



ENGLAND
FOOTBALL

A photograph of two young football players on a grass field. The player on the left is wearing a yellow training bib over a red and black kit, with red and black striped socks. The player on the right is wearing a red kit with a white tree logo on the front, red socks, and is in the middle of a kicking motion. A football is on the ground to the right. The background shows a green fence and some foliage.

THE MINI-SOCCER AND YOUTH FUTSAL HANDBOOK

Version updated May 2024

KEY CHANGES

There is nothing more important in football than keeping players, coaches, spectators and everyone involved safe. If we can do that we can all enjoy the game we love.

MINI SOCCER AT A GLANCE

2024/2025 season:

| | U7 | U8 | U9 | U10 |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| <u>Max permitted format</u> | 5v5 | 5v5 | 7v7 | 7v7 |
| <u>Ball Size</u> | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <u>Offside</u> | No | No | No | No |
| <u>Throw Ins</u> | No | No | No | Yes |
| <u>Pass or Dribble In</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | No |
| <u>Back Pass Rule</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Corners</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Retreat Line</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Power Play</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Deliberate Heading Allowed</u> | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | Yes unless league has opted to include U10s |

2025/2026 season:

| | U7 | U8 | U9 | U10 |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <u>Max permitted format</u> | 5v5 | 5v5 | 7v7 | 7v7 |
| <u>Ball Size</u> | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| <u>Offside</u> | No | No | No | No |
| <u>Throw Ins</u> | No | No | No | No |
| <u>Pass or Dribble In</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Back Pass Rule</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Corners</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Retreat Line</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Power Play</u> | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| <u>Deliberate Heading Allowed</u> | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition | No – if occurs an indirect free kick to the opposition |

PASS OR DRIBBLE-IN

U7-U9 (2024/25) AND U7-U10 (2025/26)

Traditional throw-ins will no longer take place and will be replaced by a pass or dribble-in.

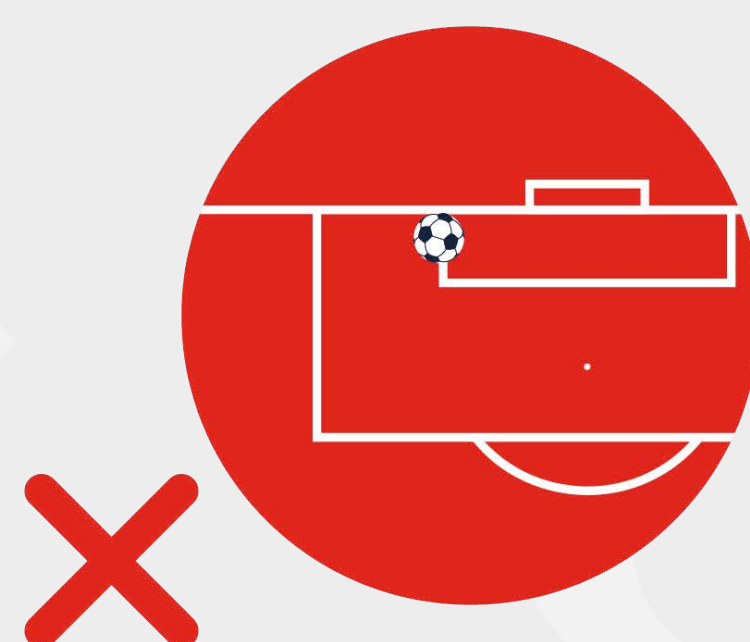
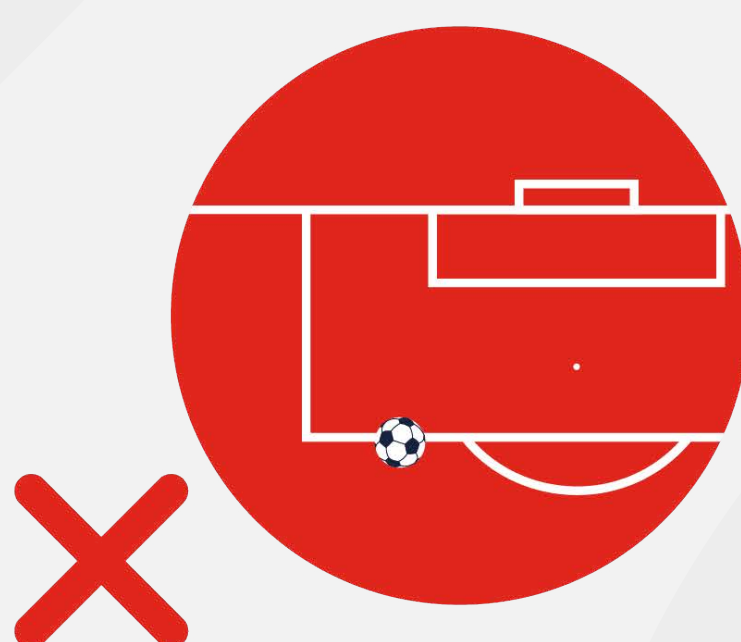
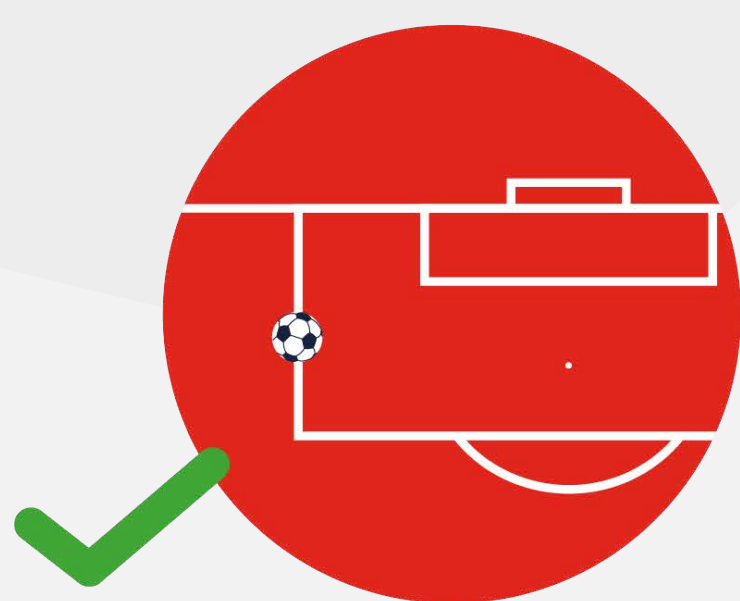
For more details [click here](#).

DELIBERATE HEADING

No deliberate heading for Under 7s up to and including Under 9s.

Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free kick. The indirect free kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed, except:

Where a player deliberately heads the ball within their own penalty area, the referee will stop the game and restart with an indirect free kick to the opposition from the nearest side line of the penalty area where the offence took place.



FURTHER HEADING GUIDANCE

- ✓ Heading guidance in training for all age groups between under 6 and under 18.
- ✗ No heading in training in the foundation phase (primary school children).
- ✓ Graduated approach to heading training for children in the development phase between under 12 to under 16.
- ✓ Required ball sizes for training and matches for each age group – under 7s to under 10s will play with a size 3 ball.
- ✗ No deliberate heading in matches for Under 7s up to and including Under 9s.*
All other age groups can head the ball in matches.

**For the 2025/26 season this will change to no deliberate heading in matches for Under 7s up to and including Under 10s in matches.*

FOUNDATION PHASE TRAINING

For age groups u5 to u11 heading should NOT be introduced in training sessions.

Coaches should use the time they have with players to maximise enjoyment and development of other skills, particularly the fundamentals of working with the ball in their hands and feet.

Focus should be on learning to master the ball and control of the body through fun activities.



[www.EnglandFootball.com/participate/
learn/Brain-Health/Heading-in-Football](http://www.EnglandFootball.com/participate/learn/Brain-Health/Heading-in-Football)

INTRODUCTION

Without Laws there would be no football. But when very young children play there are many other things to consider too.

- ✓ *Can we make sure that everyone, children AND adults, has an enjoyable time?*
- ✓ *If the pitch is fit to play, is the weather appropriate for small children?*
- ✓ *Is there any reason why EVERY child should not be able to enjoy at least 50% game time on the day?*

If we can all apply these principles just as much as the Laws themselves, then we should see more and more children enjoying the greatest game in the world.

Players will play to the laws of the game of the age-group that they are playing in.



We want to provide a safe, fun and positive environment in which young people can play and enjoy football.

This can be achieved if everyone plays their part in supporting and promoting Respect.

Here are some of the things you can do to help:

- ✓ Welcome the opposition and treat them how you would like to be treated.
- ✓ Support and encourage players from both sides.
- ✓ Let the coaches coach.
- ✓ Remember that the referee may be learning the game.
- ✓ You are a role model to children at all times during the game.
- ✓ Always make the game fun.
- ✗ Do not go onto the pitch unless a child is injured.
- ✓ Show children how to win or lose in the right way.

To find out more about Respect go to:

www.EnglandFootball.com/participate/explore/inclusive-football/Respect

SILENT SUPPORT

A photograph showing a group of people, likely spectators, clapping. In the foreground, a man wearing a black cap, sunglasses, and a black jacket with white stripes on the sleeve is clapping. Behind him, several other people, including women in pink and blue clothing, are also clapping. The background is slightly blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting like a sports field.

What is Silent Support?

Silent Support helps create a more positive space for players, coaches and spectators.

The idea is to cut down on unnecessary distraction from the side lines.

How does Silent Support work?

Instead of confusing shouts and rebukes from spectators, players are encouraged by their applause only. Rather than hearing lots of voices offering conflicting instructions, players might only hear the voice of their coach – or from no-one at all if that's the way you want to play it.

SILENT SUPPORT

When will it happen?

This season Leagues can choose to run Silent Support games, they may do this for different reasons.

- ✓ **If side line behaviour at games is poor.** Use Silent Support to quieten down your spectators – or even coaches – to create a calmer playing environment.
- ✓ **If younger players are getting confused by too much advice.** With Silent Support, the only voice players hear is their coaches', cutting out conflicting instructions.

To find out more about Silent Support go to:

community.thefa.com/leagues-clubs/b/blog/posts/silent-support

There will also be a national initiative, but all leagues will be notified and can choose to take part.

PFA YOUTH ADVISORY SUPPORT

Signing for an academy is an exciting opportunity, but it's also an introduction to the highly competitive, complex nature of football.

The PFA is not affiliated with leagues, clubs or governing bodies, so they can provide accurate, free, impartial information and advice about the academy system and what it entails for young players and their families.

They operate a free, confidential service where you can get advice about:

- Premier League and English Football League youth-development rules
- Academy registrations, inductions and contractual offers
- Football Association and FIFA regulations scholarship offers

PFA YOUTH ADVISORY SUPPORT

- End-of-season procedures and requesting release
- Player development, including coaching and education rules
- Player welfare
- Intermediaries



0161 236 0575



youthadvisory@thepfa.com



[www.thepfa.com/players/
youth-advisory/independent-advice](http://www.thepfa.com/players/youth-advisory/independent-advice)

INTRODUCTION

Children from U7– U10 do not play in leagues. They can play in a maximum of three trophy events during the season.

This allows them to learn about winning and losing in a fun environment. Trophies can be awarded to the winners and the results of the mini-event published.

Age Maximum Format Trophy Events

| U7s - U8s | U9s - U10s |
|--|---|
|  5 v 5 3 x 2 weeks in a season |  7 v 7 3 x 4 weeks in a season |



When you see this symbol, rotate your device to see the diagram in more detail.

All sizes, times or numbers shown are the maximum allowed unless otherwise stated (FA Standard Code of Regulations – Youth [SCORY]). All diagrams are shown with 7 versus 7 for illustrative purposes only.

MINI-SOCCER LAWS INDEX



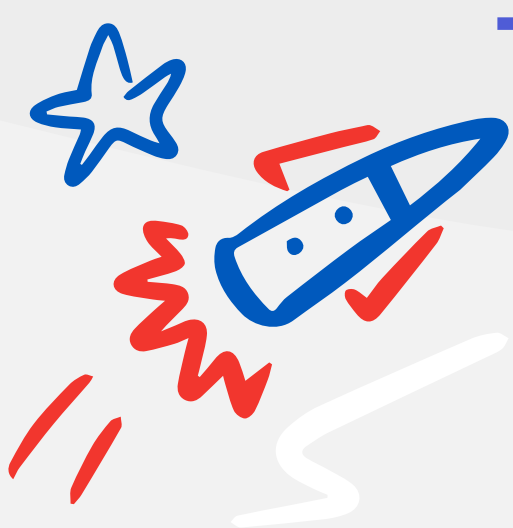
Childhood is a magical time of infinite possibilities, hope and potential! To help our young children we have developed Play Phase for children age 4-6 as England Football's Early Years philosophy.

The fun of taking part in games while keeping active can make a huge and positive difference that lasts a lifetime. So, let's lay these good foundations early.

