

The FA 
FUTSAL.

Playing Futsal – Getting Started



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As Futsal is still a relatively new sport in England you may find difficulties in finding an appropriately sized court or are unable to access proper Futsal goals. But try not to be put-off by this; in essence Futsal is a simple game that at a recreational level can be played anywhere. There are three core components that contribute towards making Futsal the game that it is; and these are the three minimum criteria for establishing a game of Futsal:

1. Futsal Pitch Markings (either permanently through tape or just by temporarily marking the pitch with flat disc markers)
2. Futsal Ball
3. Futsal Goals

Futsal Pitch

Ideally the game should be played indoors in any appropriately sized school or community sports hall. At a recreational level we would suggest that the minimum pitch size is 25m x 15m with a run-off around the pitch of 2m. The floor surface should be wooden or a suitable synthetic floor that is smooth and flat. Pitch markings can be laid down with tape.

Although we would recommend playing the game indoors, at an introductory stage there is no harm in playing outdoors as long as the surface is hard and firm. Futsal can be played on artificial grass, but this surface does slow the pace of the game; and for this reason Futsal shouldn't be played on grass.

At a youth and recreational level you can ultimately adapt whatever facilities that you have available to you to at least get a feel for the game. But the closer the facilities are to the required specifications for the game, the more authentic your practices and matches will become and the more likely your players will be to reap the benefits that Futsal has to offer.

