



# MINI FOOTBALL HANDBOOK



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# MINI FOOTBALL

**Smaller teams, simpler rules - more fun, more touches of the ball, more action!**

## 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 needs of young players while maintaining all the features and essence of the full game.

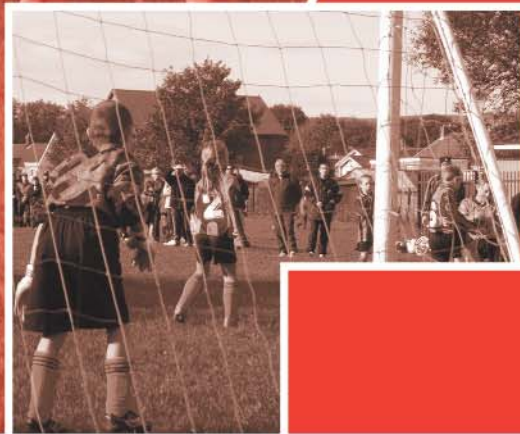
Mini Football is recognised by the FAW as the only form of football in Wales for children under 11 years old.

## 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 THE 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.



## 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.
- 4** Develop the skills 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, skilfully, 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.

- 1** It recognises that children do not perform as adults and therefore its rules meet the needs of the children.
- 2** It has all the features of real football for children.
- 3** It recognises the value of competition but because the Football Association of Wales does not wish to place undue emphasis on the result, it will not sanction competitive leagues in mini football.
- 4** It sets a standard and a framework of behaviour on and off the pitch.
- 5** It is for boys and girls regardless of their ability.





## SKILL DEVELOPMENT

- 1** There is more contact with the ball in Mini Football leading to **better technique**. In 11 v 11 the ratio of ball to outfield players is 1:20. Because there are fewer players in Mini Football each player has more contact with the ball which helps technical development.
- 2** More contact leads to more participation and usually, **more enjoyment**. Success is easier to achieve.
- 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** **Decision making** is easier 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.
- 5** Fewer players, more space and simpler decisions will encourage **more movement** of players whatever the situation.

### For teachers and coaches Mini-Football is:

- Easy to organise.
- Can be a mixed gender activity and for young players with disabilities.
- A game played anywhere, anytime.
- A more appropriate class activity than 11-a-side football.

## 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, 3 v 3, 4 v 4 and 5 v 5 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 childrens' fitness levels.

## CONDITIONED MINI FOOTBALL GAMES

Why use conditioned games?

The use of conditions within a small sided game is an additional learning tool junior coaches/managers may use. They assist players that have not quite grasped the application of various skills, and can increase/decrease problems they have to solve within a game.

For conditions to be successful it is advised that:  
They are specific to the session theme. Conditions should also be introduced through observations made from initial free play.

**Some examples of conditions placed upon a small sided game:**

- All players have a maximum number of touches: one, two or three touch.
- Your team must make a minimum number of passes (three, four, five etc).
- All players must dribble past an opposing player before passing or scoring.
- A team must win the ball back in no more than a maximum number of passes (high press defending).

- If your team loses possession the team must retreat to a certain point on the pitch (retreating defence).

Although examples of conditions have been provided there are 1001 other options in this area. The coach should use their imagination and develop conditions that best suit the needs of their players.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED TO PLAY MINI FOOTBALL

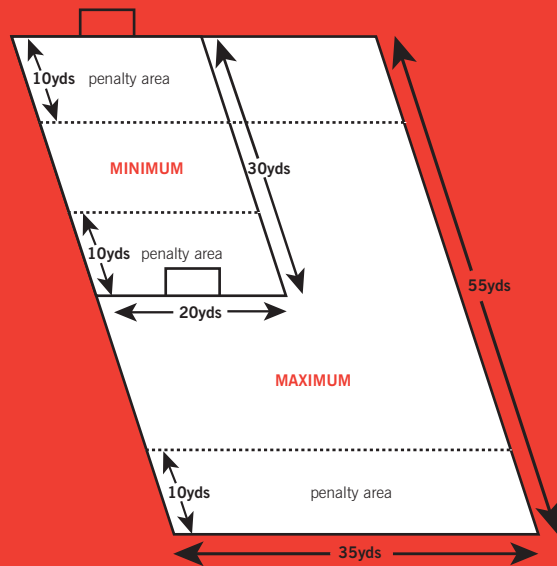
- Any level surface on which it is suitable to play football.
- A ball, no larger than Size 4. Size 3 is recommended for under 6's and 7's.
- Two goals, 12 ft x 6 ft. If you don't have a set of goals, use cones or marker discs, 12 ft apart.
- Children should wear training shoes or football boots if the surface is wet.
- Markings laid out with the use of lines, marker discs or cones.

There should be no debris or dangerous hazards either on the field of play or in the immediate surrounding area.

A conventional football field can easily be converted to Mini-Football. This can also minimise wear of the central areas of the playing field. Corner flags may be used as goals but must be at least five feet high and have a non-pointed top.

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

There should be no knock-out competitions or leagues involving Mini Football: the game itself will be a sufficient challenge for the children.