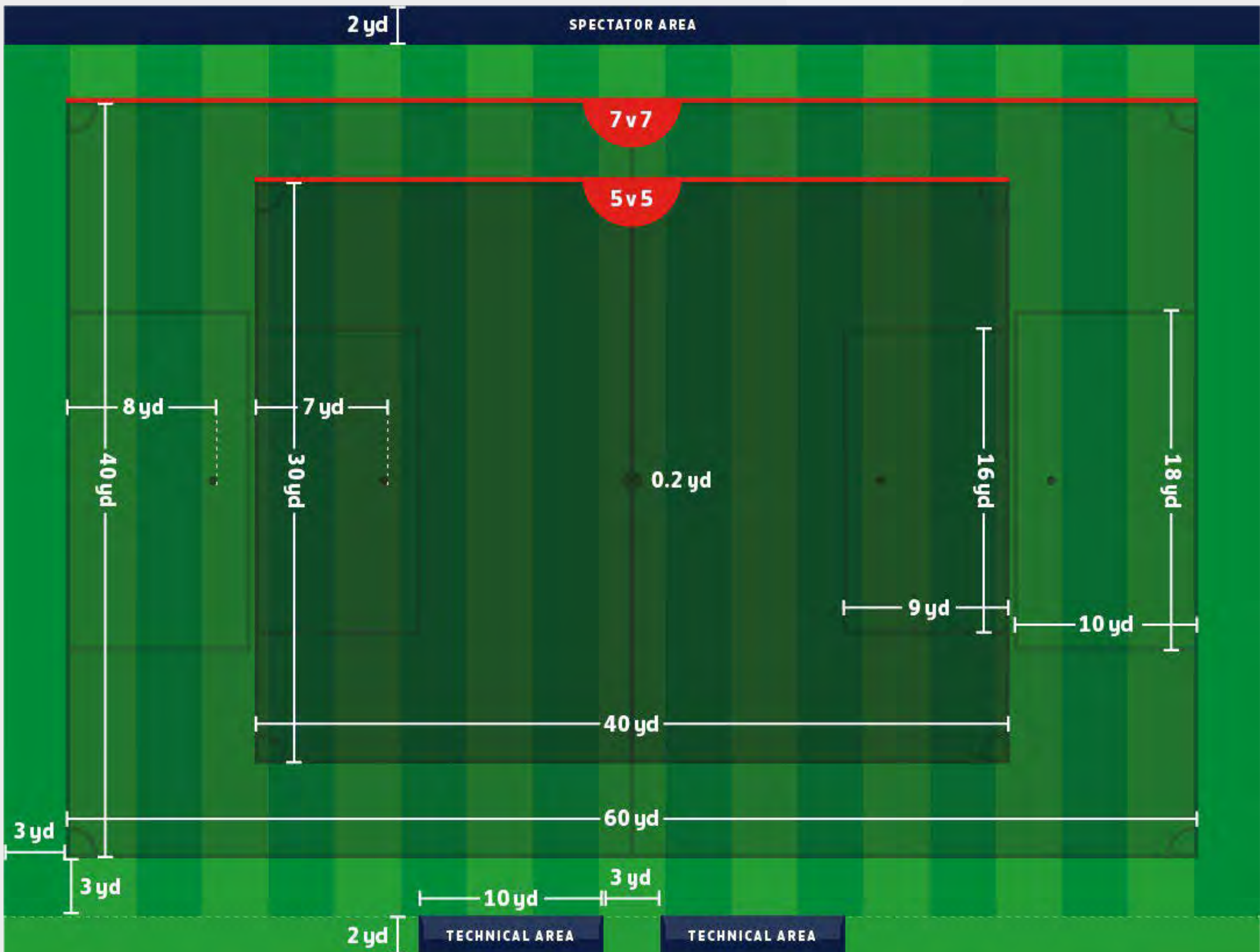
Play Phase is about encouraging children in skills and learning that will eventually be useful not just in football, but in life. It makes learning fun, playful and creative, for lifelong benefits.

To find out more about Play Phase go to:

www.Englandfootball.com/play/ways-to-play/play-phase



2 PLAYING AREA



Playing areas are for development football matches for those aged from u7/8 & u9/10.

- **Kick offs:** these are taken from the centre mark on the half way line.
- **Retreat line:** the team without the ball moves back to the half way line when goal kicks are taken.
- **Goal sizes:** the goal size for Mini-Soccer is 12ft × 6ft.

3 BALL

Ball size by age

U7s - U10s





Size 3

- U7s - U10s should use a size 3 ball.
- The ball should be safe for children to play with and made of leather or another suitable material.

4 NUMBER OF PLAYERS



Maximum number of players by age:

| U7s - U8s | U9s - U10s |
|---|---|
|  |  |

- **U7s – 8s:** the maximum number of players per team is 5v5 with a squad of 10 or less.
- **U9s – 10s:** the maximum number of players per team is 7v7 with a squad of 14 or less.

- Coaches can be flexible outside of Trophy Events
- The FA is strongly of the opinion that there are technical benefits to be gained by playing formats of the game using smaller numbers such as 4v4, 3v3, 2v2.
- The structure of Development football lends itself to playing in a variety of different competitive formats across the season. Leagues should be flexible with fixtures.
- Reds U7s and Blues U7s, each with 7 registered players, could play a 4v4 and a 3v3 instead of a 5v5 and two substitutes, where facilities allow. The FA recommends that coaches should seek to provide these different challenges.
- Roll-off roll-on substitutions can be made at any time during the game with permission from the referee, including players who have already been substituted.

5 PLAYING EQUIPMENT



- Children can **not** play Development Football without shin pads.
- These should be covered entirely by knee length socks. [Click here](#) for guidance on use of shin pads in grassroots football.
- Goalkeepers should wear a different coloured shirt to the rest of the team.
- Footwear should be appropriate for the playing surface – no metal studs on 3 and AGP pitches.
- If the weather is poor then players should wear appropriate clothing, but hoodies are not allowed.

6 MATCH OFFICIALS



- Any person who referees a game of Development Football has the authority to apply the Laws of Mini-Soccer even if they are not a fully qualified referee.
- The referee should always help the players to learn the game by explaining their decisions.
- Assistant referees are not required for Development Football.

7 DURATION OF THE GAME

Age maximum playing time in any one day:

| U7s - U8s | U9s - U10s |
|--|---|
|  40 minutes |  60 minutes |

- Children should not exceed the maximum playing time for their age in any one day. It is the responsibility of the junior club and/or the child's parent or carer to ensure this.
- Each league is allowed to determine its own playing time up to the maximum allowed.
- Half time should not be more than five minutes.
- Development games can be split into quarters within the maximum playing time allowed.
- For tournament football see the Standard Code of Rules for Youth Competitions.