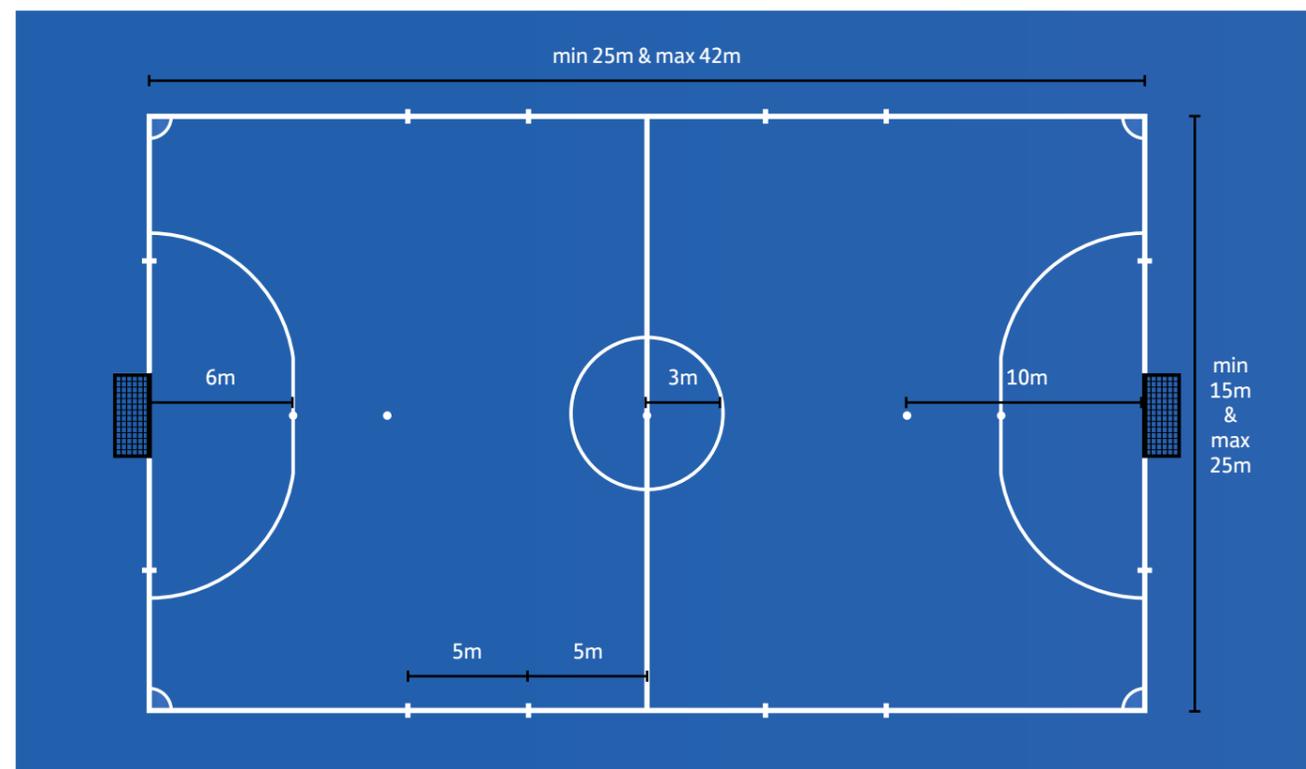
Futsal Equipment

Futsal goals are 3m x 2m in dimension and inflatable goals can be purchased as well as the stronger metal goals. Futsal goals are very similar to hockey or handball goals, and these alternatives could be used if you are struggling to access proper Futsal goals. As with any forms of football, do make sure that the goals are safe and secure before you start playing. There are a number of retailers of Futsal goals online from whom you can purchase these goals.

In order to play a game that truly resembles Futsal you will need a proper Futsal ball, as these are smaller and heavier than a normal football. The Futsal ball is an essential component, and if neglected in favour of a normal 11-a-side football the essence and nature of the game will substantially be altered. Futsal balls can be purchased online and most big sports brands make Futsal balls; there are also Futsal specific brands that make good quality balls. The FA recommends that younger players (under 12 years old) use size 3 Futsal balls and from 13 years onwards players should play with full-size Futsal balls (size 4 balls).

Futsal Referees

At elite levels of the game, three referees and a timekeeper are required to officiate a Futsal match. At a recreational level this is not essential but the job of effectively refereeing a game and managing the time can be challenging for one person to do on their own. County FAs run Futsal refereeing courses, and if you are having difficulties identify a suitably qualified Futsal referee speaking to your County FA could prove helpful.



FUTSAL LAWS OF THE GAME

The official Laws of Futsal are available to download from the FIFA website (www.FIFA.com), but outlined below are an abridged version to provide a simple introduction to the principles of Futsal, and to assist in differentiating the game from other versions of 5-a-side football.

The Pitch

- Futsal is played on a marked pitch and the ball can go out of play

Head Height

- There are no height restrictions

Substitutions

- Up to 12 players can be used in one match and there is no limit on how long a player must stay on or off the pitch. Players must enter and leave the field of play from in front of the respective team's bench.

Kick In

- In order to restart the game after a ball has gone out of play the ball is kicked back into play from the touchline and from corners. The ball must be placed stationary on the touchline and the feet of the player taking the kick-in must not cross the line.

The Four Second Rule

- For kick-ins, free kicks, goal clearances and corner kicks the player in possession of the ball has 4 seconds to restart play which the referee will count with their fingers in the air. If play isn't restarted within four seconds possession is surrendered to the opposing team. The goalkeeper is not allowed to control the ball for more than 4 seconds in his/ her own half.

The Five Metre Rule

- Players are required to keep 5m from the player in possession of the ball on free kicks, corners, goal clearances, kick-ins and penalties.

Goalkeepers

- Goalkeepers are allowed to come out of and players are allowed to go into the penalty area.
- A restart from the goalkeeper must be thrown out, but the goalkeeper can use their feet to distribute the ball from open play.

Back Passes

- Once the goalkeeper has played the ball he/she cannot touch the ball again unless an opposition player has touched the ball or if the goalkeeper is passed the ball in the opponents half.

Red Cards

- If a player is sent off then the team to which the player belongs must remain with 4 players until either two minutes have passed, or the opposition have scored a goal.

Accumulated Fouls

- Each team will be allowed to give away 5 direct free kicks in each half of the game, then on the sixth foul a direct kick will be awarded to the opposing team and the defending team is not allowed to position any players (other than the goalkeeper) between the ball and the goal. The kick may be taken from the 10m mark or, if the foul was committed closer to the goal than the 10m mark, then the kick may be taken from the position where the foul took place.

