

Optus Small-Sided Football Formats

Football Federation Australia (FFA) in 2009 released the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum was a key initiative put forward in the FFA National Football Development Plan released in November 2007.

The National Curriculum aims to provide national guidance and an integrated and consistent approach to the development of players and coaches throughout the country.

As a result of a combination of the release of the National Curriculum and feedback from the football community, including Member Federations, Associations, Zones, Clubs, parents and players, the Optus Small-Sided Football formats have been adjusted to be implemented at the commencement of the 2010 season and beyond.

The Optus Small-Sided Football Formats for the season commencing in 2010 for the Football West Leagues are summarised below:

Playing Format	Under 6 & 7	Under 8 & 9	Under 10 (& 11s in 2011)
Numbers	4 v 4	7 v 7	9 v 9
Field Size	30m x 20m	1/4 Full Size Pitch Min. - 40m x 30m Max. - 50m x 40m	1/2 Full Size Pitch Min. - 60m x 40m Max. - 70m x 50m
Field Markings	Markers or line markings	Markers or line markings	Markers or line markings
Penalty Area	Nil	5m depth x 12m width	5m depth x 12m width
Goal Size	Min: 1 .5m x 0.9m Max: 2.0m x 1.0m	Min: 2.5m x 2.0m Max: 3.0m x 2.0m	Min: 4.5m x 2.0m Max: 5.0m x 2.0m
Goal Type	Goals, Poles or Markers	Goals, Poles or Markers	Goals, Poles or Markers
Ball Size	Size 3	Size 3	Size 4
Goalkeeper	No	Yes	Yes
Playing Time	3 x 12 minute games	2 x 20 minutes	2 x 25 minutes
Half Time Break	3 mins between games	5 minutes	5 minutes
Referee	Game Leaders	Instructing Referee	Instructing Referee
Point's Table & Finals	No	No	No

Laws of Optus Small-Sided Football

The field of play

Dimensions

The field of play should be rectangular in shape. Sizes for each age group are as follows:

Under 6 & 7 – 30m x 20m

Under 8 & 9 – Maximum 50m x 40m / Minimum 40m x 30m
1/4 full size pitch – when converting a full size pitch into Optus Small Sided Football fields

Under 10 – Maximum 70m x 50m / Minimum 60m x 40m
1/2 full size pitch – when converting a full size pitch into Optus Small Sided Football fields

Markings

Markers or painted line markings.

Goal size

The size of the goal should be:

Under 6 & 7 – Minimum 1.5m x 0.9m, Maximum 2.0m x 1.0m

Under 8 & 9 – Minimum 2.5m x 2.0m, Maximum 3.0m x 2.0m

Under 10 – Minimum 4.5m x 2.0m, Maximum 5.0m x 2.0m

Note: For the Under 8 and 9 age groups, it is recommended that clubs that wish to and have the capacity to do so use 3m x 2m goals. Should a club not be able to do this in the first instance, the 5m x 2m goal is most acceptable for use on fields for the Under 8 and 9 age groups as well as the Under 10 age group. FFA understands that clubs may have existing goals for the Under 8 – 10 age groups; however when they need to replace existing goals or are in a position to make a change they should move to these dimensions specified above.

Goal type

It is preferable that pop up style or portable goals are used where possible however, the use of poles and markers as the goals particularly in the Under 6 to 9 age groups is also suitable.

Penalty area

Under 6 & 7 No penalty area

Under 8 – 10 Rectangular – 5m depth x 1 2m width

The penalty area can be marked through the use of marked lines, flat or soft markers or cones.

The Ball

Under 6 –9 Size 3

Under 10 Size 4

The number of players

Under 6 & 7 4 v 4 – no goalkeeper

Maximum of two substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Under 8 & 9 7 v 7 – inc. goalkeeper

Maximum of three substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Under 10 9 v 9 – inc. goalkeeper

Maximum of three substitutes who may rotate during the entire game. The coach or parent is allowed to make the substitutions while the ball is in play, but must wait until the substituted player has left the field.

Goalkeeper

Under 6 & 7 no goalkeeper

The game leader, coaches and managers should continually discourage children from permanently standing in front of the goal.

Under 8 – 10 goalkeeper

The goalkeeper is allowed to handle the ball anywhere in the penalty area. To restart play after a save or gathering the ball with their hands, the goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands. The ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. Opponents should move outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play once it moves out of the penalty area.

Duration of the game

Under 6 & 7 3 x 12 minute games (2 minute break between games)

Under 8 & 9 2 x 20 minutes (half-time break 5 minutes)

Under 10 2 x 25 minutes (half-time break 5 minutes)

Game Leader and Instructing Referee

Under 6 & 7 Game Leader

Under 8 – 10 Instructing Referee

Game Leader

The main role of the game leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match re-starts. Most importantly, they must make every effort to create an environment that ensures that all players have fun and have maximum involvement. The children are learning the game at this level, be flexible and patient. The game leader can be a club official, parent, older child or player or beginning referee and should always be enthusiastic and approachable.