As per rule 20a, the Blackwater and Dengie Youth Football League play halves.

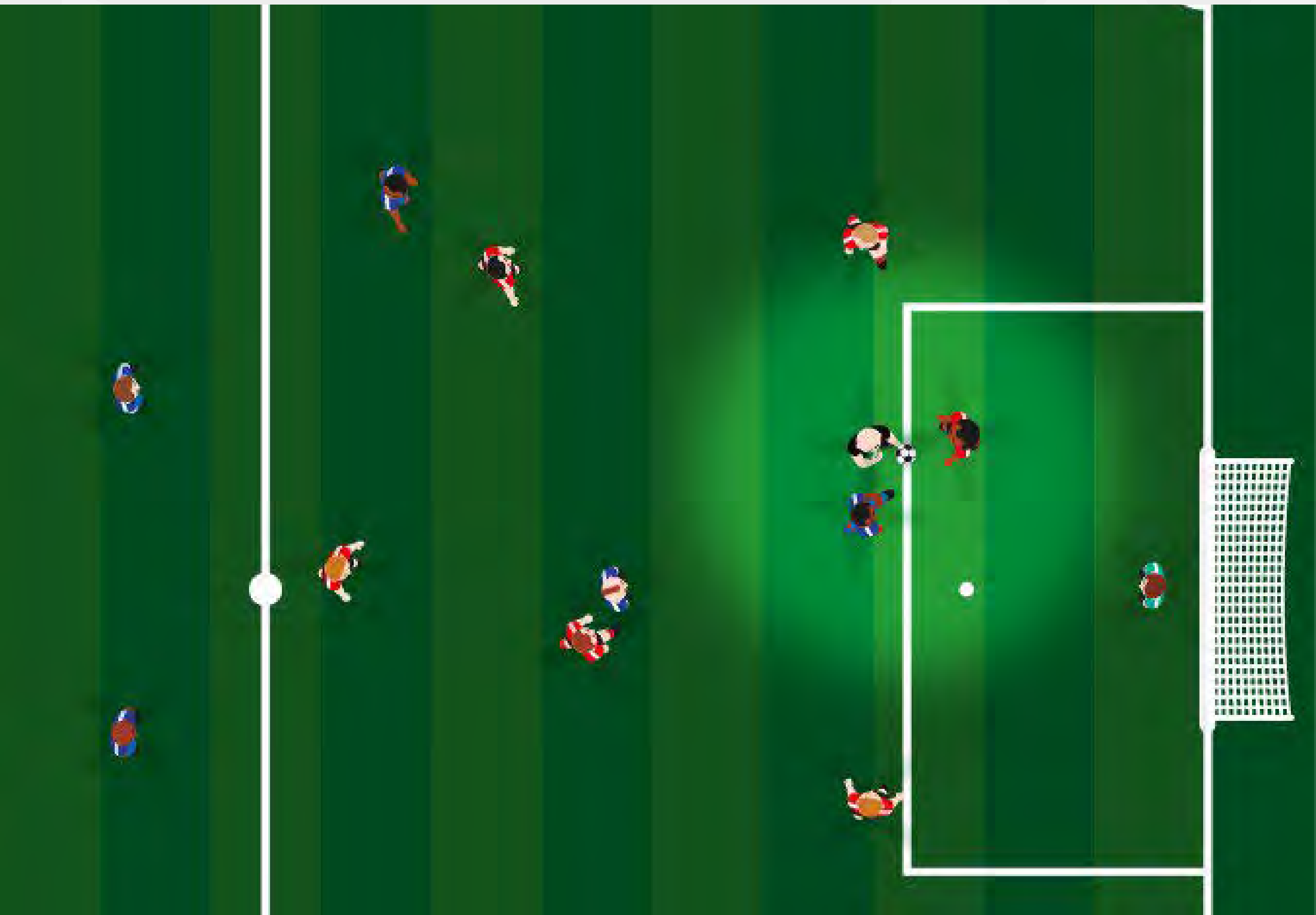
8 START AND RESTART OF PLAY



- A kick off from the centre mark starts the game, or restarts it after a goal is scored.
- It can be taken in any direction.
- The opposition must be five yards away and in their own half.



