



SPORTS ASSOCIATION

for Adelaide Schools

SAAS PRIMARY SOCCER

Primary Soccer Rules

Updated 2026 | Operational guide for Year 2/3 to Year 6 competition

PRIORITY Maximise participation, teach the game and create a safe, positive experience for every player. Coaches may agree to modify team numbers where needed to support this outcome.

1. Playing Format at a Glance

Year level	Schedule	Players	Game duration	Ball	Offside	Pitch and goal
Year 2/3	Friday - 4.00 pm	5 v 5 (including GK)	15 min x 2	Size 3	No	30 x 20 m 2 x 1 m pug or Alpha goals
Year 4	Friday - 4.00 pm	7 v 7 (max. 14 players total = 2 teams)	20 min x 2	Size 4	No	40 x 30 m 3 x 2 m goals
Year 5	Saturday - 8.30 / 9.30 / 10.30	9 v 9	25 min x 2	Size 4	No	60 x 45 m 5 x 2 m goals
Year 6	Saturday - 8.30 / 9.30 / 10.30	9 v 9	25 min x 2	Size 4	Yes	60 x 45 m 5 x 2 m goals

Team numbers: Coaches may agree to modify team numbers to allow the maximum participation possible.

Core competition settings

- No stoppage time is added at any level.
- Shin guards are compulsory for every player without exception.
- Year 6 applies offside. A foul throw in Year 6 is a direct turnover to the other team.
- Goals may be scored only when the whole ball crosses the goal line. Where cones replace goalposts, the ball must pass between the cones without knocking them over.

2. Field Layouts and Diagrams

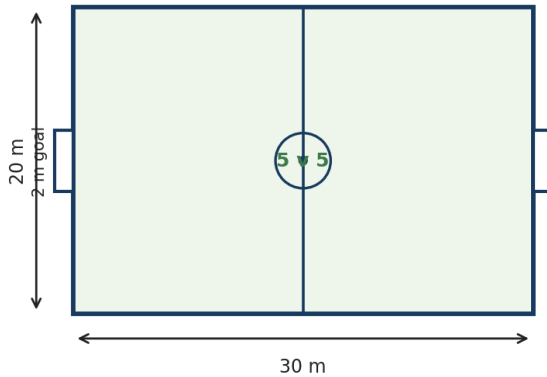
All dimensions are provided as a guide. Pitches may be set up on existing fields or open grass areas, provided the playing space is safe and clearly marked.

Short-Sided Pitch Dimensions

Diagrams are guide layouts only. Ensure fields are safe, clearly marked and adjusted to available ground space.