Duration

- Matches are played with a stopping clock (real-time) whereby the clock will be stopped whenever the ball goes out of play or when there is a stoppage in the game.
- Futsal games consist of 2 halves of 20 minutes.

Timeouts

- Each team is permitted one timeout of 60 seconds each half.

GUIDANCE FOR ORGANISING A FUTSAL COMPETITION

This guide intends to provide the key points to consider when organising a one-day Futsal festival / tournament or a Futsal league that spans weeks or months. It is not an exhaustive list of actions that need to be undertaken, as every event and league will have slightly different requirements, but it should at least provide an outline for the event organiser.

Size of the Futsal Tournament or League

The number of teams entering the tournament or league has a significant impact upon determining other factors related to organising the event, such as the size of the facility, number of referees, format of the tournament etc. So initially the organiser needs to consider the desired number of teams that they would wish to take part in the event.

The size of the facility that you plan to use, particularly in regards to the number of pitches that are available, will often give you a good gauge of the maximum number of teams that you can include in the event. It is worth noting that too many teams quickly makes a one-day Futsal tournament unworkable; spending time looking at the structure of the Festival and how the format of the fixtures will be managed will help in deciding the optimum number of teams to be involved.

In general, if you only have one pitch at your disposal for the day then 8 – 10 teams will be the maximum number in most cases for a one-day event. However, for a league the organiser can be a little more flexible over the number of teams that participate.



Communication

Once teams have been recruited, the event organiser needs to liaise with the teams prior to the event or prior to the start of the league season ensuring that they have all the information that they need to help them prepare properly for it. Information such as: the tournament rules, the format and fixtures, the kit that they will be expected to bring, the location of the venue, time of arrival, any costs, and any registration forms. If it is a league then the organiser should ideally look to contact the teams prior to each match to ensure that they are aware of their match details.

FA Affiliation

The event organiser should contact their local County FA prior to the tournament or league to discuss the need for appropriately affiliating the event with them.

Venue & Equipment

The choice of venue is very important to ensure a successful event, especially when accommodating a number of teams. Futsal should be played at an indoor sports hall, preferably with a wooden or rubber/synthetic floor. Futsal should not be played on grass and where possible not on artificial-turf either. The pitch should ideally have a 2 metre run-off around the perimeter of the pitch.

At a tournament depending on the age of the participants that you are catering for you may need to consider the length of time that players are not-on-court in-between games. Young players may get restless if there are long gaps in between their matches. For similar reasons, it would be beneficial (although not always possible) to have an area such as a café for the teams to wait in-between games, particularly if there is not a spectator viewing area.

The event organiser will need to consider whether the venue has the necessary Futsal goals, and if not then how these will be obtained. It would also be advantageous if there was an electronic scoreboard that could be used for the matches, but this is not essential.



Rules for the Event

Prior to the event it is important to pay some consideration to the rules that you intend to follow during the league or tournament. These need to be finalised and circulated to the teams and the referees before the event or before the start of the season so that all parties have time to understand how the tournament or league will be played.

Where possible, stick to the FIFA Futsal Laws of the Game, but you may need to modify them in order to fit the specific circumstances of your event, particularly in a one-day Futsal tournament.

Common rule changes for a one-day tournament or festival are:

- **Match Duration:** frequently the games are shortened and played on a non-stopping clock in order to fit all games into the allotted schedule.
- **Timeouts:** in order to keep games running to time then frequently timeouts are either reduced (one per team for entire game) or removed entirely.

- **Accumulated Fouls:** if the duration of the game has been reduced then the number of accumulated fouls that can be conceded before a penalty is given is often reduced in order to make this more relevant and appropriate.

The event organiser should also consider other elements that are specific to your tournament or league such as disciplinary action taken following a sending off (particularly in a league scenario), and what happens if there is a draw at the end of a knock-out game, or if teams are on equal points at the end of a group stage. For a league you should also consider elements such as teams failing to turn-up or cancelling at the last minute.



