

Game Format (5s)

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 5 players (one player can act as a goalkeeper, but should be encouraged to participate in the game). Team squads may consist of up to 7 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.
- If leagues/clubs are using 5-a-side courts and the ball hits the wall it will be treated as out of play.

- If league/clubs are using 5-a-side courts the marked penalty box will be treated as normal football rules.

Playing Area

Recommended

The Scottish FA promote the use of small sided games festival formats to maximise participation and inclusion.

The field of play should be a maximum of 40 metres by 30 metres.

Goalposts should be no more than 4.9 metres x 1.8 metres (16ft by 6ft).

A centre mark at the midpoint of the halfway line.

Field and goalposts as supplied by the local authority may be used. Leagues/Clubs should adapt the recommendations according to the venue specifications.

For children, playing the game in a festival format provides a great way to ensure everyone is engaged, involved and having fun.

Equipment

- Goalposts should be no more than 4.9 metres x 1.8 metres (16ft by 6ft).
- 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.

Playing Rules

The Duration of the Game

It is recommended that all 5s 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 20 minutes (2x10 minute halves with 5 minutes between halves). There should be a minimum of 5 minutes between games with a maximum of either 3 x 15minute games or 2 x 20minute games within a 1 hour period.

Note - due to local arrangements some timings may differ, however, for all 5s 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.

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.

Additional Rules

- If leagues/clubs are using 5-a-side courts and the ball hits the wall it will be treated as out of play.
- If league/clubs are using 5-a-side courts the marked penalty box will be treated as normal football rules.

Results

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.

Required Coach Education

Required Coach Education Award is Children 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.