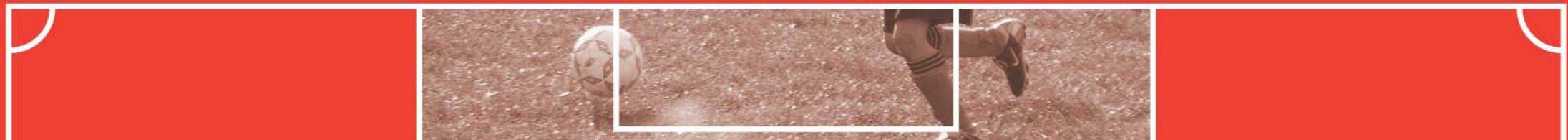
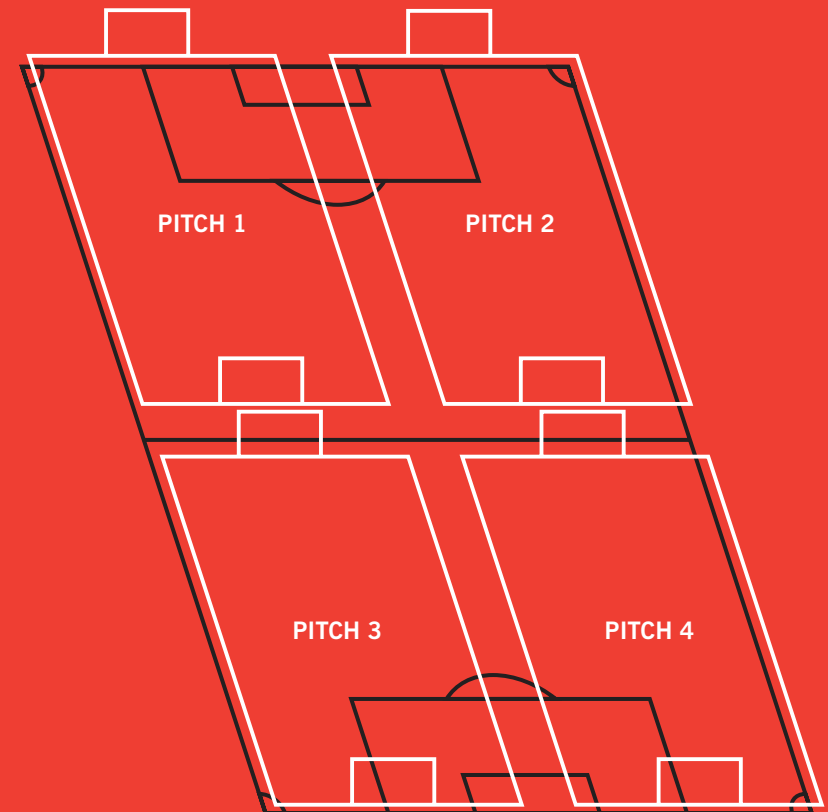
Matches should be organised along the lines of carnivals or fun days involving a number of team.

**Mini fun days may be organised as follows:**

- Groups of 4, 6 or 8 teams play each other in a round-robin, ie 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 in the case of 8 teams present after 3 games.

Mini-Football pitches may be specifically laid out on suitable open spaces or conventional football pitches may be converted for Mini-Football.(See diagram next page).

**LAYOUT FOR 8 TEAMS TO PLAY ON ONE FULL SIZE FOOTBALL FIELD**





# 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 (eg 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 the age ranges.
- 2** Laws 9 and 10 apply to mini football but there is no off-side. (Refer to FAW Handbook)
- 3** Team size should be no greater than 8 v 8. The playing area should be no greater than 55 yds x 35 yds and no smaller than 30 yds x 20 yds.

**Team and playing area sizes are recommended as follows:**

<b>Under 10-11</b>	8 v 8	55 yds x 35 yds
<b>Under 8-9</b>	6 v 6	50 yds x 30 yds
<b>Under 6-7</b>	4 v 4	40 yds x 30 yds

- 4** Any number of substitutes may be used at any time with the permission of the game leader. 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.

- 5** The ball should be no larger than size 4. Size 3 is recommended for under 6's and 7's. Players are required to wear shin guards.
- 6** The recommended goal size for all age groups is 12ft x 6ft.
- 7** The goal area extends 10 yards from the goal line across the full width of the playing area regardless of its size. The goal area can either be marked by cones on the touchline or one or two marker discs across the playing area.
- 8** Each game should last for a maximum of 20 minutes. Half time need not be taken. Games of 10 minutes in total are recommended for the younger players.
- 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 the penalty area and there are no restrictions on the number of steps they may take holding the ball.
  - Cannot handle the ball outside of the penalty area.

- Under 6's, 7's, 8's and 9's may kick the ball out of their hands and under 10's and 11's are only allowed to throw the ball.
  - Can kick the ball on the ground but may then be challenged by opponents.
- 14** Goal-kicks:
    - Are taken anywhere on the edge of the penalty area – the opposition should be at least 3 yards away.
    - Must be kicked out of 10 yard penalty area.
    - By under 6's, 7's, 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.
  - 16** Players can pass the ball to their own goalkeeper, for the goalkeeper to handle the ball.