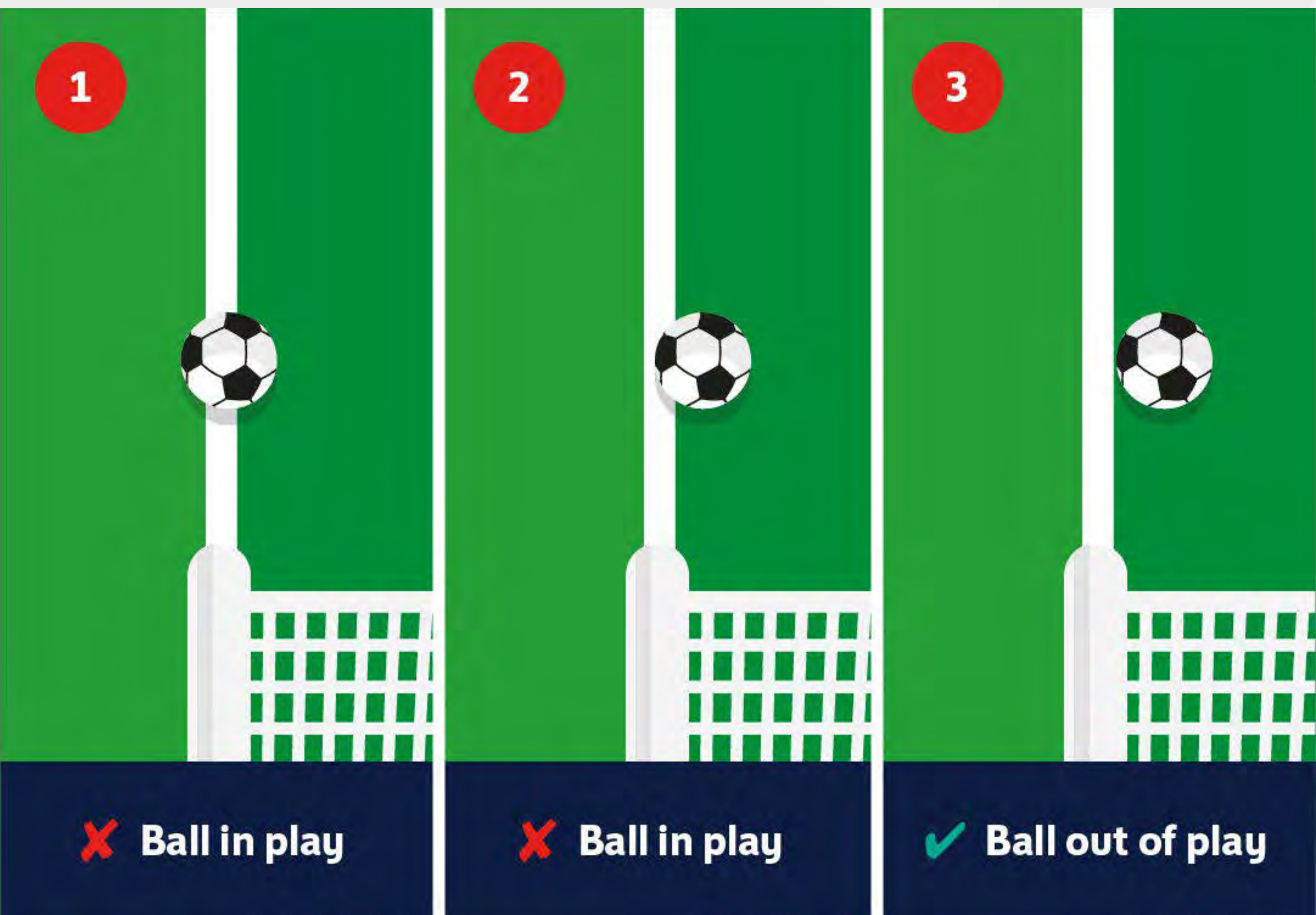
8 START AND RESTART OF PLAY



- In Mini-Soccer a goal cannot be scored directly from a kick off or a dropped ball.
- In special circumstances a drop ball is used to restart the game, such as after an injury.
- If the game has stopped with the ball in the penalty area, the drop ball should be taken on the penalty area line (pictured).



9 BALL IN AND OUT OF PLAY



- The goal line and touchlines are part of the field of play. The ball must be entirely over these lines to be out of play (pictured).
- If an attacker is the last player to touch the ball over the goal line, a goal kick is given.
- If a defender is the last player to touch the ball over the goal line, a corner kick is given.
- If a player touches the ball over the touchline, a "Pass or Dribble-In" is given to the opposing team.



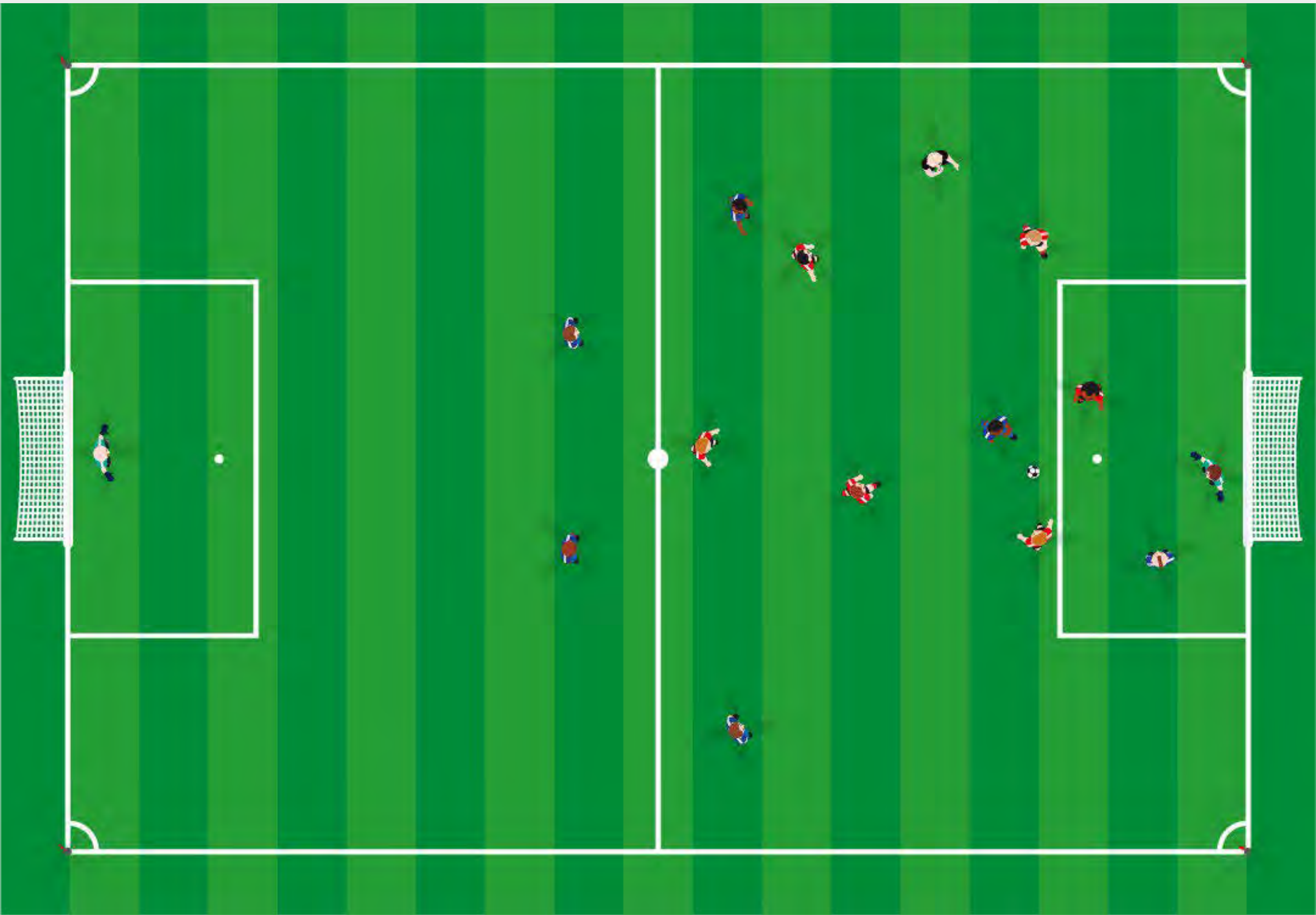
10 METHOD OF SCORING



- A goal is scored when the ball completely crosses the goal line between the posts and under the crossbar of the goal (pictured).
- If a foul or hand ball occurs the goal shall be disallowed.



