



Rules summary 2026/27

Formats, setup and match-day laws for every age group

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Age is taken at 31 August immediately before the season starts.	3v3	5v5	7v7	9v9	11v11
	U7	U8U9	U10U11	U12U13	U14U15U16U18
Format and squads					
Format	3v3	5v5	7v7	9v9	11v11
School year	Yr 2	Yr 3Yr 4	Yr 5Yr 6	Yr 7Yr 8	Yr 9Yr 10Yr 11Yr 12–13
Minimum to start	3	4	5	7	9
Max match squad	3	10	12	14	16
Max team size	3	10	14	18	22
Substitutes	Everyone plays	✓ Rolling	✓ Rolling	✓ Rolling	✓ Rolling
League status	Friendly	Friendly / trophy events	Friendly / trophy events	Competitive divisions	Competitive divisions
Setup					
Match duration	6–10 min	2 × 20 min	2 × 25 min	2 × 30 min	2 × 35 min2 × 40 min2 × 45 min
Ball size	3	3	3	4	5
Goal size	4ft × 2.5ft	12ft × 6ft	12ft × 6ft	16ft × 7ft	21ft × 7ft24ft × 8ft
Pitch, recommended	15 × 10 m	37 × 27 m	55 × 37 m	73 × 46 m	82 × 50 m91 × 55 m
Pitch, min to max	15 × 10 – 20 × 15	27 × 18 – 37 × 27	46 × 27 – 55 × 37	64 × 37 – 73 × 46	82 × 46 – 91 × 5582 × 46 – 100 × 64
Match-day laws					
Goalkeeper	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Restart from touchline	Kick-in or dribble-in, 5 yds back	Kick-in or dribble-in, 5 yds back	Kick-in or dribble-in, 5 yds back	Throw-in	Throw-in
Foul throws	n/a	n/a	n/a	Second chance, then awarded to opponents	No second chance
Deliberate heading	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Offside	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Retreat line	✓ Goal kicks (halfway)	✓ Goal kicks (halfway)	✓ Goal kicks (halfway)	✗	✗
Power play	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗
Back-pass rule	n/a	✓	✓	✓	✓
Free kicks, corners & kick-ins	5 yards	5 yards	5 yards	10 yards	10 yards
Kick-offs & penalties	5 yards	5 yards	5 yards	7 yards	10 yards
Extra time	None	None	None	None	None
Penalty kicks**	—	3 each	3 each	3 each	5 each
Timed laws — new for 2026/27					
Keeper release	n/a	8 sec — corner against	8 sec — corner against	8 sec — corner against	8 sec — corner against
Goal kick delay	n/a	5 sec — corner against	5 sec — corner against	5 sec — corner against	5 sec — corner against
Throw-in delay	n/a	n/a	n/a	5 sec — throw against	5 sec — throw against
Match officials					
Referee	Facilitator	Club-assigned referee****	Club-assigned referee****	Registered referee*	Registered referee*
Assistant referees	—	—	—	Club or parent assistants	Club or parent assistants
Referee fee***	—	£20.00	£25.00	£30.00	£30.00£35.00
Double header, per match	—	£15.00	£18.00	£20.00	£20.00£25.00

* The league will appoint a registered referee where possible. Where none is appointed, the club should assign one.

*** League and friendly games: the home team pays the fee. In knockout competitions and knockout stages it is split 50/50.

** Depending on the competition stage and format. The number of kicks will be advised per competition.

**** Use your club's referee pool for home games. If nobody is free a coach or parent can referee — but they are the referee for that game, not a coach, so no coaching from the middle. Use a whistle and the same hand signals a qualified referee would: the girls move up to league-appointed referees and need to know what real match conditions feel like.

The bits managers ask about

- No throw-ins below U12.** At 5v5 and 7v7 the ball comes back into play with a kick-in or a dribble-in, with the opposition five yards back. Deliberate heading is out at the same ages.
 - Foul throws.** U12 and U13 get a second chance — foul it again and the throw goes to the other team. From U14 there is no second chance.
- Retreat line — goal kicks only.** At 5v5 and 7v7, so every age up to U11, the opposition drops behind the halfway line at a goal kick until the ball is back in play. If the keeper catches or picks the ball up in open play there is no retreat: play carries on as normal. It stops at U12.
 - Distances.** Five yards for everything up to U11. From U12, ten yards for free kicks and corners, but seven yards for kick-offs and penalties, going to ten from U14.
 - Penalties to settle a tie.** Three each up to U13, five each from U14. There is no extra time at any age.
- The eight-second keeper rule.** A keeper holding the ball in their hands has eight seconds to release it. The referee raises a hand and counts down the last five on their fingers. Overrun it and the opposition get a corner — not an indirect free kick, which is what this replaced.
 - Five-second countdowns, new this season.** The same idea now covers restarts. Dawdle over a goal kick and the countdown starts; run out of time and it's a corner against. Dawdle over a throw-in and the throw goes to the other team. The referee whistles and signals first, so it should never be a surprise.
- The injured-keeper rule is not ours.** The one in the news — coach nominates an outfield player to come off, who stays off a minute — is a Premier League trial for 2026/27, not a change to the Laws. It does not apply in this league.
 - Who pays the referee.** Home team in league and friendly games. In knockout competitions and knockout stages it's split 50/50, so take your half along.
 - Jewellery.** No earrings, studs, bands or rings, and taping over them is not permitted. This is Law 4, not a league rule — sort it before the referee inspects.