



FOOTBALL
NSW



FOOTBALL NSW

Nepean FA Amended Version

GAME LEADER HANDBOOK 2025

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WHAT IS SMALL-SIDED FOOTBALL?

What is MiniRoos & Small-sided Football?

MiniRoos football is the national brand given to junior football in Australia for players 4 - 11 years old. The nation-wide initiative uses short, game-based sessions to introduce the sport of football to newcomers in an inclusive way. It focuses on learning new skills, being active, making life-long friends and, potentially, unearthing the next generation of national team players; Matildas, Socceroos, Pararoos & ParaMatildas.

Small-sided football is commonly also known as modified football which incorporates the game of football on smaller fields with modified rules and playing numbers. Small-sided or modified football is different to Futsal which is its separate sport with internationally recognised rules.

Small-sided football is utilised alongside or as the playing format for certain age groups within traditional season-long football activities. Research has shown small-sided football for age groups Under 12 and Under 13 has positive developmental outcomes for the participants, which has seen these formats used more commonly throughout the football landscape.

Football philosophy

Football NSW encourages small-sided football to be utilised as the preferred playing formats for Under 13 and below in various formats. (Note that Nepean FA from 2024 has played Small Sided Football formats up to and including Under 12's. Nepean FA will commence full size field and competition rules from under 13s)

Small-sided football is focused on the individual player unlike traditional 11 aside football which focusses primarily on the result and team objectives.

Small-sided football is designed to be inclusive, individual development focussed and to provide a great experience for all involved. Players within these age groups are in their formative years on building a love for the game and developing core physical literacy and football related skills.

Match results

Within these age groups it is recommended for results tables not to be maintained on public websites or scoreboards, nor the results of individual matches shared publicly.

Commonly known as 'non-competitive', results are not recommended to be shared to ensure coaches, players and parents focus on the game experience and the individual development of players.

Please note that in the Nepean FA , U12 format has changed to the recommended 9 v 9 format in 2024, however, the age group will still be recognised as a "Competition" age group. Results will be recorded and published and tables kept.

ROLE OF A GAME LEADER

Each game is to be controlled by one Game Leader. The main role of the Game Leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match restarts. Most importantly, they must make every effort to create an environment that ensures that all players have fun, are learning the game and have maximum involvement.

The Game Leader can be a club official, parent, young adult/older teenager or beginner referee and should always be enthusiastic and approachable. Most importantly, remember the children are learning the game - be flexible and patient.

The Game Leader should:

- Check all players are wearing shin guards
- Ensure team officials and parents create a safe, enjoyable and positive playing environment for the children and do not emphasis winning or losing
- Be enthusiastic, consistent and approachable
- Let the game flow and give instruction to all players on the run where you can
- Praise and encourage both teams
- Encourage all children to have fun and different children to take re-starts
- The closest player to the restart should be encouraged to take the restart especially with throw ins. This speeds up play and will stop teams trying to work out who's turn it is to take a throw in. The goalkeeper to take all goal kicks
- Use a "Ready, Set, Go" prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play
- Ensure the correct number 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 U9 - U12 age groups players should be made aware of the offside rule during training and be encouraged to always adopt this philosophy during the game.
- Encourage children to dribble or pass ball to team mates rather than kick the ball long
- Ensure the opposing team is at least 5 metres outside the penalty area for all goal line restarts
- Encourage children to be involved in all aspects of the game, attacking and defending
- Award free kicks as appropriate to help children learn the rules and consequences of committing fouls
- Explain the rules to players and why a free kick has been awarded
- When blowing the whistle make it loud so everyone can hear as this provides a perception that you are in control of the game

Game Leaders are encouraged to undertake a free MiniRoos Certificate prior to start of the season.

FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

Within small-sided football involving junior players (5 - 12 years) we encourage all Game Leaders, Coaches and spectators to observe a commonsense approach.