11 OFFSIDE



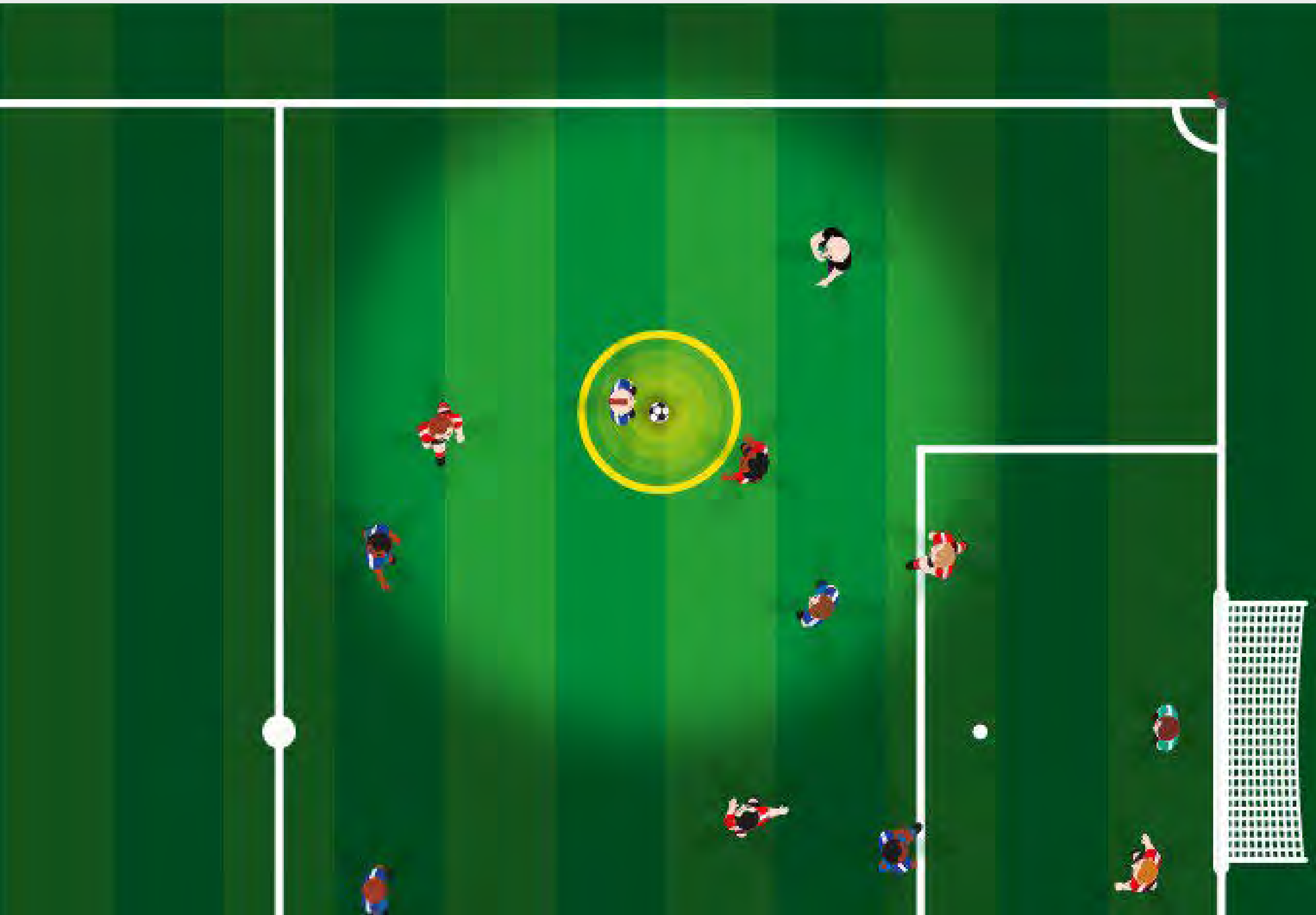
- There is no offside in Development Football.
- The children can be in any area of the pitch at any time (pictured) apart from when the Retreat Line is played.



12 FOULS AND MISCONDUCT

- Free kicks are awarded when a foul is committed as in older age football.
- In mini soccer all free kicks are direct, except when a deliberate header has occurred.
- A goalkeeper is not allowed to pick the ball up from a back pass or a throw in.
- If this happens a free kick should be given on the penalty area line closest to where the incident occurs.
- **For Under 7s to Under 9s (2024/25 season) and for Under 7s to Under 10s (2025/26 season);** Deliberately heading the ball is an offence punishable by an indirect free kick. The indirect free kick is taken at the point where the ball was deliberately headed, except: Where a player deliberately heads the ball within their own penalty area, the referee will stop the game and restart with an indirect free kick to the opposition from the nearest side line of the penalty area where the offence took place. ([See page 4 for the diagram](#))
- As with all other aspects of Development Football the children should be learning the game. Coaches in training, and referees on the day, should try to make sure the children understand all of the above.

