment and officials

	<i>12' x 6' Goalposts</i>	<i>Dedicated M/S Pitches</i>	<i>Appropriate Additional Entertainment and Activities</i>	<i>Qualified Referees</i>
National Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
County Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
League Festivals	✓	✗	✗	✗
Club Festivals Mini-Soccer Centre	✓	✗	✗	✗

Appropriate Competitive Formats for Children Playing Mini-Soccer

The central figure in the recommendation for The Football Association's Charter for Quality is the player and his or her best interests. Attempting to provide quality experiences for all young players at all levels is the overriding principle. The Football Association as a responsible Governing Body insists on the following formats of participation being adhered to:

	<i>League</i>	<i>League Cup KO Competition</i>	<i>1 Day KO Tournaments</i>	<i>County Cup</i>	<i>Fun Festival</i>
<i>U9/U10</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<i>U7/U8</i>	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓

Please remember:

Under 8's and Under 7's are not permitted to play in knock out competitions. There will not be any sanctioned National or Regional Mini-Soccer Cup Competitions.

