

Game Format (1v1 to 4v4 & Multi Games)

PLAYER JOURNEY - SMALL SIDED GAMES FORMAT OPTIONS 5-12 YEARS									
YEAR 2026	2020	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2015 FROM AUG	2014	2014 FROM MAY
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	Focus on in-house, club based games. Mixed age groups and formats to encourage fun, social interaction, and skill exploration. Some local festival activity permitted				Clubs should continue to provide a variety of activity, enabling players to play in club-based activity sessions and/or more regular festivals or fixture-based football.				
1v1, 2v2, 3v3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4v4	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5v5			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7v7				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
9v9						✓	✓	✓	
11v11									✓

For young players the small sided game has been proven through research to be the best format to develop their love for the game along with the opportunity to maximise involvement and help with player development.

The game format described below is the MAXIMUM format that players of this age should play. It is entirely acceptable that players at this stage play any smaller format of the game, involving fewer players but should not play any larger format games.

Games should be organised on a round robin festival basis and be trophy free.

Teams will comprise 4 outfield players with no goalkeepers. Team squads may consist of up to 6 players with rolling substitutions used throughout the game. Players who have been substituted may return to the field of play as often as necessary.

All team members should receive equal playing time.

A Game Supervisor must be a club official, will officiate from the side of the field and will not be allowed to coach either team.

At the end of every game, team coaches should encourage both teams to shake hands with each other and the officials.

It is unacceptable for a league and/or club to post results from development games on to any website or publish in any newsletter, newspaper or social media.

4v4 Game

Set Up

2 Teams of 4 players. Regular 4v4 Goals.

Coaches/Leaders stand on same side with additional players.

'Ethos'

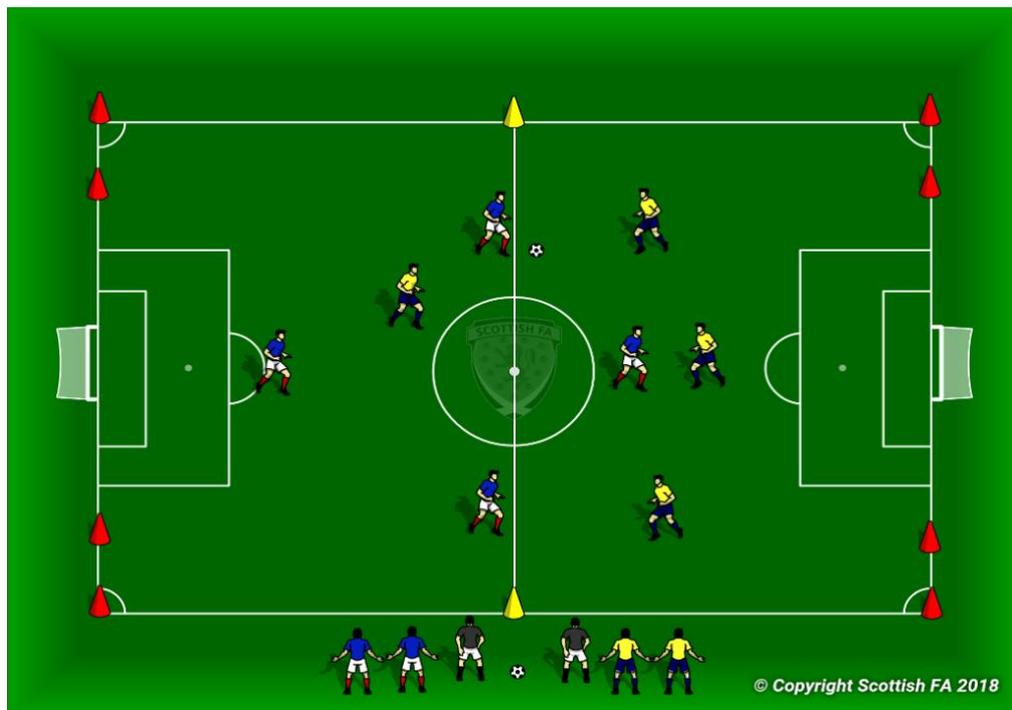
Coaches / Leaders facilitate the game by encouraging players to play with freedom. - "Learn the game by playing the game".

Restart of Play

Score – Conceding team can dribble back into play straight away, risk v reward or wait for opponent to drop to halfway.

Ball out of Play (side-line or end-line) – Dribble or Kick in from where ball went out. Opponent gives 3m space.

Foul / Handball – Dribble or kick in from place of incident.



4 Gates Game

Set Up

2 Teams of 4 players. Regular 4v4 Goals turned round.

Cones or Markers used to create 4 Gates in Corners 4m wide and 2m off the end line (gives space to next / adjoining pitch).

Coaches/Leaders stand on same side with additional players.

To Score

Player dribbles through either corner gate they are attacking (with control of the ball).

