



# JUNIOR FOOTBALL REGULATIONS

2023-24 SEASON



# JUNIOR FOOTBALL | UNDER 14-17

For the 2023-24 season, a standardised set of Junior Football Regulations has been introduced to ensure a consistent playing format is followed throughout Wales. Developing a standardised set of rules specific to junior football will help to:

- Make it simpler for players, coaches, clubs, leagues and parents to better understand the rules which are consistent across the Country
- Retain players, make the game more accessible for players of all abilities and make football a more appealing sports for players and parents.
- Ensure rules are age appropriate

**The following regulations are to be implemented by all Junior Leagues in Wales.**

## 1. PLAYING FORMAT

- 1.1. The playing formats for junior football (Under 14 - Under 17) are outlined below and are mandatory for all Junior Leagues in Wales to follow:

Age Group	Playing Format	Ball Size	Match Duration
Under 14	11 v 11	5	70 mins (35 min halves)
Under 15	11 v 11	5	80 mins (40 min halves)
Under 16	11 v 11	5	80 mins (40 min halves)
Under 17	11 v 11	5	80 mins (40 min halves)

### 1.2 Two-Year age band leagues

From the 2023-24 season, where leagues operate two-year age bands, the playing format must reflect the youngest age group of players. For example, if a league operates an Under 12 and Under 14 league, all Under 14 fixtures must play the 9v9 format given that all players in academic year eight (8), Under 13, are playing up. This is due to the Under 13 age band format being 9v9.

To reflect the FAW Small-Sided Football playing formats, the FAW recommends that leagues operating a two-year age band, structure their respective leagues in accordance with the small-sided football playing formats as follows: (Under 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15). This will ensure that all players will participate within the correct playing formats for their respective age. Please see the table below for guidance.

Age Group	Playing Format	Ball Size	Total Match Duration
Under 7	4v4	3	40 mins (festival format)
Under 9	5v5	3	50 mins (festival format)
Under 11	7v7	4	60 mins (festival format)
Under 13	9v9	5	70 mins (2 x 35 min halves)



Age Group	Playing Format	Ball Size	Total Match Duration
Under 15	11v11	5	80 mins (2 x 40 min halves)
Under 17	11v11	5	80 mins (2 x 40 min halves)

*Regulation 1.2 does not apply to leagues that operate single age bands.*

## 2. AGE GROUPS

2.1. To align with the Small-Sided Football regulations, age groupings must be a minimum of one academic year and a maximum of two years (FAW rule 88.2).

2.1.1 For the purposes of age groupings, an Academic year begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> September and ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> August of the following year. Academic year one (1) is the year in which a player reaches his / her 6<sup>th</sup> birthday.

2.1.2 Clubs are encouraged, if practically possible, to run single age group teams as this will help to grow the game and band players together who, in the main, are of similar age, size and football ability. It is recognised, however, that this may not be possible due to limited player numbers.

2.1.3 If leagues run single age band divisions, the FAW would encourage players to play within their relevant age group.

2.1.4 If a club feels that based on a player's ability or physicality, they should be playing down one-year group, permission to play down must be gained annually in accordance with FAW Rule 88. A written letter outlining rationale must be sent to the relevant league secretary and signed by the club secretary and be subject to approval by the relevant area association.

2.1.5 Where clubs operate single age bands, entire teams are not ordinarily permitted to move up an age group en masse. This approach could benefit some players but may also disadvantage others within a team. If a club wishes to play a whole team up one academic year en masse, a written letter outlining rationale must be sent to the relevant league secretary and signed by the club secretary. Applications will be subject to approval by the relevant area association.

2.2 A junior player is permitted to play in the age group directly one year above. The age groups that a player is eligible to play in are set out in the following table:

Age as of August 31 <sup>st</sup> of the relevant playing season	School Academic year	Eligible age groups	Format
13	9	Under 14	11v11
		Under 15	11v11
14	10	Under 15	11v11
		Under 16	11v11
15	11	Under 16	11v11
		Under 17	11v11
16	12	Under 17 & Open age	11v11



- 2.3 Leagues will have discretion on whether to introduce an under 17 league programme. This age group is not a mandatory requirement, however this option can support the retention of players within the game who may not be ready for the transition into senior football.
- 2.4. On their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday, a player will be permitted to play open age football for the same registered club. Therefore, a player on their 16<sup>th</sup> birthday would have permission to play in both junior, youth and senior matches.
- 2.5 In order to provide relevant training and playing opportunities for girls across Wales, there is additional flexibility with regards to the age bandings that a junior female player or team can request to participate within:
  - 2.5.1 Any junior girls' team aged under 12 – under 17, can request to play, up to a maximum of two years, down within a mixed / boys junior league. Any girls team with permission to do so, must conform to the playing format of the respective league age group. For example, an under 14 girls team playing in an under 12 mixed/boys league must play the 9V9 format.
  - 2.5.2 Girls can request permission to play down up to a maximum of two years within a boys/mixed team or league, or for a Cymru Premier Academy at ages under 12 – under 17. For example, an under 12 girl can request permission to play within an under 10 boys team / mixed league.

Permission for girls or girls' teams to play down two years down are managed on a case-by-case basis as follows:

For a junior girls' team wanting to play down two years in a boys/mixed league, a written letter outlining rationale must be sent to the relevant league secretary and signed by the club secretary and be subject to approval by the relevant area association.

For a junior girl to play down two years in a boys/mixed team, a written letter outlining the rationale must be sent to the relevant league secretary and signed by the club secretary and player's parent.

For a junior girl to play down two years in a Cymru Premier Academy, a written letter outlining the rationale must be sent to Competitions Executive in FAW Domestic Department and signed by the Head of Coaching and players' parent.

### 3. Football size

The ball size for all junior football must be size 5.

### 4. Match Duration

Match duration for each age group is set out in the table below:

Age Group	Match Duration
Under 14	70 minutes (35 minute halves)
Under 15	80 minutes (40 minute halves)
Under 16	80 minutes (40 minute halves)
Under 17	80 minutes (40 minute halves)
Under 18 and above	90 minutes (45 minute halves)



**5. Squad size**

5.1 To help provide adequate playing opportunities and to reflect the varying demographics across Wales, each area association will be responsible for setting squad cap and match day squad cap limits which are to be documented in each area association's rules on an annual basis.

**6. Playing time**

6.1 All players in the match day squad should have a minimum of 50% playing time when participating in matches.

**7. Substitutions**

7.1 There is no limitation on the number of substitutions allowed during a match. Rolling substitutions are allowed throughout meaning players may re-enter the game after being substituted.

**8. Concussion**

Concussion symptoms may vary and can include dizziness, headache, or unsteadiness. Please refer to the UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite (Grassroots) Sport that will help you identify, manage and prevent concussion affecting players in grassroots football:

[UK Concussion Guidelines for Non-Elite \(Grassroots\) Sport](#)

[FAW Heading Guidelines](#)

A player can only return to football activities (not before day 21) as long as they are symptom free at rest for 14 days.

**9. Smoking**

8.1 Smoking is banned from the side-lines at all training and matches. This includes e-cigarettes.

**10. IFAB Laws of the game**

9.1 Expect for the regulations detailed above, the '[IFAB Laws of the Game document](#)' must be followed.

