

# APPENDIX TWO

## The FA Mini-Soccer Handbook



September 1999 saw the implementation of Mini-Soccer for all children under ten years of age. As a result of nearly three years' consultation and cooperation between all bodies involved with children's football, boys and girls are now introduced to the game on smaller pitches with scaled down goalposts and fewer players.

To provide quality experiences for young players at all levels, The FA deems Mini-Soccer the most appropriate and fun introduction to football: it allows greater involvement in the game, with more touches, dribbles and passes.



# Mini-Soccer Introduction

“THE CHILDREN ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH THEY ARE ENGAGED. THE GAME IS NOT THE THING, THE CHILD IS.”

PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR AGES 5-16 (DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE, AUGUST 1991)

The main theme throughout Mini-Soccer is to meet the needs of children. 11-a-side association football does not meet these needs. Children need a modified game that fits their needs; too often children are modified to meet the requirements of a game. Mini-Soccer modifies association football without losing the essence of the game.

Mini-Soccer is the appropriate introduction to football. All available research and observation shows that children will have more fun and learn more playing a game with smaller teams and modified rules. Mini-Soccer is, therefore, a game children can actually play rather than struggling to understand a game created for adults.

If children are to enjoy and take part in soccer they need to:

- feel success;
- take an active part in the game;
- learn to play as a team;
- understand the Laws;
- develop soccer skills;
- be able to take part whatever their ability;
- develop their fitness.

Mini-Soccer sets out to meet these needs. It allows children to succeed and take part in something that is still recognisably football.

Mini-Soccer recognises the fact that younger children perform better in smaller teams with simple Laws. It is more than another version of five-or six-a-side football for the following reasons:

- 1 it recognises that children do not perform as adults and therefore its Laws, researched and piloted by The FA, meet the needs of children;
- 2 it has all the features of 'real' football to children;
- 3 it doesn't set unrealistic expectations - many adults do not know what can be expected of children and so emphasise the result at the expense of performance; Mini-Soccer helps by defining the targets for children at different ages;
- 4 it sets a standard for behaviour on and off the pitch;
- 5 Mini-Soccer is for all children regardless of their ability. It is intended for girls and boys, and young footballers with disabilities and learning difficulties.

In an age when so much of children's leisure time is as organised as their study, Mini-Soccer offers something special: a game that children can organise themselves! With relatively little instruction, children can play and enjoy a game that is suitable for a wide ability range and gives everyone a chance to take part.



## Guidance for the Laws of Mini-Soccer

The Laws have been formatted and aim to be simple and as near to 'real' football as possible. The games require only a game leader who is urged to be as flexible as possible with the youngest children. The children will need the Laws explained to them as the game proceeds (eg handball, in / out of play). It will also be necessary to demonstrate in certain instances how to re-start the game (eg, throw-ins).

## What Can Children Expect From Adults?

Children are often easily led, anxious to please and prone to over-enthusiasm, so plenty of praise and positive reinforcement is needed, especially with beginners.

Children find it hard to understand negative instructions and easier to understand positive reinforcement. This can frequently mean playing down the result and playing up the performance, which reduces the child's anxiety and decreases their worry about failing. Remember, children do not mean to make mistakes; we should accept mistakes as a necessary part of learning.

Make sure the players play by the Laws; the majority of children at this age will not knowingly infringe the Laws of the game. Finally, work with other adults, not against them, and by doing so, reinforce positive attitudes among the children.

## Interference From The Touchline

While the fun and friendly atmosphere created by Mini-Soccer should keep such instances to a minimum, there may be situations where comments and abuse from adults, parents and managers is made from the touchline. This could be directed at the referee, but also at the players.

### What can be done?

- Stay calm and do not get into disagreements.
- Report the matter to the relevant club or league officials.
- Set a positive, responsible example.
- Remember the RESPECT programme.

## Referees - Mini-Soccer game leaders

The referee has an important role to play in Mini-Soccer. Carrying out their duties without favour, they should create a fun playing environment for all those taking part. The referee should encourage fair play, fun, respect for others, development of skills and teamwork, and understanding of the Laws of the game.