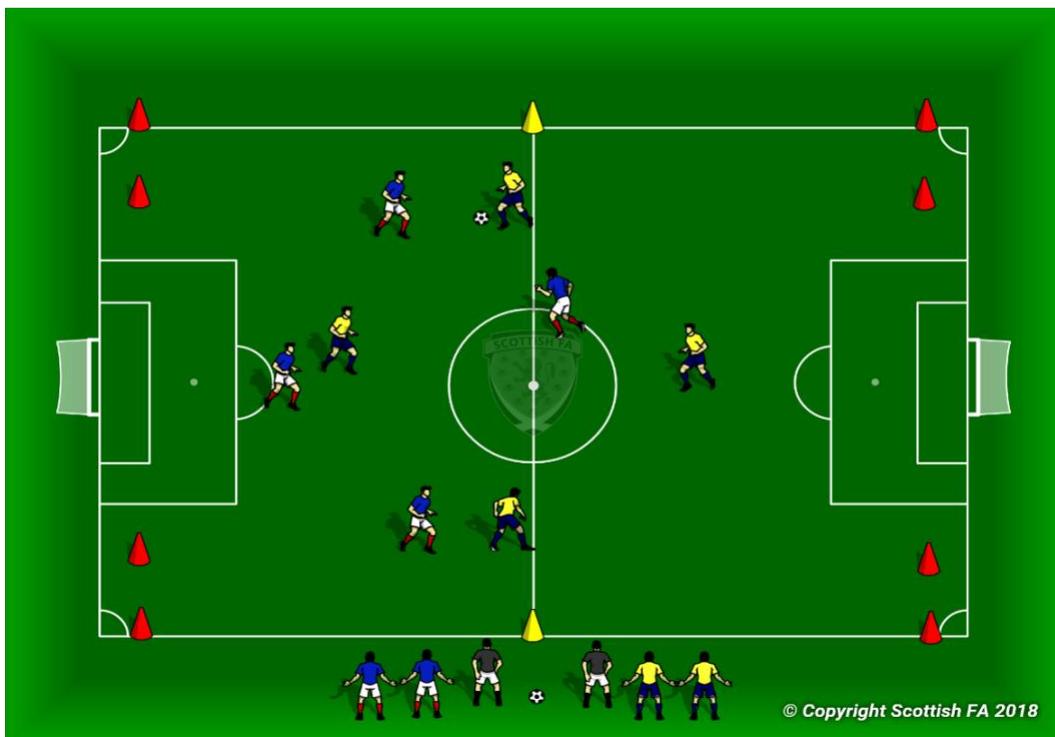
Restart of Play

Score – Conceding team can dribble back into play straight away, risk v reward or wait for opponent to drop to halfway.

Ball out of Play (side-line or end-line) – Dribble or Kick in from where ball went out. Opponent gives 3m space.

Foul / Handball – Dribble or kick in from place of incident.

Player Blocking Gates - Gates wide enough for opponent to get past, coach encourages player to come out and join in.



Numbers Game

Set Up

2 Teams of 4-6 players. Regular 4v4 Goals plus corner gates.

Cones are used to create 4 gates in corners. (Gates can be brought in off end line as per 4 goal game to give space to next / adjoining pitch if required)

Leaders stand on same side and work together for the benefit of all players, one as main feeder, the other with the 'magic ball'.