Players within these age groups are developing their physical literacy, social and behavioural management skillset. At times they will be clumsy, aggressive or uncontrolled. Approach these moments to ensure player welfare is the number one priority by utilising restarts such as freekicks to 'reset' the match and ensure everyone remains involved where possible.

Indirect free kicks are awarded for all acts of handball or fouls and misconduct. Opponents must be at least 5 metres 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 8-metre penalty mark with only a goalkeeper in position. All other players must be outside the penalty area and be at least 5 metres behind the penalty mark.~~ —In Nepean FA Small Sided Football there will be no penalties awarded during regular play, any infringement that would see a penalty awarded will be taken as an indirect free kick

Fouls and misconduct are:

- kicks or attempts to kick an opponent.
- trips or attempts to trip an opponent.
- jumps at an opponent.
- charges at an opponent.
- strikes or attempts to strike an opponent.
- pushes an opponent.
- tackles an opponent from behind to gain possession of the ball.
- makes contact with the opponent before touching the ball.
- holds an opponent.
- spits at an opponent.
- handles the ball deliberately.
- plays in a dangerous manner; and
- impedes the progress of a player.

CAUTIONS - YELLOW & RED CARDS

In small-sided football 5-11 we do not typically issue yellow or red cards; however we encourage Game Leaders & Coaches to take responsibility for the safety and welfare of all players.

If the Game Leader or Coach believes a serious foul has been committed that would warrant a caution in traditional football formats, we encourage them to utilise one of the following techniques;

- Substitute the player(s) from the match for 5 minutes
- Remove the player for the remainder of the game
- Game Leader to hand over responsibility of the player management to the coach

This changes from Under 12 & upwards, Cautions - Yellow and Red will be issued in line with The Laws of the Game.

PLAYING FORMATS BOYS AND GIRLS AGED UNDER 6 & 7

PLAYER NUMBERS

Under 6 & 7 football should have a maximum of 4 v 4 on the field with no goalkeeper.

GOAL TYPE

It is preferable that pop-up style portable goals are used where possible however, the use of poles or markers as goals is also suitable. Goal size of 1m x 1m

GOALKEEPER

There are no goalkeepers in MiniRoos Under 6 & 7. It is the responsibility of the Game Leader to discourage children from permanently standing in front of the goal.

BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

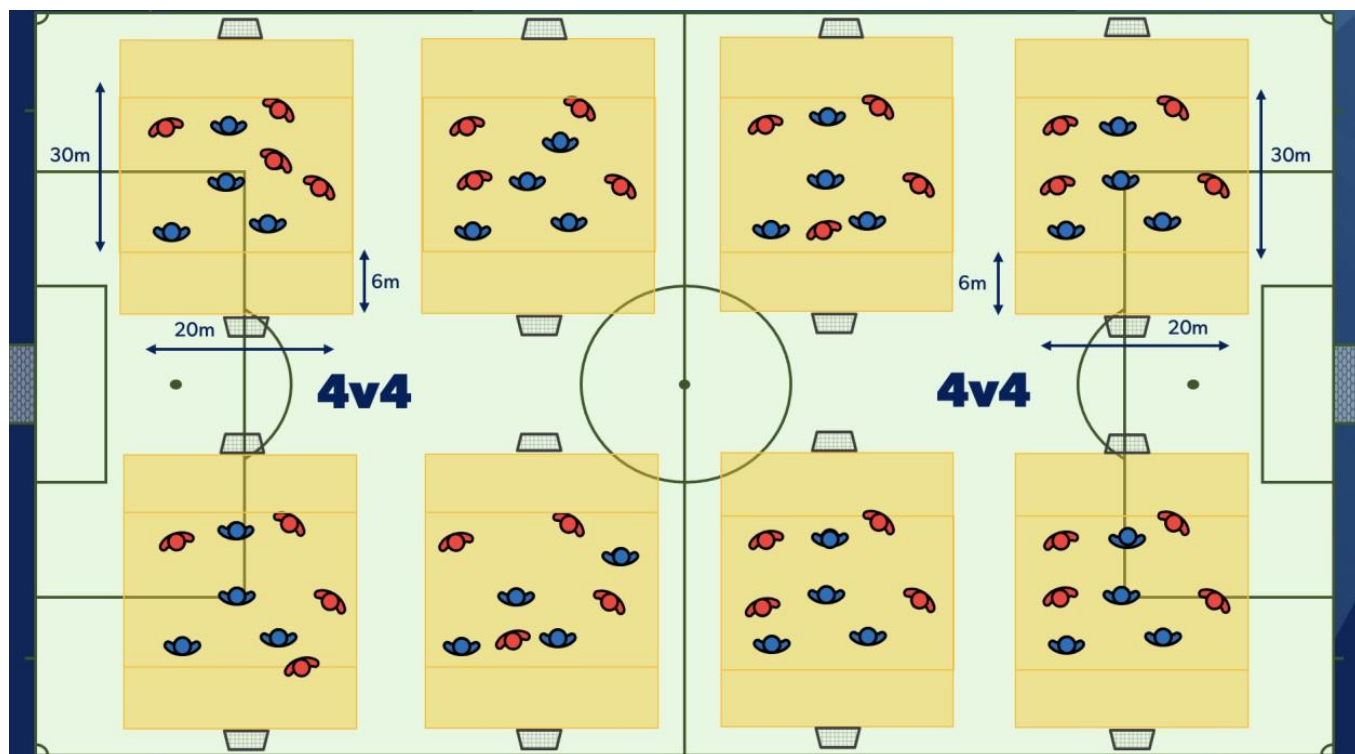
There is no throw in. A player from the opposing team to the player that touched the ball last before crossing the touch line will place the ball on the touch line and pass or dribble the ball into play. Opponents must be at least 5m away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate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

BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE

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 halfway line and can move once the ball is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

OFFSIDE

There is no offside rule in MiniRoos Under 6 & 7. Game Leaders should strongly discourage children from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.



Playing Formats boys and girls aged Under 6 & 7

Number of Players	4 a-side
Goalkeeper	No
Field	40m x 30m
Goal	1m x 1m
Ball	Size 3
Duration	20 minutes x 2

PLAYING FORMATS BOYS AND GIRLS AGED UNDER 8 & 9

PLAYER NUMBERS

Under 8 & 9 football should have a maximum of 7 a-side on the field including goalkeeper.

GOAL TYPE

It is preferable that portable goals are used where possible however, the use of poles or markers as goals is also suitable. Goal size of 3m x 2m

OFFSIDE

There is no offside rule in MiniRoos Under 8 & 9. Game Leaders should strongly discourage children from permanently standing in blatant offside positions.

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 ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. The goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands.

Opponents must be at least 10 metres outside the penalty area and cannot move inside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play once it moves out of the penalty area. An indirect free kick is awarded if the goalkeeper touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately passed to them by a teammate.

BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE THROW IN

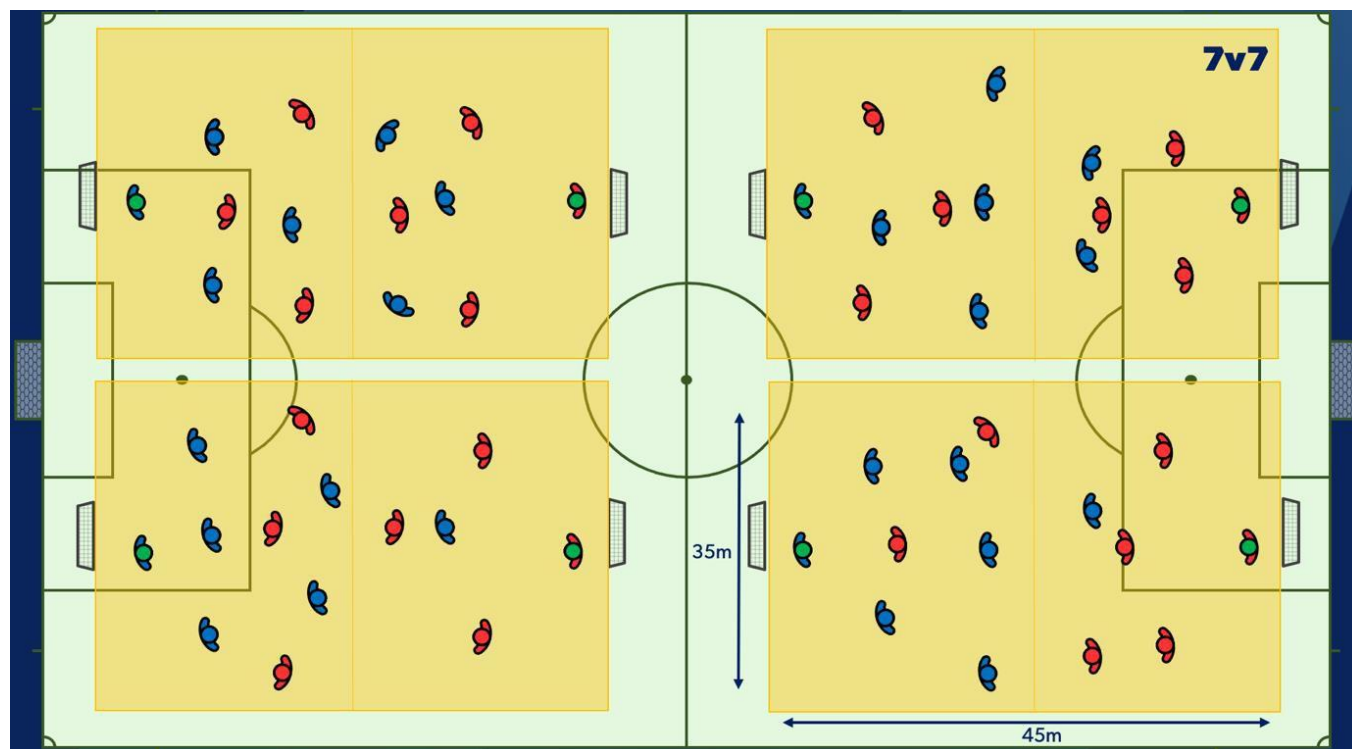
Player faces the field of play, has part of each foot on the ground either on or behind the touch line, uses both hands and delivers the ball from behind and over their head. The thrower must not touch the ball again until it has touched another player. Opponents must be at least 5 metres away from the 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

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 5 metres 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

Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents remain at least 10 metres outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. Game Leaders should not restart play until they are satisfied all opposition players are at least 10 metres outside the penalty area. The ball is in play once it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.



Playing Formats boys and girls aged Under 8 & 9

Number of Players	7 a-side
Goalkeeper	Yes
Field	45m x 35m
Penalty Area	5m x 12m
Goal	3m x 2m
Ball	Size 3
Duration	25 minutes x 2

PLAYING FORMATS BOYS AND GIRLS AGED UNDER 10 & 11

PLAYER NUMBERS

Under 10 & 11 football should have a maximum of 9 a-side on the field including goalkeepers.

GOAL TYPE

It is preferable that portable goals are used where possible however, the use of poles or markers as goals is also suitable. Goal size of 5m x 2m.

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 ball must be thrown or rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. The goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands.

Opponents must be at least 10 metres outside the penalty area and cannot move inside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play once it moves out of the penalty area or when the goalkeeper places the ball on the ground. An indirect free kick is awarded if the goalkeeper touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately passed to them by a teammate.

BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

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 5 metres 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

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 5 metres 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.