Staffing & Organisation

For a **one-day festival** or event it is advisable to appoint a Tournament Director to oversee the running of the tournament. This individual will have the following duties:

- Make sure matches are running on time and to schedule
- Be the point-of-contact for all team managers
- Organise the referees
- Make any official ruling decisions (e.g. consider any dismissals)

It would also be advisable to appoint a Results Coordinator, who collects the scores and results from the referee and assists the Tournament Director in ensuring that the event runs smoothly.

For a **league** it may not be necessary to have a league organiser to attend every game, unless the format of the competition requires it. However, a League Secretary should be appointed to liaise with teams and referees before and after the games to ensure that everything is running smoothly. The League Secretary will be responsible for:

- Creating a fixture list
- Regular communication with teams regarding fixtures
- Organising referees
- Collecting match results and formulating a league table
- Managing disciplinary issues



Referees

In official Futsal matches there are two referees to officiate the match, a third referee to manage the benches and to keep count of the team-fouls and a timekeeper. The event organiser may decide it is unnecessary to have so many match officials. It is suggested that there is at least one referee and a timekeeper who will also keep count of team-fouls during the match.

The event organiser should also take into account the need to rest match officials during the course of a one-day tournament, rather than repeatedly be called upon to officiate games. This can obviously lead to exhaustion for the referees resulting in poorer decisions being made.

The event organiser will need to organise the referees in advance of the tournament or league, ensuring that they are able to attend and that relevant communications have been sent to them (e.g. time of arrival, matches to be refereed, teams taking part etc).



Innovation & Creativity

When initially embarking on organising your first Futsal tournament or league there will inevitably be issues that arise that you may not have encountered before, particularly in comparison to 11-a-side football. Be creative and innovative in your solutions and try not to let problems deter you.

For example, if you are looking to establish a winter youth Futsal league then it may be unrealistic to expect all teams to have a home venue, so perhaps you consider an alternative format for your league where you use one or two central venues for all teams in the league to play their games from. The venue costs are calculated beforehand and factored in to the league entry fee that each club needs to pay at the start of the competition so that all clubs share the costs.

Also consider partnership working, particularly at the youth age groups where most youth football clubs have some form of relationship with their local school that is more than likely to have a sports-hall that could be suitable for playing Futsal that they might be prepared to offer to the club or league at the weekend's or evenings for less cost than the local leisure centre.



EXAMPLE TOURNAMENT FIXTURE SCHEDULE:

Outlined below is an example of how a one-day festival or tournament could be coordinated for **8 teams** using **one pitch**. This example is based around organising the 8 teams into 2 groups, and during the group stages playing one period of 10mins and in the knock-out stages playing 2 halves of 10mins.

Match	Time	Group	Team		Team
1	10.30	A	A	v	B
2	10.45	A	C	v	D
3	11.00	B	P	v	Q
4	11.15	B	R	v	S
5	11.30	A	A	v	C
6	11.45	A	B	v	D
7	12.00	B	P	v	R
8	12.15	B	Q	v	S
9	12.30	A	A	v	D
10	12.45	A	B	v	C
11	13.00	B	P	v	S
12	13.15	B	Q	v	R

Match	Time	Group	Team		Team
13	13.45	SF	Group A Winner	v	Group B Runners Up
14	14.30	SF	Group B Winner	v	Group A Runners Up

Match	Time	Group	Team		Team
15	15.15	FINAL	WINNER MATCH 13	v	WINNER MATCH 14



CASE STUDIES & EXAMPLES OF YOUTH FUTSAL IN ACTION

Case Study 1: Shropshire Junior Football League

For the past six seasons the boys Shropshire Junior Football League (SJFL) have worked with the Shropshire County FA to provide a programme of youth Futsal leagues. These have run for eight weeks during the winter (January and February) for Under 8's through to Under 10's football clubs to take part in. At a time of the year when the poor weather often means outdoor youth football is restricted, indoor Futsal has proved a welcome change for a number of youth clubs in the area.