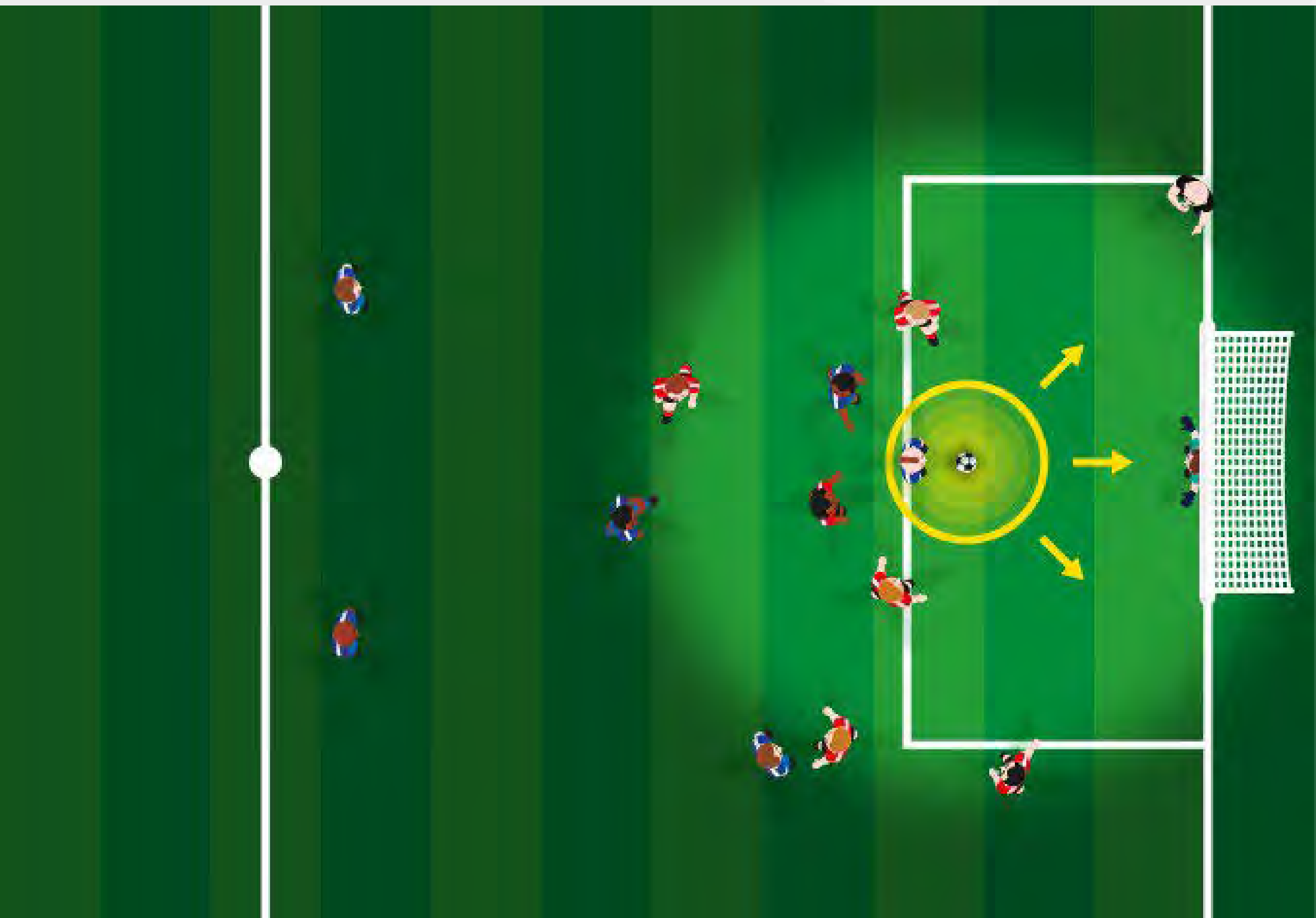
13 FREE KICKS



- For all free kicks defending players must be 5 yards from the ball (pictured).



14 PENALTY KICKS



- If a foul is committed in the penalty area by a defender a penalty kick will be awarded.
- All players except the defending goalkeeper and kicker must be outside the penalty area and at least 5 yards from the penalty mark.
- The ball must be kicked forward.



U7-U9 (2024/25) AND U7-U10 (2025/26)

15 PASS OR DRIBBLE-IN

- When the whole of the ball passes over the touchline, on the ground or in the air, instead of a throw-in, a pass-in or dribble-in is awarded.
- A kicker taking a pass-in may choose to touch the ball again before it is touched by another player

At the moment of delivering the ball:

- The ball must be stationary on the touchline at the point where it left the pitch; only the kicker may be off the pitch.
- All opponents must stand at least 5 yards from the point on the touchline where the pass-in or dribble-in is to be taken.

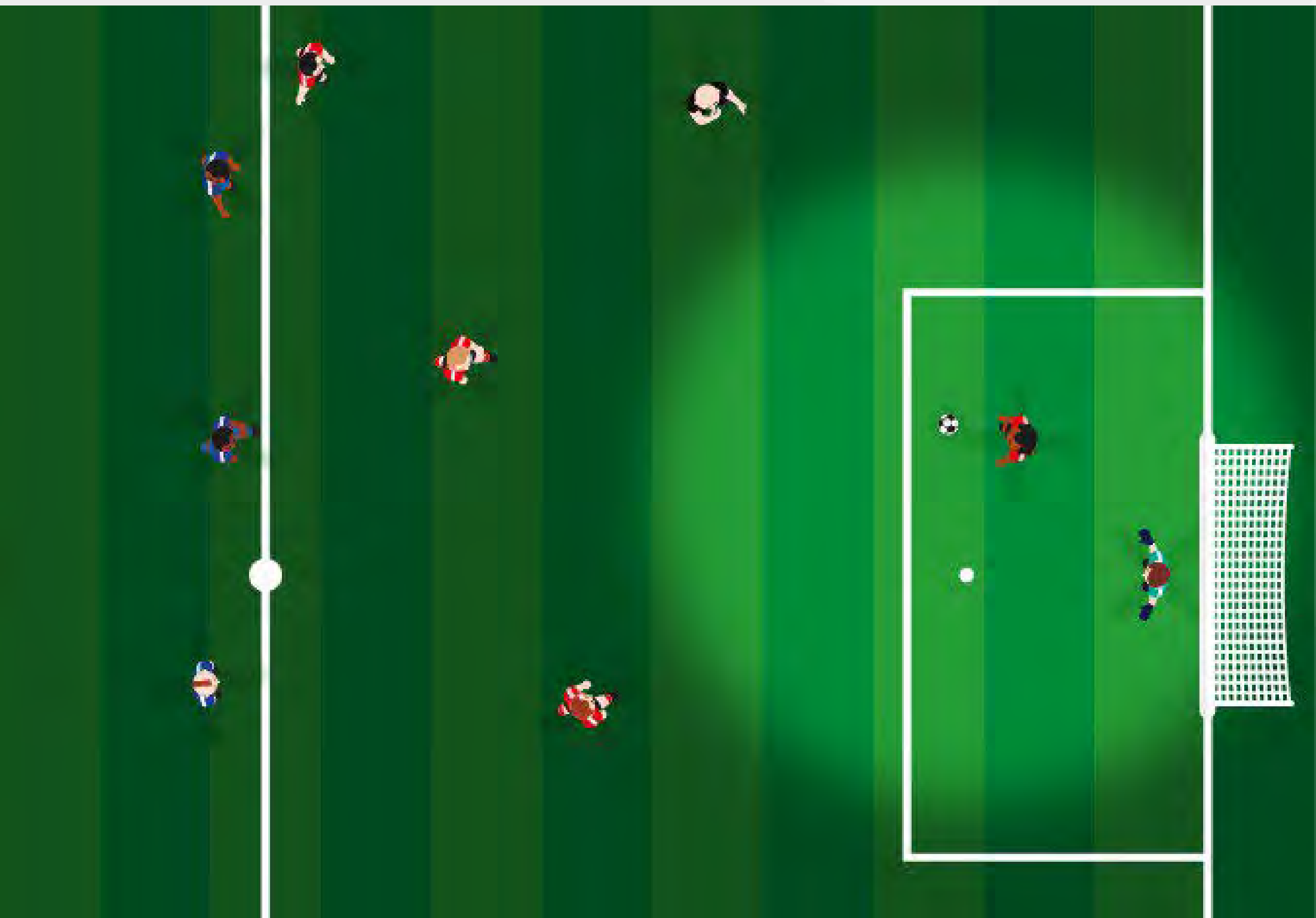
A goal cannot be scored directly from a pass-in.

