

MINI FOOTBALL

INTRODUCTION

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) recognises that children do not perform the same as adults in an 11-a-side game. Therefore a modified version is required to meet the developmental needs of young players while maintaining all the features and essence of the full game. Mini Football is recognised by the FAW as the only form of football in Wales for children Under 11 years of age.

WHAT IS MINI FOOTBALL

Mini Football is a modified version of the 11-a-side game. It gives children the chance to play real football, for a real team, whilst experiencing an enjoyable and fun introduction to football through small sided games.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN

All available research shows that children have more fun and learn more playing a game within smaller teams. Mini Football is therefore ideal for girls and boys under 11 years of age in terms of maximizing their enjoyment and technical/skill development.

IF CHILDREN ARE TO ENJOY AND TAKE PART IN FOOTBALL THEY NEED TO:

1. Take an active part in the game and have fun without any pressure from parents, coaches or managers.
2. Learn to play within a team.
3. Understand and observe the rules of football.
4. Develop the skills and techniques to play football.
5. Be able to take part whatever their ability.
6. Have plenty of contact with the ball.

KEY VALUES OF MINI FOOTBALL

Mini football is for girls and boys aged 5 to 11 of all abilities who are interested in football (all children of primary school age). The FAW believes that children should learn how to compete to win fairly, skillfully and within the rules of the game. At this age striving to win is more important than the outcome, winning is not everything, making the effort is.

Mini Football:

1. Recognises that children do not perform and compete as adults and therefore its rules are adapted to meet the needs of children.
2. Has all the features of real football for children.
3. Recognises the value of competitiveness for children and provides an appropriate environment.
4. Sets a standard and a framework of behaviour on and off the pitch.
5. Is for boys and girls regardless of their ability.

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

1. There is more contact with the ball in Mini Football leading to a better technique. In 11v11 the ratio of ball to outfield players is 1:20, because there are fewer players in Mini Football each player has more regular contact with the ball. More contact with the ball helps players practice technique and develop technique into a skill through 1v1 competition.
2. Decision making is easier and occurs more often because of the small numbers involved. As a result, the players will gain a greater understanding of the game. The basic football situations are easier to see and simpler to solve.
3. Because the ball is never far away from the player, the chance of developing concentration is greatly increased. Playing 11-a-side football, many children lose interest in the game because the ball goes out of their immediate vicinity and they quickly become bored spectators.
4. Fewer players, more space and simpler decisions will encourage more movement of players whatever the situation.
5. More contact leads to more participation and usually, more enjoyment, success is easier to achieve.

MINI FOOTBALL IS THE BASIS OF ALL FOOTBALL

Small sided games have been played for hundreds of years in the street, the playground, or on the beach and many professional teams use them as the basis for their coaching. They invariably lead to basic football situations, such as, 1v1, 2v2 and 3v3 so typical of the 11-a-side game. Mini-football, through its dynamic tempo, produces more vigorous exercise than 11-a-side football and so helps to improve children's core components of fitness – speed, agility, balance and coordination.

ORGANISATION OF MINI FOOTBALL

The general aim of Mini Football is to provide a safe, supervised environment for children to enjoy their introduction to the game.

Playing Surface

Mini football pitches may be specifically laid out on any suitable open spaces or conventional grass or Astroturf football pitches which can be converted for Mini-Football. There **must** be no debris or dangerous hazards either on the field of play or in the immediate surrounding area. Markings **must** be laid out with the use of conventional lines, marker discs or small cones.

Playing Equipment

Children **must** wear footwear suitable to the surface being played on. All children **must** wear suitable shin guards. All jewellery must be removed.

Organisation of games, festivals and fun days

The FAW believe that the game of Mini Football provides children with the necessary introduction to competition. The game itself is a sufficient skill development challenge for children. **As a consequence no league or knockout competition must be organised (or will be sanctioned by the FAW) involving Mini Football.**

Matches can be scheduled in a number of different ways to be determined by the Junior League:

- On a 'Home and Away' basis as determined by the organising junior league.
- On a round robin basis where 3 or 4 teams play at one venue against each other, teams can rotate on and off the pitch having rest breaks when not playing.
- On a Festival basis where a number of teams play round robin games at a central venue. Each team plays against each of the other teams, on completion of the first round of matches, one team will remain on each pitch while their previous opponents move on to the next pitch. This format is followed until all of the teams have played against each other, or have played a suitable number of games. Coaches/Managers should ensure suitable breaks are provided between games.

