



CLUB & COACH GUIDANCE

How to run U7 3v3 matchdays

A practical guide for the 2026/27 season

THE PRINCIPLE Run several short games at the same time so every child plays, gets more touches and makes more decisions.

This is competitive football, but scores and results are not recorded. Enjoyment and development come first.

ON PITCH	EACH GAME	TOTAL PLAY	SQUAD GUIDE
3 v 3	6–10 min	30–40 min	6–12 players

1 Set up the playing area

PITCH	EQUIPMENT
10 × 15m recommended 15 × 20m maximum - Grass or 3G; lines, cones or flat markers 3m safety run-off; normally 6m between pitches	- Size 3 ball, approximately 5 psi - Goals: 1.2 × 0.75m recommended - Maximum goal size: 1.5 × 0.9m - Goals secured safely; spare balls close by

2 Run a simple carousel

- Confirm numbers.** Managers share attendance in advance and agree how many pitches are needed.
- Create teams.** Split every child into groups of two or three; mix squads if that keeps everyone playing.
- Play together.** Start all pitches at once and play for 6–10 minutes.
- Rotate.** Move teams to a new pitch or opponent after each game, with quick drink breaks as needed.
- Reach the target.** Run enough rounds for each child to receive around 30–40 minutes of football.

When numbers change

Be flexible: 2v2, 3v2 and mixed-club teams are acceptable when they maximise participation and keep games balanced. Local league rules still apply.



MATCHDAY REFERENCE

Rules, adults and good practice

Playing rules at a glance

14. Three outfield players per team. There are no goalkeepers or penalty areas.
15. Begin and finish with a high five. Use rock-paper-scissors to decide who starts.
16. There is no heading and there are no penalty kicks.
17. At every restart — goal line, corner, sideline or free kick — the player may dribble in or pass.
18. Opponents stay at least 3m away from every restart.
19. At a goal-line restart, opponents retreat into their own half.
20. A goal only counts when the shooter is in the opposition half.
21. After a goal, the scoring team retreats to its goal line and the conceding team restarts from its goal line.
22. There are no substitutes: every child plays the whole game.
23. There is no referee. Children self-officiate with support from a Pitch Facilitator.

The role of adults

Provide one Pitch Facilitator per pitch. Their job is to keep the environment safe, help children understand the rules and offer positive encouragement — not to coach every action or referee the match.

24. Keep input minimal while the ball is in play so children can make decisions.
25. Parents and spectators should encourage both teams and remain behind the Respect Line.
26. If a game is one-sided, swap players to create a fairer challenge rather than focusing on the score.

SAFEGUARDING All on-pitch adults must hold an in-date DBS check and current safeguarding children qualification. The FA guide specifies a minimum safeguarding ratio of 1 adult to 6 children.

A straightforward 12-player example

Set out two pitches and play two 3v3 games simultaneously. Run four or five eight-minute rounds, changing opponents between rounds. Nobody waits on the touchline.

Official guidance

England Football: [A closer look at 3v3](#) • [FutureFit League Guidance](#)

This guide summarises England FA guidance for U7 football from 2026/27. Clubs should also follow CDJFL and County FA instructions.