



**Them playing  
the game**



**You playing  
your part**

All you need to know to create  
the environment where  
everyone can enjoy football.

## Creating the environment so we can all enjoy the game

**F**ootball is the greatest game in the world. It is played by more people across the globe than any other sport. For a privileged few, it is how they earn a living. But for the vast majority of people who play the game, it is a fun, leisure activity for all ages, to be enjoyed.

We can all help our children enjoy the game more, by creating the right environment. By allowing them to play with freedom. By letting them make mistakes. By encouraging them to make their own decisions. We can simply #LetThemPlay



*“Enjoyment is central to football, particularly for children. While some set out on the pathway to becoming a professional, the vast majority play the game for fun. It’s important that everybody involved in the sport helps maintain a positive environment that allows children to play freely.”*

**Gareth Southgate**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gareth Southgate'.

*“Children have a massive capacity to think and behave creatively. An effective coach will support and encourage this in the football and Futsal games that they play. We want our players to play with freedom and enjoyment.”*

**Peter Sturges**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Sturges'.

## How to make match day enjoyable for everyone

**The better the environment we create for the players, the more everyone will enjoy the game. Greeting the opposition and the referee, putting on refreshments, appointing a Match Day Manager, are all ways in which any club at any level can start to make a difference on the day.**

*“The fact is that kids learn to make good decisions by making decisions, not by following directions.”*

**Alfie Kohn**

Lecturer in Education and Psychology

### GOOD PRACTICE

- ✓ Issue a Code of Conduct to everyone involved at the start of the season.
- ✓ Whatever your role – coach, parent, player, referee – turn up in good time.
- ✓ All players play a minimum 50%.
- ✓ Coaches to stay in the technical area, unless a player is injured.
- ✓ Spectators behind the barrier on the opposite side of the field.
- ✓ Applause for good play for BOTH teams.
- ✓ Only the coach to issue instructions to the players.
- ✓ Respect Handshake before the game.
- ✓ Handshakes all round after the game – regardless of the score.
- ✗ No spectators behind the goals.
- ✗ No shouting at the referee.

### RESPECT

**If we do not have Respect for the opposition players and coaches, and especially for the referee, then we do not have a game of football.**

- ✓ Support and encourage players.
- ✓ Treat the opposition how you would like to be treated.
- ✓ Let the coaches coach.
- ✓ Remember that the referee may be learning the game.
- ✓ You are a role model to children at all times during the game.
- ✓ Applause for both sides.
- ✓ Make the game fun at all times.
- ✗ Do not encroach onto the pitch.
- ✗ No angry postmortems after the game.

# Key recommendations for the game

## An at-a-glance guide to junior football



U7/8s

- Format:** 5 v 5
- Match length:** 20 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 40 mins/day, 60 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 40yd x 30yd
- Ball size:** 3
- Goal size:** 12ft x 6ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
Two weeks of trophy events, three times a season
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - having fun
  - playing with my friends



U9/10s

- Format:** 7 v 7
- Match length:** 25 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 60 mins/day, 90 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 60yd x 40yd
- Ball size:** 3 for U9s, 4 for U10s
- Goal size:** 12ft x 6ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
Four weeks of trophy events, three times a season
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - acquiring skills
  - trying my best



U11/  
12s

- Format:** 9 v 9
- Match length:** 30 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 80 mins/day, 120 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 80yd x 50yd
- Ball size:** 4
- Goal size:** 16ft x 7ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
Six weeks of trophy events, three times a season. U12s as U13/14s
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - being part of a team
  - game play



U13/  
14s

- Format:** 11 v 11
- Match length:** 35 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 100 mins/day, 150 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 100yd x 60yd
- Ball size:** 4
- Goal size:** 21ft x 7ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
Any varieties including one season-long league table
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - taking responsibility
  - positional awareness



U15/  
16s

- Format:** 11 v 11
- Match length:** 40 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 100 mins/day, 150 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 110yd x 70yd
- Ball size:** 5
- Goal size:** 24ft x 8ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
any varieties including one season-long league table
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - in-game decisions
  - tactical appreciation



U17/  
18s

- Format:** 11 v 11
- Match length:** 45 mins E/W
- Player game time:** 120 mins/day, 180 mins/comp
- Pitch size:** 110yd x 70yd
- Ball size:** 5
- Goal size:** 24ft x 8ft
- COMPETITIONS**  
any varieties including one season-long league table
- KEY LEARNINGS**
  - in-game decisions
  - tactical appreciation

## Match day best practice for coaches

Every coach at every level can play a huge part in creating the match day environment that everyone can enjoy, not only the players, but the match officials and those watching too. A good coach can be a positive role model that youngsters will remember for the rest of their lives.

