

Optus Small Sided Football – Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Small sided Football'?

These are football games with fewer players competing on a smaller sized field. These are fun games that encourage players to have more contact with the ball because fewer players are playing in a smaller playing area. All ages can play "Small Sided Football", but it has a definite developmental impact on younger football players.

Why make the change?

It makes the game of football a better experience for the children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Players will perform more energetic workouts due to playing both attacking and defensive roles. While learning both attack and defense, a player will become all rounded and will understand more readily the roles and importance of team-mates.

Whose idea was this?

The idea of small-sided football for young players is not new. US Youth Football has been a proponent of small-sided football since the 1980s. Small sided Football is endorsed by the USA, England, Ireland, Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, France, and Korea national coaching committees, to name a few! As well as across Australia

Why can't they play 11 v 11 like "real: football?"

The 11 v 11 format is the adult version of the game. Using an adult size field and goals makes little sense for children under the ages of twelve.

Other sports don't alter their game – why does football?

It's not really correct to say other sports don't alter their games. A number of other sports make some modifications to cater for younger players. Playing football on a small field is a more efficient use of space, it takes less time to advance for a shot on goal, and children are more actively involved for a longer period of time and it helps towards player's technical development.

I didn't grow up playing this way!

True! Football was traditionally played 11 v 11 for all age groups. However this isn't true any longer, small-sided football formats are in use all over the world.

How will they learn to play 11 v 11?

Progressing from 4 v 4, 5 v 5 to 7 v 7 9v9 BEFORE 11 v 11 is a sound educational method. The problem is that young players were forced into 11 v 11 before their bodies were physically developed to play the adult version of the game. Any notion that players will be less prepared to play 11v11 is not justified. The decision to play small-sided football is based on "age" alignment with player technical development philosophy.

Why no keepers at under 5s, under 6s, under 7s and under 8s?

The role of goalkeeper in football is uniquely specialised and typically players develop as keepers at a later age. At the youngest age groups keepers can be uninvolved in the game for long periods, which can be uninteresting and cold. Having no keepers allows all players to be fully involved.

Can the keeper kick the ball from their hands in 7v7 and 9v9?

The keeper is not permitted to kick the ball from their hands. If the keeper makes a save or catches the ball they may play out from the back to their defense or throw to wide players. The keeper can also roll the ball out or play out with a pass, once the ball is placed on the ground by the keeper it is in play.

Is there a rule stating that after a player has scored 3 goals they are not permitted to score again until another member of their team scores a goal?

There is no rule stating this. There is however a recommendation aimed mostly at the younger age groups e.g. U6 and U7 to help get all players involved in the game. This recommends that if there is a dominant player on the field that after having scored 3 goals you can encourage them to help play the ball to team mates in order that someone else can get a shot on goal which will help them learn to pass and share the ball. This is

not a rule it is a recommendation that may be used if you wish to as a coach or game leader with your own team.

If I am a coach of the team, can I “coach” from the sidelines?

In SSF we encourage all “coaching” to be done at sessions during the week, e.g. passing and receiving games, dribbling games and finish with SSF’s 4v4 or 5v5, this is when the main theme of the coaching session- e.g. passing, passing into space, dribbling can be encouraged.

On game day encourage players to try out what they have practiced in training, as a coach encouragement and positive reinforcement of techniques practiced is very important at this age. Mostly let the children make own decisions in the game, where and when to pass, shoot, dribble ect. We do not wish to impose our adult decisions on the children.

(6-8s)

Can I stand in the space between active pitches if I am not actively involved in a game as game leader, interchange player or substitutions coordinator?

The area between the pitches is for game leaders/ coaches and players who are rotating. No Parents or Spectators are permitted in these areas; all spectators are asked to remain around the perimeter of the pitches- this allows players to play the game without any perceived pressure from parent/spectators.

(6-8s)

How do the game leaders communicate with the players if there is not meant to be a whistle used?

Game leaders are quite close to the play and to the pitch, especially with U6 where they may need to enter pitch. Use voice commands to communicate to the children and if they need to stop use a phrase they will associate with stopping e.g. if ball goes out of play, use Freeze or Stop use words such as play or go to restart the game. If we use familiar phrases each time then children will begin to associate these words and not run of pitch or restart quickly. Whistles are not permitted at this age.

(6-8s)

Why are the game leaders not meant to run around the pitch with the players?

Game leaders are on the side lines to help facilitate the game. All Coaching should be completed on training sessions. Game leaders should

operate a sideline and goal each. Game leaders can encourage children to find space- from a restart tell them they can run with ball or pass, but no “coaching” is to take place, encourage and ask questions of them, can you pass to your friend?, can you run with the ball? Let them make the decision, not us as adults; this will help with their decision making processes while in game situations.

How long should a player take to get the ball back into play?

Players should restart the game with a dribble, kick or pass, on their own or when the game leader says, go/play/ start. There is no time limit but encourage to restart game as quickly as possible.

If one team is considerably stronger than their opponent should we substitute players to other matches or swap between the teams in 6s, 7s, 8s or 9s?

We encourage clubs to mix their teams each week as much as possible this gives everyone the chance to play with and against different levels of players in their own age bracket. Interchange players between teams (own age) if they are too strong or too weak, this will help level the playing field and give children a more positive and fun experience.

Can we promote a player up an age group and if so when?

We prefer players to stay within their own age groups as much as possible, however if a player is playing in an age bracket which is not very challenging for them they may move up into the age level above but only with the permission of club officials experienced and responsible to make this decision.

(6-8s) Can we stand a player in defense?

We would strongly discourage this and ask that game leaders encourage and get all players involved in the game. A simple request from the game leader to go get involved in the game may help their playing and enjoyment in the game.

(9s) How long should each player spend as goalkeeper?

There is no time limit on this but we suggest that all players take a turn in goals. This helps each player have an experience in goals and no one person should be placed in goals and left there all game or all season. Suggestion of half a game for each player throughout the season.