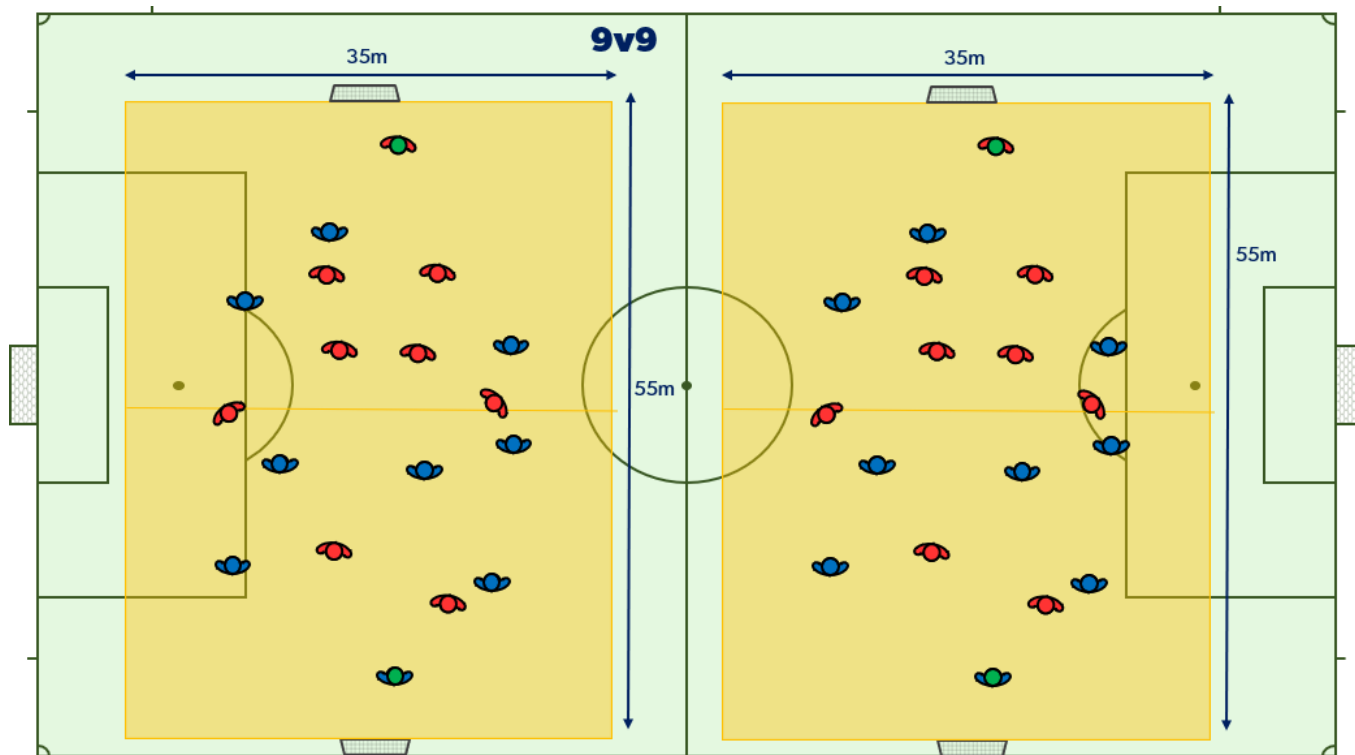
BALL CROSSING THE GOAL LINE AFTER TOUCHING THE ATTACKING TEAM LAST

Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents remain at least 10 metres outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. Game Leaders should not restart play until they are satisfied all opposition players are at least 10 metres outside the penalty area. The ball is in play once it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.

OFFSIDE

The official offside rule (Law 11, FIFA Laws of the Game) does not apply to MiniRoos Under 10 & 11. Goals can be scored from the offside position.

Game Leaders should direct players permanently standing in blatant offside positions to move into onside positions. Children should be made aware of the official offside rule during training and be encouraged to always adopt this philosophy during the game.



Playing Formats boys and girls aged Under 10 & 11

Number of Players	9 a-side
Goalkeeper	Yes
Field	55m x 35m or side to sideline of a full size field
Penalty Area	10m x 20m
Goal	5m x 2m
Ball	Size 4
Duration	25 minutes x 2

PLAYING FORMATS BOYS AND GIRLS AGED UNDER 12

PLAYER NUMBERS

Under 12 football should have a maximum of 9 a-side on the field including goalkeepers.