The Laws of the game should be a guide for the referee in Mini-Soccer with the spirit of the Laws being more important than the letters of the Law. Appreciation of the needs of the child is essential.

## 9 v 9

During the 2002-03 season, a number of leagues approached The FA regarding the possibility of moving to 9 v 9 for under-11s.

The FA organised a number of regional Mini-Soccer consultation meetings to review Mini-Soccer and to discuss ideas for the future development of the game.

The consultation also led to the introduction, within FA rules, for the 9 v 9 game for children who have reached the age of 10 on 31 August.

The 9 v 9 option is now available for under-11s to under-14s.

When 9 v 9 is played The FA recommends the following: Follow 11 v 11 Laws of the game, except:

### Size of pitch

- use junior size pitch 80m x 50m (87 x 55 yards) and junior goals 4.9m x 2.1m (16ft x 7ft).

### Substitutes

- Maximum squad of 18 with repeat substitutions allowed.

### Playing Time

- Maximum 35mins each way.

### Anything not covered above

- The FA standard code of rules for youth leagues apply.

The FA hopes that, where facilities allow, leagues will make use of the 9 v 9 option to assist the players' development.



# The FA Laws for Mini-Soccer



**For players**  
(both boys and girls over six and under 10 years of age)

[Updated by The FA Council on 15 May 2008]

**Please note:**  
Where leagues operate under-11 Mini-Soccer events, they must follow these Laws.

**Please remember:**  
Under-7s or under-8s are not permitted to play in leagues where results are collected or published, or winner trophies are presented; this is deemed to be detrimental to the development of the player and the game, and will not be sanctioned. To play in a KO Cup game or a game where points are awarded, or results collected, a player must have achieved the age of eight on or before 31 August.

Except where other provision is made, the Laws of Association Football apply. Each Law is numbered to correspond with the appropriate Law of the Game. These Laws are mandatory unless special permission is granted by The FA.

## Law 1: Playing Area

**WARNING:** Please ensure that The FA goalpost safety guidelines are observed.

### Size of pitch

Law 1: Playing Area – size of pitch		
Under-10s & Under-9s		
Width	Min 27.45m	Min 30 yds
	Max 36.60m	Max 40 yds
Length	Min 45.75m	Min 50 yds
	Min 54.90m	Max 60 yds
Under-8s & Under-7s		
Width	Min 18.30m	Min 20 yds
	Max 27.45m	Max 30 yds
Length	Min 27.45m	Min 30 yds
	Max 45.75m	Max 50 yds

**Penalty area**  
Length 9.15m (10 yards); Width 16.47m (18 yards)

**Penalty mark**  
The penalty mark is 7.32m (8 yards) from the goal line opposite the centre of the goal.

**Halfway line**  
The field of play is divided into two halves by a halfway line. The centre mark is indicated at the mid-point of the halfway line.

**Goal size**  
The distance between the posts is 3.6m (12ft) and the distance between the lower edge of the cross bar and the ground is 1.88m (6ft).

## Law 2: The Ball

The ball should be size 4 for under-9s and under-10s and size 3 for under-8s.

It should be safe and made of leather or another suitable material.

## Law 3: Number of Players

- Under-10s / under-9s: 6 v 6, 7 v 7
- Under-8s / under-7s: 4 v 4, 5 v 5, 6 v 6, 7 v 7

Where the appropriate facilities are available, The FA would encourage leagues and competitions to use the smaller number of players at the youngest age group.

Players must play with and against players only from their own age range, as per FA and competition rules.

Players should not be allowed to begin to play until the season of their seventh birthday.

Each team must not have a squad greater than double the size of the team per age group.

Any number of substitutes, without being named, may be used at any time with the permission of the referee or game leader. Entry into the field of play will only be allowed during a stoppage in play. A player who has been replaced may return to the playing area as a substitute for another player.

## Law 4: Playing Equipment

Players must wear shin guards and goalkeepers must wear a distinguishing playing strip. Shin guards must be covered entirely by stockings.