There are lots of different ways you can create that positive environment.

Here are just a few:

- ⚽ You could take the pressure off yourself and give players ownership for choosing the formation and the team.
- ⚽ All players getting at least half the available game time is a great way to create good team spirit. You could plan your substitutions before the game.
- ⚽ The score line is only one way to measure development. You could set team and individual player targets.
- ⚽ Some coaches think they are not involved unless they continually offer instruction. But instead of doing a running commentary throughout the game, let the players make decisions, allow them to make mistakes and learn from them.
- ⚽ Advanced technical coaching terms can confuse young players. Try to use appropriate language.
- ⚽ Instead of getting anxious and uptight on match day, try and relax and enjoy it. Remember don't shout at match officials, children could copy your behaviour.
- ⚽ Reward effort rather than just ability.
- ⚽ No one enjoys it when a game ends with an angry post mortem. You could save your feedback until training night. Always try and be constructive whatever the result.

**These players are starting on their football journey, remember how much you enjoy the game and pass it on to them!**

## Match day best practice for parents

Whether you played yourself, or if you are new to football, the game is a great activity that can be enjoyed by all the family. Kids love playing, and they like their parents to take an interest. What they don't like is when mums and dads get too involved from the touchline, or put too much pressure on them to do well.

The FA asked young players up and down the country why they play the game.

Here are the top six reasons:

*Trying my hardest is more important than winning.*  
*I love playing football because it's fun.*  
*It helps keep me fit and healthy.*  
*I like meeting new friends through football.*  
*It's a really good game and I love it.*  
*I like playing with my friends.*

### Match day tips

- ✓ Do offer praise, encouragement and applause – for both sides.
- ✓ Do stand in the designated area for spectators.
- ✗ Don't issue instructions from the touchline.
- ✗ Don't follow your son/daughter up and down the touchline.



# Useful information and contact details



## SAFEGUARDING

For more information on Safeguarding children within football, best practice guidance, including how to report a concern go to: [www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding](http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding)

If the matter is urgent and you cannot contact your Club's welfare officer, you can call The NSPCC 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 5000 – or if it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the police or children's social care in your area and let us know via: [safeguarding@thefa.com](mailto:safeguarding@thefa.com)

## DISCRIMINATION & EQUALITY

The FA is working hard to make football a game For All, for more details of our work look here: [www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/inclusion-and-anti-discrimination](http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/inclusion-and-anti-discrimination)

At the same time we want to make sure no-one is excluded from being involved, so if you see or experience discrimination in the game, tell us here: [equality@thefa.com](mailto:equality@thefa.com). If you want to know more about coaching diversity bursaries, girls football, disability football or faith and football just drop us an email at: [info@thefa.com](mailto:info@thefa.com)

**#PlayYourPart**

## DISABILITY PLAYER PATHWAY

Did you know that disability football is the seventh largest participation team sport in the country?

There are player pathways in place from grassroots where there are now 1991 affiliated disability teams, through to a talent pathway which has 600+ individuals engaged and six impairment specific international squads that compete in World and European Championships. To find out more visit: [www.thefa.com/disability](http://www.thefa.com/disability)

## FUTSAL

Futsal is an exciting, fast paced modality of football that originates from South America in the 1930s. It is played across the world in a format that is officially recognised by both UEFA and FIFA.

The nature of the game places a large emphasis on technical skill and ability in situations of high pressure. Many of the top world class footballers played Futsal in their youth and credit it with supporting their footballing development, when played and coached correctly. Check: <http://www.thefa.com/get-involved/player/futsal/what-is-futsal> for more info.