The Game leader should:

- Encourage all children to have fun and different children to take re-starts.
- Ensure the correct number of players are on the field.
- Discourage players from permanently over-guarding the goal.
- Use a “Ready, Set, Go” prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play.

- Encourage children to dribble or pass ball into play from all re-starts rather than a big kick.
- Ensure team officials and parents create a safe, enjoyable and positive playing environment for the children and do not emphasise winning or losing.
- Encourage children to be involved in all aspects of the game, attacking and defending.
- Remember most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by a lack of coordination, with no intent. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball or foul and misconduct has occurred, explain to the child they have done the wrong thing and that they should not do this again.
- Let the game flow and give instruction to all players on the run where you can.
- Praise and encourage both teams.
- Be enthusiastic and approachable.
- **Most Importantly - Remember the children are learning the game – be flexible and patient.**

Instructing Referee

The main role of the instructing referee is to control the game to ensure it is played fluently and instruct and correct the players (with minimal blowing of the whistle) on how to behave and what the rules are, e.g. what a foul is, what a free kick is and how to throw in etc... Should these indiscretions happen a second time the referee should stop the game and apply the appropriate action and decisions. This person can be a club official, capable parent, older child or player, beginning or official referee from the federation or association.

The Instructing referee should;

- Encourage all children to have fun and different children to take re-starts.
- Ensure the correct numbers of players are on the field
- Discourage players from permanently standing in blatant offside positions and instruct them to move into onside positions. In the Under 10 age groups children should be made aware of the offside rule during training and be encouraged to adopt this philosophy during the game at all times.
- Let the game flow and give instruction to all players on the run where you can
- Instruct players in the first instance before blowing the whistle where possible
- Ensure team officials and parents create a safe, enjoyable and positive playing environment for the children and do not emphasise winning or losing
- Be enthusiastic, consistent and approachable

The start of play and restart after a goal

Under 6 -10

Pass forward to a team mate from the middle of the half way line. All players must be in their own half of the field of play. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a team mate before a goal can be scored.

Ball in and out of play

The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line or the touch line on the ground or in the air, or when play has been stopped by the game leader or instructing referee.

Ball crossing the touch line

Under 6 & 7

There is no throw in. A player from the opposing team to the player that touched the ball last before crossing the touch line will place the ball on the touch line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a team mate before a goal can be scored.

Under 8 - 10

Throw-in: Player faces the field of play, has part of each foot on the ground either on or behind the touch line, uses both hands and delivers the ball from behind and over their head. The thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play once it enters the field of play. A goal cannot be scored directly from a throw in.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the defending team last

Under 6 & 7

There is no corner kick. Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the half way line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch a team mate before a goal can be scored.

Under 8 - 10

Corner kick. A player from the attacking team places the ball inside the corner arc nearest to the point where the ball crossed the line. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball is in play when it is kicked and moves. A goal may be scored directly from a corner kick.

Ball crossing the goal line after touching the attacking team last

Under 6 & 7

Regardless of which team touched the ball last, a player from the team whose goal line the ball has crossed will place the ball anywhere along the goal line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must retreat to the half way line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch a team mate before a goal can be scored.

Under 8 - 10

Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents remain outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play once it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.

Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar. When goal posts are not available and cones are used for goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes between the cones without touching them, below shoulder height of the player.

Offside

Under 6 – 10 No offside

Note: In the Under 8 – 10 age groups, team coaches and managers should strongly discourage children from permanently standing in blatant offside positions. In the Under 10 age group children should be made aware of the offside rule during training and be encouraged to adopt this philosophy during the game at all times. Instructing referees should direct players permanently standing in blatant offside positions to move into onside positions.

Fouls and misconduct

Under 6 & 7

Indirect free kicks are awarded for all acts of handball or fouls and misconduct. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken. (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal).

Most acts of handball or fouls and misconduct at this level are caused by a lack of coordination, with no intent. In this case try and give the advantage to the attacking team and continue play. If you decide a deliberate or serious act of handball, foul or misconduct has occurred, explain to the child they have done the wrong thing and that they should not do this again.

Under 8 – 10

Indirect free kicks are awarded for all acts of handball or fouls and misconduct. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball when the indirect free kick is taken. (An indirect free kick is where a goal can be scored only if the ball subsequently touches another player before it enters the goal).

For deliberate or serious acts of handball or fouls and misconduct in the penalty area, a penalty kick is awarded from an 8m penalty mark with only a goalkeeper in position. All other players must be outside the penalty area and be at least 5m behind the penalty mark.

Fouls and misconduct are:

- 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
- tackles an opponent from behind 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
- plays in a dangerous manner
- impedes the progress of a player

Points tables and finals

To ensure that Optus Small-Sided Football is played in the correct spirit and give all players the best possible chance to develop, FFA advises that Member Federations, zones, associations and clubs adopt and promote the following advice and recommendation:

Under 6 – 10

FFA advises that the keeping of points tables and playing of finals must not be done.