



Small-sided games (SSG) is about learning, self-experiencing, having a lot of touches on the ball and above all, children having fun every time they step on the pitch.

The future of your son, daughter or pupil, as a “player for fun” or as a future Soccerroo or Matilda, must begin with SSG. As always, Member Federations, associations, clubs, coaches, officials and parents will play a key role in revolutionising and creating the right playing environment for our young players.

Robert Baan,  
National Technical Director,  
Football Federation Australia (FFA)

## Parents code of behaviour

Parents need to understand the philosophy of SSG and it will be through your support, assistance and positive behaviour the right environment will be created for your child to enjoy their football experience.

As a parent always remember

- Remember that children participate in sport for their enjoyment, not yours
- Encourage children to participate, do not force them
- Let children play and learn by doing, limit constant instruction
- Focus on your child's efforts and performance rather than whether they win or lose
- Encourage children to play according to the rules and spirit of the game
- Encourage children and teams to keep control of ball
- Ensure that the time players spend with you is a positive experience. All young people are deserving of equal attention and opportunities
- Never ridicule or yell at a child or team for making a mistake or losing
- Remember that children learn best by example. Appreciate good performance and skilful plays by all participants
- ‘Smart supporting’ – not loud and intense but calm, relaxed and at all times positive
- Respect officials' decisions and teach children to do likewise
- Show appreciation for volunteer coaches, officials and administrators. Without them, your child could not participate
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion

Do I need to know a lot about football to be a parent helper or supervisor?

SSG relies on parent helpers as coaches, supervisors and game leaders. The main focus of SSG is enjoyment and to let the children experience the game through participation with minimal instruction. There is plenty of help to assist you with training ideas and advice on SSG from FFA, Member Federations, associations and most importantly your club.

Parents can find more information on the philosophy, benefits and training activities for SSG, the Grassroots Football Certificate (coach and parent education course for SSG) and the Telstra Football Anytime program (official FFA club based introductory football program for SSG) from the FFA website or telephone 02 8354 5555.



## Small-Sided Games PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE

[www.footballaustralia.com.au](http://www.footballaustralia.com.au)

### What are small-sided games?

They are football games with fewer players competing on a smaller-sized field. They are fun games that encourage players to have more contact with the ball because fewer players are playing in a smaller playing area. SSG have a definite developmental impact on younger football players.

### Why change to small-sided games?

It makes the game of football a better experience for children. More touches on the ball, more opportunities to make decisions, more actual play. Players will be more active due to playing both attacking and defensive roles within a match and will understand the importance of team-mates and playing and working together.

### Do other countries play small-sided games?

SSG are played and endorsed throughout Brazil, Argentina, Japan, England, Ireland, The Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea and USA, to name a few. The idea of SSG is not new.

### Benefits of small-sided games for your child

A significant amount of research has been conducted in countries where SSG are prevalent, which overwhelmingly highlight the following benefits:

- more touches of the ball by all players throughout all areas of the pitch
- more shots on goal
- more efficient use of facilities, given there can be multiple games on one standard-size field
- repeated decision-making experience
- the ball is in play far more often
- the emphasis is on player development rather than winning or losing
- better success rate leads to improved quality of play, self-esteem and player retention
- the game is easier to understand
- freedom of expression – no positions in early stages
- less perceived stress on the players
- less perceived pressure from coaches and parents
- parents more likely to volunteer for SSG game leader roles
- children enjoy the progressive and sequential game formats

### What's changing?

From 2008, FFA and Member Federations, in conjunction with zones, associations and clubs will lead a staged implementation of SSG throughout Australia.

The implementation will start with some or all age groups, associations and clubs in each Member Federation in 2008 and will continue over several years to progress throughout all age groups, associations and clubs in each Member Federation in a staged approach.

A summary of the SSG formats to be implemented under the direction of Member Federation, zones and associations at your club can be seen below;

Playing Format	Under 6	Under 7 & 8	Under 9 & 10	Under 11 & 12
<b>Numbers</b>	4 v 4	5 v 5	7 v 7	9 v 9
<b>Field Size</b>	30m x 20m	30m x 20m	40m x 30m	60m x 40m
<b>Field Markings</b>	Markers or painted line markings	Markers or painted line markings	Markers or painted line markings	Markers or painted line markings
<b>Penalty Area</b>	Nil	Nil	8m length x 16m width	8m length x 16m width
<b>Goal Size</b>	Min: 1.80m x 0.90m Max: 2.00m x 1.00m	Min: 1.80m x 0.90m Max: 2.00m x 1.00m	Min: 4.80m x 1.60m Max: 5.00m x 2.00m	Min: 4.80m x 1.60m Max: 5.00m x 2.00m
<b>Goal Type</b>	Markers, Poles, Goals	Markers, Poles, Goals	Markers, Poles, Goals	Markers, Poles, Goals
<b>Ball Size</b>	Size 3	Size 3	Size 3	Size 4
<b>Goalkeeper</b>	No	No	Yes	Yes
<b>Recommended Playing Time</b>	2 x 15 minutes	2 x 20 minutes	2 x 25 minutes	2 x 30 minutes
<b>Half Time Break</b>	5 minutes	5 minutes	5 minutes	7.5 minutes
<b>Referee</b>	Game Leader	Game Leader	Instructing Referee	Instructing Referee

### How will children learn to play 11 v 11?

Progressing from 4 v 4, 5 v 5, 7 v 7 and 9 v 9 BEFORE 11 v 11 is a sound educational method and process. The progression helps players discover the differences in the size of the field and size of the goal, and the benefits of having more space, learn to use different and better developed techniques to play a more tactical game, and learn the role of different positions and determine what best suits them.

### Why no goalkeepers until under 9s?

The role of the goalkeeper in football is uniquely specialised and typically players develop as keepers at a later age. In the youngest age groups, keepers can be uninvolved in the game for long periods, which can be uninteresting and means they are not part of the team for long periods of the game. Most goalkeepers have played for many years as field players before deciding to become goalkeepers.

### Moving the focus away from winning or losing

The emphasis of SSG is on participation and enjoyment, and an associated removal of the current emphasis on the importance of winning. Children are much more likely to enjoy their football playing experience, will be keen to play more often and are less likely to drop out of the game.

Clubs, coaches, team supervisors and parents play the most important role in creating the right environment for SSG and need to stress and adhere to the following SSG playing conditions;

Under 6 - 10

No official recording of tables, results, finals and statistics. Games focus on participation, enjoyment and skill development.

Under 11 and 12

Recording of tables, results, finals and statistics is optional. Games focus on participation, enjoyment and skill development.

### Role of game leader and instructing referee

The game leader is encouraged to be a junior player or parent. The role of the game leader is to keep the game moving fluently with little to no stoppages to play.

The instructing referee can be a junior player, parent, beginning or official referee. The role of the instructing referee is to keep the game moving fluently and instruct the players during the game on rules and how to behave, at the same time minimising stoppages to play.

### Role of coach / parent helper

**The major role of the coach / parent helper is to make the football experience of every player and their families as enjoyable as possible. This person will provide the best environment for children to learn and enjoy the game through organising fun game-based practices. Having good personal and organisational skills are most important for coaches and parent helpers working with children in this age group, to allow them to learn through playing the game with minimal instruction and a focus on player development.**