## Law 5: Referees

**The authority of the referee**  
Each match is controlled by a referee who has full authority to enforce the Laws of the game in connection with the match to which they have been appointed.

### Powers and Duties

- The Referee:**
- enforces the Laws of the game;
  - controls the match in cooperation with the assistant referees/time keeper;
  - ensures the ball meets the requirements of Law 2;
  - ensures the players' equipment meets the requirements of Law 4;
  - stops, suspends or terminates the match at their discretion for any infringements of the Laws;
  - stops, suspends or terminates the match because of outside interference of any kind;
  - stops the match if, in their opinion, a player is seriously injured and ensures they are removed from the field of play;
  - ensures any player bleeding from a wound leaves the field of play;
  - allows play to continue when the team against which an offence has been committed will benefit from such an advantage;

- penalises the original offence if the anticipated advantage does not ensue at that time.

### Referees:

- take disciplinary action against players guilty of cautionable and / or sending-off offences;
- take action against team officials who fail to conduct themselves in a responsible manner and may, at their discretion, expel them from the field of play and its immediate surroundings;
- ensure no unauthorised persons enter the field of play;
- restart matches if they have been stopped.

### Decisions of the Referee

The decisions of the referee regarding facts connected with play are final.

The referee may only change a decision on realising that it is incorrect or, at his / her discretion provided play has not restarted.

## Law 6: Timekeeper / Scorer / Assistant Referee

### Duties

- A person may be nominated to assist the referee to:
- record goals scored;
  - act as timekeeper and signify to the referee, by an agreed signal, when the time of each half has expired;
  - suspend time on an instruction from the referee for all stoppages and add that time to the end of each half;
  - supervise the use of rolling substitutes;

- carry out any other duties as prescribed by the referee.

If an independent timekeeper/scorer is not nominated, these duties are the responsibility of the referee.

## Law 7: Duration of the Game

In any one day, no player shall play more than the stipulated period given below:

- Under-10s / under-9s: 60 minutes
- under-8s / under-7s: 40 minutes

Each league / competition will determine its own playing time within the maximum time permitted. The half time interval must not exceed five minutes.

## Law 8: Start and Restart of Play

### Procedure

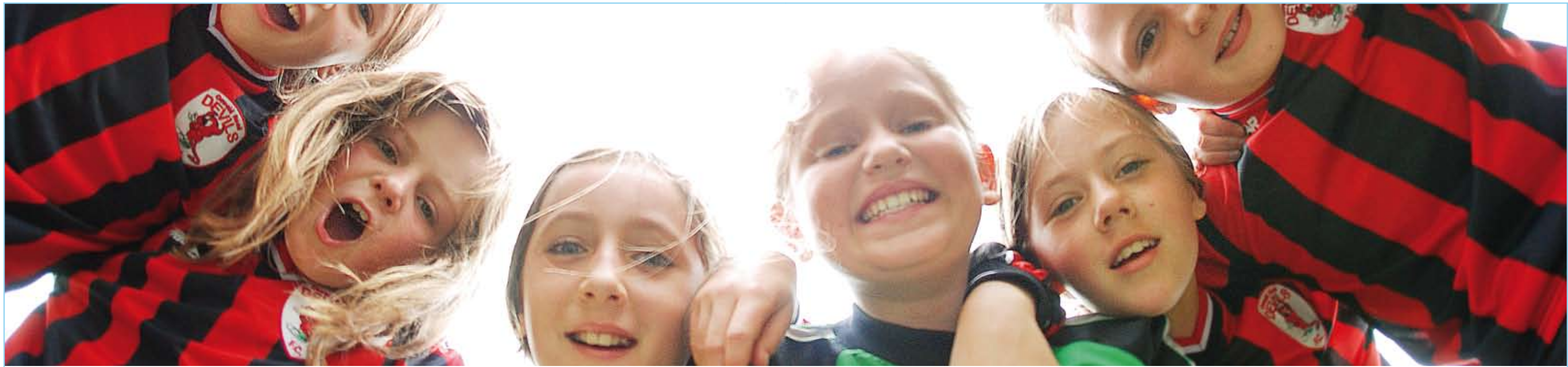
A kick-off is taken at the centre of the playing area to start the game and after a goal has been scored. Opponents must be 4.5m (5 yards) away from the ball, and in their own half of the field. The ball must be played forward.