The ball is in play when it is kicked and clearly moves. For more information, including a video please [click here](#).

U10s only in 2024/25:

Normal throw-ins are allowed.

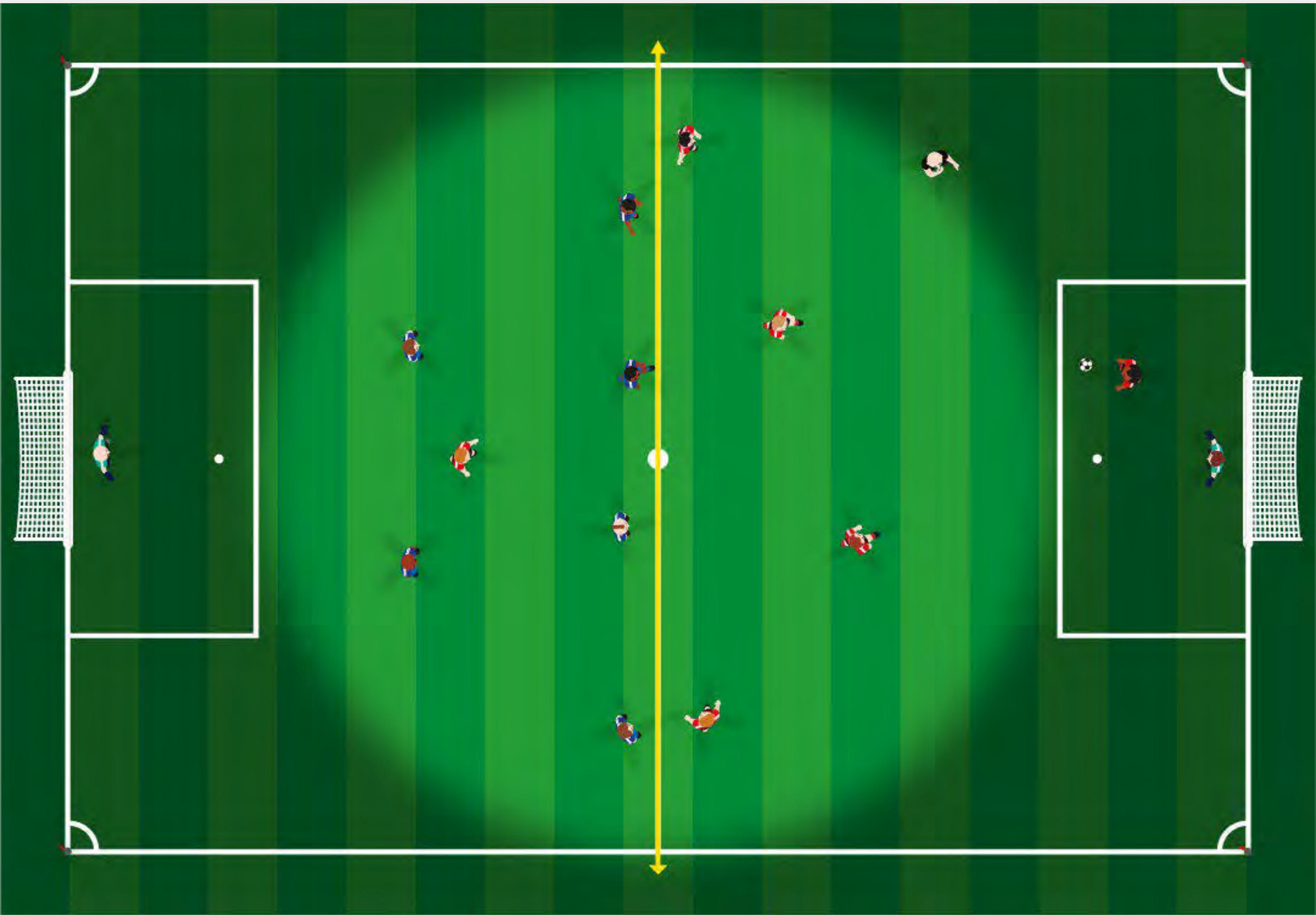
16 GOAL KICKS



- If an attacking player kicks the ball over the goal line a goal kick is awarded to the defending team.
- A goal kick can be taken from any point within the penalty area and by any player from the team with the ball (pictured).



16 GOAL KICKS



- The team without the ball must retreat to their own half until the ball is in play.
- This is known as the Retreat Line (PICTURED).
- Once the ball is in play, the team without the ball can try and win it back.
- As with all the Laws of Development Football, the referee should help the players learn the game.



17 CORNER KICKS



- If a defending player kicks the ball over the goal line a corner is awarded to the attacking team.
- The defending players must remain at least 5 yards from the ball until it is in play (PICTURED).
- The player taking the corner may not touch the ball again until it has touched another player.





OPTIONAL
POWER PLAY LAW

Development football is designed to create the best learning and fun experience for young players. To ensure an imbalance in ability does not spoil this, the FA has approved 'Power Play' as an option that mini-soccer and youth leagues can adopt.

- If a team is losing by a four goal difference they can put an additional player on – so 5v5 becomes 6v5.
- If the score returns to less than a four goal difference the team takes off a player. It does not have to be the last player to come on.



OPTIONAL
POWER PLAY LAW

- If a team goes on to be losing by a six goal difference a further additional player can be added – so 6v5 becomes 7v5.
- The main aim of the Power Play option is that all players are being challenged and enjoying the game.
- Power Play is available through all mini soccer football formats 5v5 and 7v7.

OPTIONAL

POWER PLAY LAW

The diagram below helps to explain the process:

| Score | What happens? | 5v5 | 7v7 |
|---------------------------|--|-----|-----|
| Red Team 3-0 Blue Team | No change | 5v5 | 7v7 |
| Red Team 4-0 Blue Team | Blue Team brings on one extra player | 5v6 | 7v8 |
| Red Team 4-1 Blue Team | Blue Team removes one player* | 5v5 | 7v7 |
| Red Team 5-1 Blue Team | Blue Team brings on one extra player | 5v6 | 7v8 |
| Red Team 6-1 Blue Team | No change | 5v6 | 7v8 |
| Red Team 7-1 Blue Team | Blue Team brings on another extra player | 5v7 | 7v9 |
| Red Team 7-2 Blue Team | Blue Team removes one player* | 5v6 | 7v8 |
| Red Team 7-3 Blue Team | No change | 5v6 | 7v8 |
| Red Team 7-4 Blue Team | Blue Team removes final extra player* | 5v5 | 7v7 |

* This does not need to be the same player that was put on as the additional player.