The County FA works with the SJFL to run an eight week Futsal league fixture programme for 40 clubs to take part in and have made it an integral component of the league's FA Charter Standard league development plans. It is optional for youth teams to get involved, and those that don't wish to play Futsal can continue to play outdoor football fixtures. But ever since the inception of the Futsal leagues the 40 places have been quickly taken by eager clubs. The fixtures are run out of a central venue with two indoor Futsal pitches (Shrewsbury Sports Village) every Sunday from 9am to 5pm.

In the 2012/13 season the County FA extended their winter Futsal provision by working with the Shropshire Girls & Women's League to pilot a similar provision for Under 9's girl's teams on Saturday's. The success of this pilot has resulted in girls Under 10's and Under 12 age groups being included for the 2013/14 winter programme.

Prior to the start of the Futsal league, the CFA works with the league and the clubs to offer a Futsal coaching workshop to support the clubs in understanding the nuances of the game. They also organise a Futsal conversion course for referees to ensure that there are sufficient qualified Futsal match officials to referee the games. The County FA ensures that the winter Futsal leagues align with their qualification process for the FA National Youth Futsal Festival, and are keen to continue looking at ways in expanding their Futsal offer particularly within schools.



"On behalf of the Under 8's teams we thoroughly enjoyed the Futsal mini league. I thought it was well run and the lads had a great time, and hopefully improved their skills along the way."

Chris Hedley – Team Manager in Shropshire Junior League

"Despite very mixed results for my team this season the boys have again enjoyed the opportunity to play Futsal through the bad winter weather."

Adrian Tomkins – Team Manager of Shropshire Junior League

Case Study 2: Essex Clubs

A volunteer (Greg Regan) from a local FA Charter Standard youth club in Essex was keen to set-up local Futsal opportunities for young players to benefit from within the area. He arranged a one-off round-robin taster event at a local facility in Barking for under 8's and under 10's teams to take part in trying Futsal for the first time.

Following the positive conclusion of this event with players and teams enjoying the experience, Greg worked with Essex County FA to call a meeting to bring together a number of youth clubs to discuss developing further Futsal provision within the area. The group discussed several options for future youth Futsal events and it was decided that a 5 week Futsal fixture programme would be delivered at the excellent facilities at the nearby University of East London. Teams could commit to one week or all five and the ethos was very much around learning the game with no results recorded.

In an attempt to keep costs down, it was decided not to pay for qualified match officials; instead the club manager's shared refereeing duties and they also hired some seating to prevent parents from being too close to the touchlines of the pitch. On reflection, Greg realised that he experienced difficulties juggling all of the organisational requirements over the five weeks, but he rectified this by linking with Genesis Futsal Club who play within the FA National Futsal League. Genesis were happy to provide support, assistance and guidance to help Greg.

Going forwards there is much interest in expanding this Futsal provision and setting up under 9's and under 11's to supplement the two age groups they are already delivering to. There are discussions about progressing into a monthly league running over six months with matches being held on a Saturday. Greg, Genesis and other local partners are looking into the feasibility of making this happen.

Case Study 3: Liverpool Clubs

In October 2012 Ash Celtic, an FA Charter Standard youth club from Liverpool, were eager to work with the Liverpool County FA to establish some local youth Futsal league provision for under 7's through to under 10's. With a little bit of effort and promotion from both the club and the County FA within two weeks this idea turned into a reality with 34 teams signed up into this new league. This was the maximum number of teams that the league could hold due to the size of the facility. The interest from local clubs joining this league was undoubtedly helped by the poor weather during this period where a number of matches at the weekend were being cancelled.

Due to a lack of available and suitable Futsal facilities within the area to host this number of teams, Ash Celtic and Liverpool FA showed their innovation by working with Wavertree Tennis Centre to mark Futsal courts within their tennis facility. The league was held every Friday evening from 6pm – 9pm.

The league has continued to run non-stop during both the football off-season and on-season and been able to retain 34 teams. They have also had so much additional interest from other clubs that they have now begun negotiating with the tennis centre to install a further three Futsal pitches so that they can increase their age groups to meet the demand.