GOAL TYPE

Portable secured goals should be used. Goal size of 5m x 2m.

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 ball must be thrown, rolled from the hands or played from the ground with their feet, within 6 seconds. The goalkeeper is not allowed to kick or drop kick the ball directly from their hands.

Opponents must be at least 10 metres outside the penalty area and cannot move inside the penalty area until the ball is in play. The ball is in play once it moves out of the penalty area or when the goalkeeper places the ball on the ground. An indirect free kick is awarded if the goalkeeper touches the ball with their hands after it has been deliberately passed to them by a teammate.

BALL CROSSING THE TOUCH LINE

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 5 metres 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

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 5 metres 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

Goal kick from anywhere within the penalty area. Opponents remain at least 10 metres outside the penalty area until the ball is in play. Game Leaders should not restart play until they are satisfied all opposition players are at least 10 metres outside the penalty area. The ball is in play once it is kicked directly out of the penalty area.

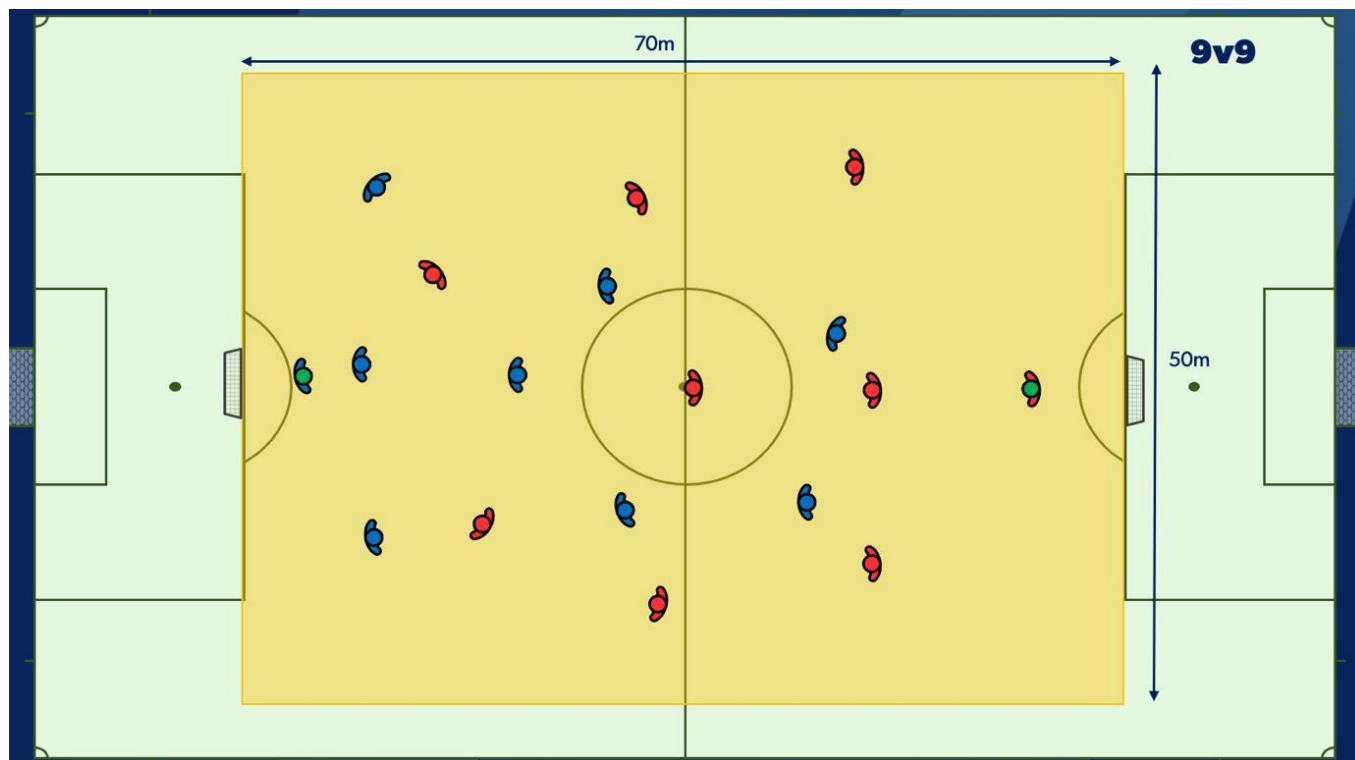
OFFSIDE

The official offside rule (Law 11, FIFA Laws of the Game) applies to U12. Goals can NOT be scored from the offside position.

Children should be made aware of the official offside rule during training and be encouraged to always adopt this philosophy during the game.

PENALTIES

There will be no penalties awarded during regular play, any infringement that would see a penalty awarded will be taken as an indirect free kick.



Playing Formats boys and girls aged Under 12

Number of Players	9 a-side
Goalkeeper	Yes
Field	70m x 50m or full field box to box
Penalty Area	10m x 20m
Goal	5m x 2m
Ball	Size 4
Duration	30 minutes x 2

OVERVIEW

AGE GROUP	UNDER 6 & 7	UNDER 8 & 9	UNDER 10 & 11	UNDER 12
MATCH LOGISTICS				
Players	4 v 4	7 v 7	9 v 9	9 v 9
Goals	1m x 1m	3m x 2m	5m x 2m	5m x 2m
Duration	20 min x 2	25 min x 2	25 min x 2	30 min x 2
Field size	30m x 20m	45m x 35m	55m x 35m Sideline to sideline	70m x 50m Box to box
Penalty area	NA	5m x 12m	10m x 20m	10m x 20m
Ball size	3	3	4	4
MATCH RULES				(Nepean FA 2025)
Goalkeeper	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ball crossing side line	Pass or dribble in	Throw-in	Throw-in	Throw-in
