



Optus Small-Sided Football 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 Qantas Socceroo or Westfield Matilda, must begin with Optus Small-Sided Football. 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 Optus Small-Sided Football 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?

Optus Small-Sided Football relies on parent helpers as coaches, supervisors and game leaders. The main focus of Optus Small-Sided Football 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 Optus Small-Sided Football from FFA, Member Federations, associations and most importantly your club.

Parents can find more information and educational resources on the philosophy, benefits and training activities for Optus Small-Sided Football and the Grassroots Football Certificate (coach and parent education course for Optus Small-Sided Football) from the FFA website or telephone 02 8354 5555.



Optus Small-Sided Football  
PARENT INFORMATION GUIDE

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



## What is Optus Small-Sided Football?

They are football games designed especially for children 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. Optus Small-Sided Football meets the developmental needs of younger football players whilst maintaining a strong focus on maximum participation and enjoyment.

## Why change to Optus Small-Sided Football?

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 football?

Small-sided football is played and endorsed throughout many countries including, Brazil, Argentina, Japan, England, Ireland, The Netherlands, Scotland, Germany, France, Korea and USA, to name a few. The idea of small-sided football is not new.

## Benefits of Optus Small-Sided Football for your child

A significant amount of research has been conducted in countries where small-sided football is 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 and 1 v 1 opportunities
- more efficient use of facilities, given there can be multiple games on one standard-size field, re-size existing smaller fields or make use of previously unused areas
- 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 pressure from coaches and parents
- parents more likely to volunteer for Optus Small-Sided Football game leader roles
- children enjoy the progressive and sequential game formats

## What's changing?

In 2009 and beyond the implementation of the Optus Small-Sided Football formats will continue with a minimum of the Under 6- 8 age groups across Australia and over the ensuing years will continue up to and including Under 12's in a staged approach.

FFA supports and encourages the many Member Federations, zones, associations and clubs that are further progressed with their implementation of Optus Small-Sided Football or wish to accelerate the implementation of Optus Small-Sided Football.

A summary of the Optus Small-Sided Football formats to be implemented under the direction of Member Federations, zones, associations and clubs can be seen below; it is very important that these formats remain consistent from club to club and state to state, in particular in regards the field size, playing numbers, goalkeepers, ball and goal size.

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			
<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> <small>(This may differ depending on how Optus Small-Sided Football is implemented)</small>	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, learning to use different and better developed techniques to play a more tactical game, as well as understanding the role of different positions and determining 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. The role of the goalkeeper has changed in the modern game, they need to be capable to act in the game as "sweeper" who can kick a ball, control a ball and build up the game without using their hands. 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 Optus Small-Sided Football 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 Optus Small-Sided Football and need to stress, adhere and promote the following Optus Small-Sided Football playing conditions;

- Under 6 - 10 No official recording of competition tables, results, finals and statistics. Games focus on participation, enjoyment and player development.
- Under 11 and 12 Recording of competition tables, results, finals and statistics is optional. Games focus must remain on participation, enjoyment and player development.

## Role of game leader and instructing referee

### Under 6, 7 and 8 years of age groups - game leader

The club can appoint a club official, parent, older child/player or beginning referee to the role of game leader.

The game leader will explain and assist players with all match restarts. The game leader must use common sense to ensure that the game flows as much as possible. He or she must assist the players in getting the game moving quickly. He or she should try to encourage as many players as possible to get involved and to not permanently stand in front of the goals. The game leader instructs and helps players to enjoy the game all of the time. Keep the opponents 4.5m away from all restarts with exception of the goal line restart where defenders move back to the halfway line.

### Under 9, 10, 11 and 12 years of age group - instructing referee

The club can appoint a club official, capable parent, older child/player, beginning referee or use an official referee from the federation or association to the role of instructing referee.

This person's "official" role is to control the game to ensure it is played fluently and instruct the players on how to behave, what a foul is, what a free kick is and how to throw in etc. He or she can correct the players with minimal blowing of the whistle and stopping the game. If it occurs a second time, the referee should stop the game and apply the appropriate action. Keep the opponents 4.5m away from all restarts.

## 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.**