"The feedback was overwhelmingly positive on the whole. There was excellent feedback on the format and no issues with lack of trophies or finals. Parents behaved excellently throughout. Players enjoyed the quickness and excitement plus getting to play lots of games. Essex FA helped to advertise via article, twitter and emails to clubs. Other managers also helped to spread the word."

Greg Regan – Essex Youth Futsal

"This was a great project led by Greg and supported by a number of grassroots coaches. We're keen for this to develop into further provision and we'll be looking into ways we can support with workforce including linking in young leaders and potentially using a casual coach to support with organisation. We're also in discussions with other youth football leagues about running some regular Futsal events."

Nick Emery – Essex County FA



Case Study 4: FA National Youth Futsal Festival

The Berks & Bucks County FA have looked to kick-start youth Futsal within their area using the momentum and interest generated through the FA National Youth Futsal Festival. In 2012 the County FA ran their first County Festival to qualify teams through to the Regional and National Futsal Festival's. For many youth teams within Berks & Bucks this County Festival was the first experience that they had of Futsal, and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive. This experience helped spur the clubs to work with the County FA to establish the 'Berkshire Youth Futsal League' to run from May to August involving over 40 teams and between December and January involving 55 teams across under 10 – under 16 age bands. As the league has grown, the need for additional facilities has been challenging but something that so far they have been able to overcome with some innovative thinking and working with their partners.



Following on from girls teams enjoying the County Youth Futsal Festival, the County FA has worked with the Berkshire County Girls League to introduce a mid-winter break in their normal league provision to play a series of Futsal tournaments in February from under 10s through to under 16s. The County FA are also working with the referees from the league to deliver a Futsal referee conversion course so that they will be able to officiate these games competently.

Although youth Futsal has grown quickly with Berks & Bucks over recent years, in the Milton Keynes area of the county the interest in Futsal has been less. To generate enthusiasm the County FA has worked closely with the main youth football league in the area to run a series of Futsal coaching workshops for coaches from the clubs. The County FA will then work with the league to signpost these clubs to attend and take part within the County Youth Futsal Festival this season, and use the interest this generates to try and establish further ongoing Futsal provision.



Case Study 5: Wensleydale Junior Football League

Wensleydale Junior Football League (WJFL) based in North Riding County FA, first experimented with Futsal as a league in 2011. For the past two seasons the WJFL have worked closely with the County FA to run a one-day Under 12's Futsal tournament during the winter to act as a local qualifying tournament for the FA National Youth Futsal Festival. The tournaments were a massive success and the clubs began showing an interest to the league about extending the Futsal provision for the 2013/14 season.

The WJFL have looked to proactively incorporate Futsal as part of some of the changes that they have been making to the format of their league provision in line with the recommendations of The FA Youth Development Review. For the 2013/14 season the WJFL have now split the season into three parts for all age groups from Under 8s through to Under 14s. The first third of the season (Sep – Dec), clubs will be playing developmental games on grass; the second part of the season (Dec – Feb), the clubs will play in an indoor Futsal league; the final third of the season (Feb – May) the clubs will be back on grass playing a mixture of development games interspersed with competitions and mini-tournaments.

The Futsal component of this forward-looking approach by the WJFL will initially involve the first four weeks as development games to help players and coaches better understand the game and to create the right environment for young player development. The following three weeks progress into competitive league matches involving 36 teams and over 400 young players. This league will continue to act as a local qualifier for the FA National Youth Futsal Festival. The WJFL are planning to stage this Futsal activity at two different venues each weekend: a local secondary school and a leisure centre that the league has good relationships with.

To maximise the value of incorporating Futsal into their league programme, the WJFL have organised with the support of the County FA a one-day In-Service CPD event for club coaches to come and learn more about Futsal delivered by the lead coach of the FA Regional Centre of Futsal Excellence. This has been followed up further with coaches being encouraged to attend the FA Coaching Futsal: Beginners Guide course.