In Mini-Soccer a goal cannot be scored directly from a start or restart of play.

### Special circumstances

A dropped ball to restart the match, after play has been temporarily stopped inside the penalty area, takes place on the penalty area line parallel to the goal line at the point nearest to where the ball was located when the play stopped.





## Law 9: Ball In and Out of Play

### Ball out of play

The ball is out of play when:

- it has wholly crossed the goal line or touch line whether on the ground or in the air;
- play has been stopped by the referee.

### Ball in play

The ball is in play at all other times, including when:

- it rebounds from a goal or post, crossbar or corner flag post and remains in the field of play;
- it rebounds from either the referee or an assistant referee when they are on the field of play.

## Law 10: Method of Scoring

### Goal scored

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar, provided that no infringement of the Laws of the game has been committed previously by the team scoring the goal.

### Winning team

The team scoring the greater number of goals during a match is the winner. If both teams score an equal number of goals, or if no goals are scored, the match is drawn.

### Competition rules

For matches ending in a draw, competition rules may state provisions involving extra time, or other procedures approved by the

International FA Board to determine the winner of a match; this must be included within the maximum participation time.

## Law 11: Offside

There is no offside.

## Law 12: Fouls and Misconduct

In Mini-Soccer all free kicks are direct.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences in a manner considered to be careless, reckless or using excessive force:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent;
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent;
- jumps at an opponent;
- charges an opponent;
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent;
- pushes an opponent.

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if a player commits any of the following offences:

- tackles an opponent to gain possession of the ball, making contact with the opponent before touching the ball;
- holds an opponent;
- spits at an opponent;
- Handles the ball deliberately (except for the goalkeeper within his / her own penalty area);
- plays in a dangerous manner;

- impedes the progress of an opponent;
- prevents the goalkeeper from releasing the ball from his / her hands;
- commits any other offence, not previously mentioned in Law 12, for which play is stopped to caution or dismiss a player.

### Penalty kicks

A penalty kick is awarded if any of the above offences is committed by a player inside his / her own penalty area, irrespective of the position of the ball, provided it is in play.

### Free kicks

A free kick is awarded to the opposing team if the goalkeeper:

- takes more than six seconds to release the ball from his / her hands;
- touches the ball again with his / her hands after it has been released from his / her possession and has not touched any other player;
- touches the ball with his / her hands after it has been deliberately kicked to him / her by a teammate;
- touches the ball with his / her hands after he / she has received it directly from a throw in taken by a teammate.

For all these offences, the free kick should be taken from the penalty area line, parallel with the goal line, at the nearest point to the offence.

### Cautionable offences

A player is cautioned and shown the yellow card if he / she commits any of the following seven offences:

- is guilty of unsporting behaviour;
- shows dissent by word or action;
- persistently infringes the Laws of

the Game;

- delays the restart of play;
- Fails to respect the required distance when play is restarted with a corner kick or free kick;
- enters or re-enters the field of play without the referee's permission;
- deliberately leaves the field of play without the referee's permission.

### Sending off offences

A player is sent off and shown the red card if he / she commits any of the following seven offences:

- is guilty of serious foul play;
- is guilty of violent conduct;
- spits at an opponent or any other person;
- denies the opposing team a goal or an obvious goal scoring opportunity, by deliberately handling the ball (this does not apply to a goalkeeper within his / her own penalty area);
- denies an obvious goal scoring opportunity to an opponent moving towards the player's goal by an offence punishable by a free kick or penalty kick;
- uses offensive or insulting or abusive language and / or gestures;
- receives a second caution in the same match.

## Law 13: Free Kicks

For all free kicks opponents must be 4.5m (5 yards) from the ball.