Ball crossing goal line after touching defending team last	Goal restart	Corner play	Corner play	Corner play
Ball crossing goal line after touching attacking team last	Goal restart. Opposition must be at halfway.	Goal restart. Opposition must be at halfway.	Goal restart. Opposition must be 10m from goal line.	Goal restart. Opposition must be 10m from goal line.
Offside	No	No	No - Actively discouraged	Yes (2025)
Fouls	Common sense	Common sense	See fouls list	See fouls list
Match results	Not published	Not published	Not published	Published
Point tables	No	No	No	Yes

FURTHER INFORMATION

GOAL TYPE

To comply with Australian Safety Standards, portable goals must be anchored securely to the ground. The use of sandbags or pegs is recommended when using portable goals. For more information on Australian Safety Standards please visit the Product Safety Australia website: www.productsafety.gov.au.

FIELD MARKINGS

Cones, markers or painted line markings are suitable. This includes the penalty areas in the U8 - U12 age categories.

U12 field may remain sideline to sideline at Host clubs discretion pending available fields preferably be re-orientated to box-to-box. 70m X 50m

START OF PLAY AND RE-START AFTER A GOAL

Pass to a teammate 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 5 metres away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate 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.

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.

SHIN GUARDS

Shin guards must be worn by all players without exception.

CONCUSSION

Any player suspected of suffering from concussion should be examined by a medial practitioner before returning to play. As a general rule; "If in doubt, sit it out".

SUBSTITUTIONS

Players may be rotated on and off the field at any time during the game. A coach/parent may make substitutions while the ball is in play, ensuring the player is off the field before the substitute goes on.

Equal playing time should be a priority ensuring all players regardless of age, gender and/or ability get to take the field. Regular rotation of players is key. Kids don't register to watch football - they just want to play! If there is space on the sidelines, substitutes should be encouraged to set up small-sided games or practice their skills in a designated area, not interfering with play.

GAME LEADERS

Each game is to be controlled by one 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, are learning the game and have maximum involvement.