'BEHIND THE LINE, BEHIND THE TEAM' CAMPAIGN

As part of the FAW/Welsh Football Trust's campaign to improve parent/coach behaviour at Mini Football matches the use of buffer zones alongside all mini pitches will be piloted during the 2009/2010 season. **This will be mandatory at all under 7 and under 8 matches**, a junior league may apply this pilot to the other Mini Football age groups at its own discretion. As a consequence at all Mini Football games clubs **MUST**:

1. Create a 'Buffer zone' that runs parallel to pitch, ideally 2 metres from both touchlines, a smaller buffer zone can be used where space doesn't allow 2 metres.
2. Buffer zone should be marked by cones or additional marked line.
3. Only players, designated coaches and 1st Aider allowed within zone.
4. All other spectators must watch from behind the buffer zone lines. NO spectators are allowed to stand on the goal line or behind the goal.

THE RULES OF MINI FOOTBALL

The rules are simple and as near to real football as possible. A game leader, who is urged to be as flexible as possible with the youngest children, supervises the matches.

Rules are explained as the game proceeds (for example, hand ball, and then in/out play). It may also be necessary to demonstrate in certain instances how to restart the game (e.g. throw in, corner kicks).

1. The game is for boys and girls aged 5 to 11 (as of midnight 31st August the previous year) and mixed football is allowed in all age ranges.
2. Laws 9 and 10 apply to mini football but there is no off-side. (Refer to FAW Handbook).
3. Team size, pitch size and ball size **must** be implemented as below in the table:

Implementation Date	Age Group	Number of Players	Size of Pitch (length x width)	Size of Ball
Effective from start of 2009/10 season	Under 7	4v4 No Goalkeepers	30x20 yards	3
Effective from start of 2009/10 season	Under 8	5v5 Goalkeeper introduced	30x20 yards	3
Effective from start of 2010/11 season	Under 9	6v6	40x30 yards	3
Effective from start of 2011/12 season	Under 10	7v7	60x40 yards	4
Effective from start of 2011/12 season	Under 11	8v8	60x40 yards	4

4. For Under 9's, 10's and Under 11's they continue to play Mini Football with the following structure below until the effective season displayed in table above. All other Mini Football rules apply.

Number of Players: Maximum of 8v8

Size of Pitch: Maximum of 60x40 yards

Size of Ball: Maximum size 4

Size of Goal: Maximum 12 feet x 6 feet.

Size of Penalty Area: 10 yards across full width of pitch.

5. The maximum goal size for all age groups is 12ft x 6ft. It is highly recommended that at Under 7 a smaller goal is utilized. This can be achieved through using cones, placing a 12ft x 6ft Mini Goal face down or using specific smaller goals (such as pop up (pug) goals).

6. The goal area can be marked by cones on the touchline and a small number of marker discs on the playing area. The goal area extends a set distance from the goal line and is also a specified width. See table below:

Age Group	Distance from Goal Line to Edge of Area (Length)	Width of Penalty Area
Under 7 <i>Effective from start of 2009/10 season</i>	NO Goal Area	NO Goal Area
Under 8 <i>Effective from start of 2009/10 season</i>	5 yards	10 yards
Under 9 <i>Effective from start of 2010/11 season</i>	8 yards	15 yards
Under 10 <i>Effective from start of 2011/12 season</i>	10 yards	20 yards
Under 11 <i>Effective from start of 2011/12 season</i>	10 yards	20 yards

7. A Mini Player can only play a maximum of 60 minutes sanctioned match time in one 24 hour period. For under 7 and under 8 players this **must** be broken down into a maximum of either 15 minute individual periods of play or games.

8. Any number of substitutes may be used at any time (Rolling substitutes). Players may re-enter the game and all substitutes **must** have a period of play. As far as possible there should be equal playing time for each player.

9. The kick off is taken in the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored.

10. Although Law 15 applies and the throw in should be taken in the normal way, game leaders can show flexibility.

11. Law 17 applies to corner kicks except the opposition should be at least three yards away.

12. Law 12 applies to free kicks although they are all indirect and the opposition should be at least three yards away.

13. Goalkeepers:

- Can handle the ball in their penalty area and there are no restrictions on the number of steps they may take holding the ball. The Goalkeeper can leave the penalty area but cannot handle the ball outside the penalty area.
- When handling the ball in the penalty area:
 - Under 7's, 8's and 9's can either throw or kick the ball out of their hands.
 - While Under 10's and 11's can throw the ball out of their hands or kick the ball on the ground but can then be challenged by opponents.

14. Goal-kicks:

- Are taken anywhere on the edge of the penalty area – the opposition should be at least 5 yards away. The ball must be kicked out of the penalty area before another player touches it.
- Under 8's and 9's may be taken from their hands from within the goal area.

15. There are no restrictions regarding the number of players allowed in the goal area during open play.

16. Players can pass the ball to their own goalkeeper, for the goalkeeper to handle the ball. **No pass back rule**