## Law 14: Penalty Kicks

A penalty kick is awarded for offences, as described in Law 12.

### Position of the ball and the players

All players except the defending goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and at least 4.5m (5 yards) from the penalty mark.

The ball must be kicked forward.

### Infringement / sanctions

If a player, or players, commit an offence at the taking of a penalty kick his / her team shall not be allowed to gain an advantage (ie, the kick is retaken or the goal is disallowed depending on which team offended).

If a player of both the defending and the attacking teams offend, the kick shall be retaken.

## Law 15: Throw-ins

A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw-in.

A throw-in is awarded:

- when the whole of the ball passes over the touch line, either on the ground or in the air;
- from the point where it crossed the touch line;
- to the opponents of the player who last touched the ball.

At the moment of delivering the ball, the thrower:

- faces the field of play;
- has part of each foot either on the touch line or on the ground outside the touch line.

A throw-in:

- uses both hands;
- delivers the ball from behind and over the player's head;
- the throw-in is awarded to the opposing team if any of these requirements are not carried out.

The thrower may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he / she does, a free kick will be awarded against them. The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play.

## Law 16: Goal Kicks

A player of the defending team kicks the ball from any point within the penalty area.

Opponents must remain outside the penalty area and at least 4.5m (5 yards) from where the kick is taken until the ball is in play.

## Law 17: Corner Kicks

The opposing players must remain at least 4.5m (5 yards) from the ball until it is in play.

The kicker may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. If he / she does, a free kick is awarded against them.

The ball is in play immediately when it enters the field of play.



# Goalpost Safety Guidelines

The FA, along with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Health and Safety Executive and the British Standards Institution, would like to draw your attention to the following guidelines for the safe use of goalposts. Too many serious injuries and fatalities have occurred in recent years as a result of unsafe or incorrect use of goalposts. Safety is always of paramount importance and everyone in football must play their part to prevent similar incidents occurring in the future.

For safety reasons, goalposts of any size (including those which are portable and not installed permanently at a pitch or practise field) must always be anchored securely to the ground.

- Portable goalposts must be secured by the use of chain anchors or appropriate anchor weights to prevent them from toppling forward.
- It is essential that under no circumstances should children or adults be allowed to climb, swing on or play with the structures of the goalposts.
- Particular attention is drawn to the fact that if not properly assembled and secured, portable goalposts may topple over.
- Regular inspections of goalposts should be carried out to check that they are kept properly maintained.
- Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use; they should be dismantled and removed to a place of secure storage.

It is strongly recommended that nets should only be secured by plastic hooks or tape and not by metal cup hooks. Any metal cup hooks should, if possible, be removed and replaced. New goalposts should not be purchased if they include metal cup hooks which cannot be replaced.

Goalposts which are home-made or which have been altered from their original size or construction should not be used. These have been the cause of a number of deaths and injuries.

Guidelines to prevent toppling:

- follow manufacturer's guidelines in assembling goalposts;
- before use, adults should:
  - ensure each goal is anchored in its place;
  - exert a significant downward force on the cross bar;
  - exert a significant backward force on both upright posts;
  - exert a significant forward force on both upright posts.

These must be repeated until it is established that the structure is secure. If not, alternative goals / pitches must be used.

For reference, you should note that The FA and BSI have developed two standards for goalposts - BSEN748 (2004) for full-size goals and BS8462 (2005) for all other sizes. There is also a code of practice standard - BS8461 (2005). Further details are available from [TheFA.com/GetIntoFootball/facilities](http://TheFA.com/GetIntoFootball/facilities).

**Remember to use all equipment, not just goalposts, safely at all times.**





# Mini-Soccer Formats



## Introduction

Mini-Soccer embraces the concept of fun and enjoyment, which is vital if children are to develop a lifelong love for football.

Mini-Soccer is now recognised as the mandatory introduction to football for all under-10s in England. All leagues and clubs who affiliate to The FA and offer opportunities to the under-10 age groups are required to play to the laws of Mini-Soccer.