To Score

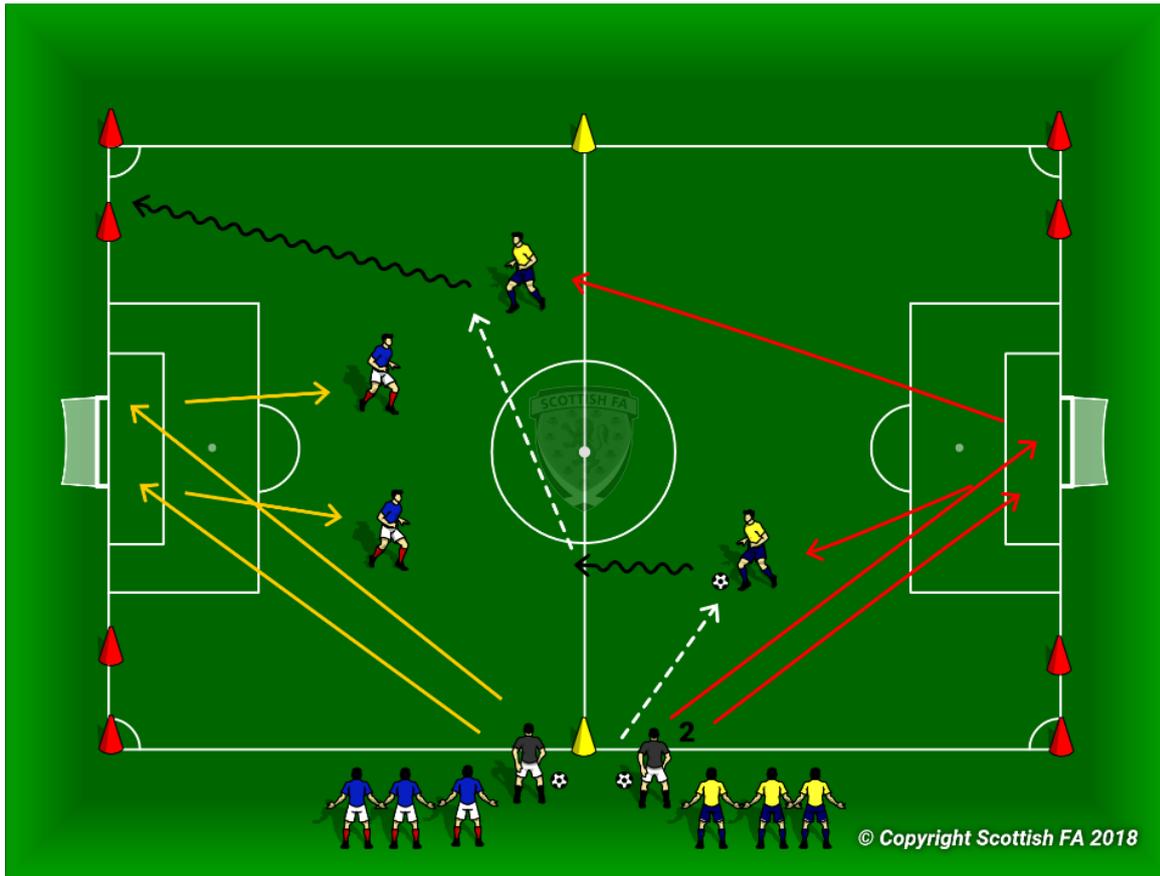
Players score in goal or dribble through either corner gate they are attacking.

How it Works

Leader calls any number between one and four. As per diagram, if leader calls "2", the first two players in each line run out, touch their goal and the leader feeds to one team to attack.

If a goal is scored inside 10 seconds or the ball goes out of play quickly, the other leader can use the 'magic' ball to play the ball in for a second attack.

If the game is going on for too long (over 30 secs) the leader can give a five second warning where one of the teams has to score or the game is over (this is to avoid inactivity with the players on the side)



Numbers game

Numbers Game (with pitch variation)

As per 'Numbers Game' above, this time showing how 'magic ball' is introduced after a goal is scored quickly.

Note.

Players receive same number of points for scoring in either a middle or corner goal. The game is designed for players to work out quick solutions to problems.

Equipment

- Goalposts shall be 2.5 metres by 1.2 metres (8ft by 4ft) or smaller.
- A size 3 ball should be used.
- All players must wear shin-guards.
- Metal studs are suitable for grass fields only.
- Players must wear the appropriate clothing dependent on weather.
- Glasses may be worn provided they have safety frames and lenses.

The Duration of the Game

It is recommended that all 4v4s (& multi-game formats) games are played on a festival format at central venues, with games being shorter in duration with numerous games taking place.

It is recommended that for regular festivals games should last no more than 10 minutes in length (with 5min between games), with a maximum of 4 games within a 1 hour period

Note - due to local arrangements some of the timings may differ, however, for all 4v4s its recommended to ensure games are shorter in duration to enable children to enjoy the experience and have fun.

The Start and Restart of Play

On scoring a goal, the team that scores will retreat to the halfway line. The team conceding the goal will restart the game from the penalty area by either dribbling directly into play or playing a forward pass.

The Ball in and out of Play

Free Kicks - Normal rules apply except that the distance an opposing player must be is 3 metres from the ball. All free kicks are indirect.

The Throw In - In the event of the ball going out of play, a kick-in/dribble-in will be awarded. The players must place the ball down and either dribble directly into play or play a short pass.

The Goal Kick - The players must place the ball down and either dribble directly into play or play a pass out, opposing player must be is 3 metres from the ball.

The Corner Kick - In the event of the ball going out of play, a kick-in/dribble-in will be awarded. The players must place the ball down and either dribble directly into play or play a pass.

Results

It is unacceptable for a league and/or club to post results from development matches on to any website or publish in any newsletter, newspaper or social media.

Required Coach Education

Required Coach Education Award is Level Children's Coaching Certificate of the Scottish FA Children's Pathway.

[Click here](#) for further information on the coach education pathway

Recommended Coach in Service

All coaches should attend 'Introduction to Small Sided Games' In-Service training, relevant CCD/CPD & PCS Coaches Workshop

Heading Guide for Coaches, Teachers, Leaders and Parents

For guidelines on heading, please [click here](#).