Mini-Soccer is played in a number of formats across England. Many leagues operate on a traditional home and away basis. Other leagues bring a number of teams to a single venue and play a number of games on the same day. Some leagues play on a friendly basis with no league champions. Others offer cup competitions. The format offered by individual leagues is determined by the league and its members with in the Laws of Mini-Soccer.

Other formats of Mini-Soccer are also encouraged. Traditionally, Mini-Soccer has been used by clubs, schools, local authority schemes and others as a turn-up-and-play opportunity, possibly for those children who may not be part of a team and for those who just love to play. These opportunities operated as the old Mini-Soccer Centres and took place after school, on the weekends or in school holidays. Such schemes are now required to affiliate to the relevant County FA and operate to the requirements detailed here.

Festivals have long been played as an end-of-season event, and during holiday periods. The format for under-10s must be Mini-Soccer and guidelines for such events are also included.

MINI-SOCCER IS NOW RECOGNISED AS THE MANDATORY INTRODUCTION TO FOOTBALL FOR ALL UNDER-10S IN ENGLAND. ALL LEAGUES AND CLUBS WHO AFFILIATE TO THE FA AND OFFER OPPORTUNITIES TO THE UNDER-10 AGE GROUPS ARE REQUIRED TO PLAY TO THE LAWS OF MINI-SOCCER.

## Prerequisites for Operating Mini-Soccer

- All games must comply with the Laws of Mini-Soccer and be under the control of a referee over 14 years of age.
- There must be opportunities for boys and girls to participate. Organisers should also be aware that Mini-Soccer provides an excellent introduction to football for disabled children.
- The facility must have no unnecessary hazards. It must be safe and include the following:
  - a safe playing surface, including goalposts (see Goalpost Safety);
  - the use of toilets for both sexes;
  - an adult with a minimum of an FA Emergency Aid qualification, who must be on site at all times;
  - high standards of behaviour, which are expected from all spectators, coaches, officials and players;
  - appropriate Public Liability and Personal Accident Insurance, which must be obtained.

## Duration of Play

In any one day, no player shall play more than the stipulated period given below:

- Under-10s / under-9s – 60 minutes
- under-8s / under-7s – 40 minutes

The basic premise is that children under 10 years of age should not play more than one hour in any one day. The maximum time must also include any provision for extra-time, as per Law 7 of the Laws of Mini-Soccer.

## Recommendation for Operating Club Festivals and Mini-Soccer Centres

A programme of 6-10 sessions is recommended, and the most popular periods are September, October, November, March, April and May.

Saturday and particularly Sunday mornings have proven to be the most popular times for operating.

Football clubs, schools, youth clubs, sports centres or similar venues can all be affiliated, providing the prerequisite criteria are met.

If you require further information, contact your local County FA.

	12' x 6' goalposts	Dedicated Mini-Soccer pitches	Additional activities and entertainment	Qualified referees
National Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regional Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
County Festivals	✓	✓	✓	✓
League Festivals	✓	✗	✗	✗
Club Festivals	✓	✗	✗	✗
Mini-Soccer Centres	✓	✗	✗	✗

## Appropriate Competitive Formats

The central figure in the recommendation for The FA's Charter for Quality is the player and his or her best interests. Attempting to provide quality experiences for all young players at all levels is the overriding principle. The FA, as a responsible governing body, insists on the following formats of participation being adhered to:

	League	League Cup	Knockout Comp	County Cup	Fun Festival
U8	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓
U7	✓	✗	✗	✗	✓

**Please remember:** While under-7s and under-8s are permitted to play in leagues, no results should be collected or published or winner trophies presented. This is deemed to be detrimental to the development of the player and the game, and will not be sanctioned.

## Sanction for Mini-Soccer Festivals

**National / Regional\* / County / League\*\*:** Sanctions through Form D from The FA.

\* Involving clubs from more than three County FAs.  
\*\* Involving clubs from three or fewer County FAs.

**Club / Traditional turn-up-and-play Mini-Soccer†:** Affiliate as a club through County FA

† All traditional Mini-Soccer Centres must affiliate to their respective County FA.