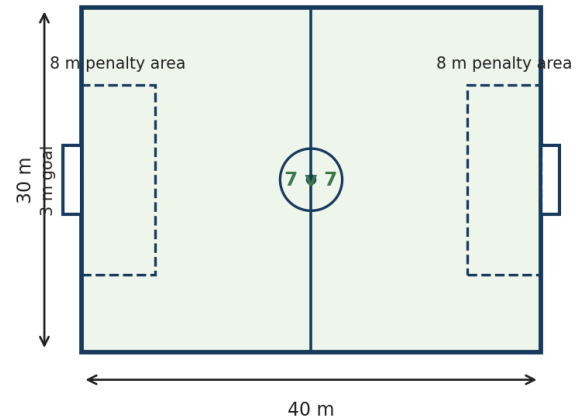
Year 2/3 pitch

5 v 5 (including goalkeeper) | Size 3 ball | No offside



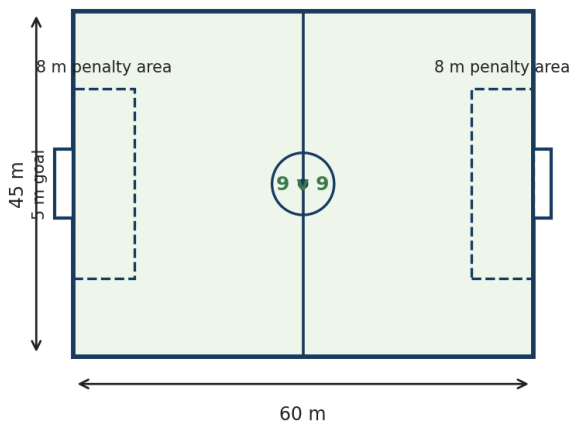
Year 4 pitch

7 v 7 | Size 4 ball | No offside



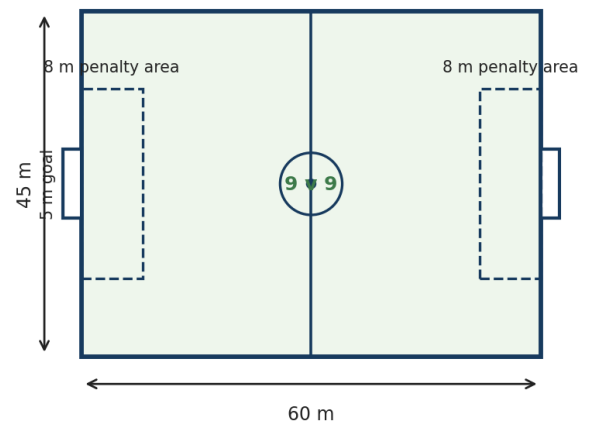
Year 5 pitch

9 v 9 | Size 4 ball | No offside



Year 6 pitch

9 v 9 | Size 4 ball | Offside applies

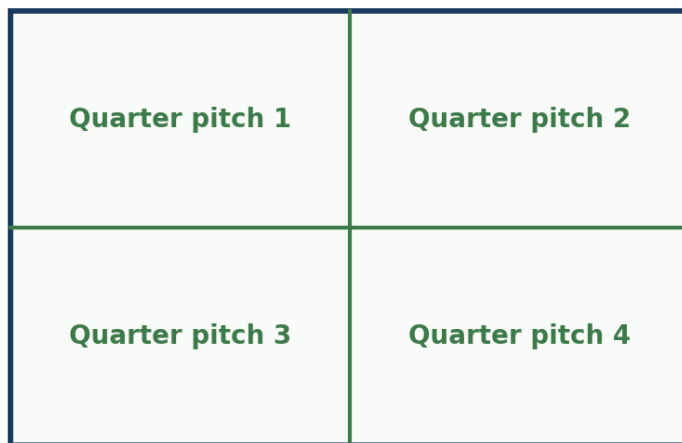


Offside applies in Year 6 only

Figure 1. Recommended short-sided field dimensions by year level.

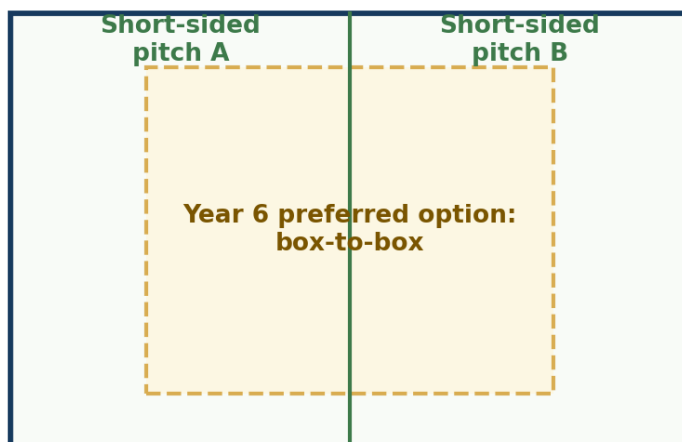
Field allocation options

Year 2/3 - up to four quarter pitches per full-size pitch



Use when ground space permits. Individual playing areas should be approximately 30 m x 20 m.

Years 4-6 - two short-sided pitches per full-size pitch where practical



Year 4 uses a half-pitch layout. Year 5/6 may use available open grass areas; box-to-box is best practice for Year 6.

Figure 2. Full-size pitch allocation options.

Ground set-up notes

- Year 2/3: use up to four pitches per full-size pitch where required; a smaller existing field or open grass area may also be used.
- Years 4-6: use up to two short-sided pitches per full-size pitch where required; a smaller existing field or open grass area may also be used.
- Year 6: box-to-box is the preferred set-up where the ground configuration allows it.
- Where goalposts are unavailable, use clearly positioned cones. Confirm the relevant goal width before play begins.

3. Match Operations and Player Participation

Year 2/3 - Game Leaders

Both teams must provide a Game Leader / coach to assist the players. No referee is required. Game Leaders should use common sense, help the game flow, explain decisions and encourage as many players as possible to be involved. At this level, most fouls and handballs arise from coordination rather than intent.

GAME LEADER APPROACH Instruct rather than punish. Use advantage where possible, especially when it helps the attacking team. Be fair to both teams and keep the game enjoyable.

Years 4-6 - Match Officials and Equipment

- **Home team:** provide a match-standard ball, a central referee and two Assistant Referee flags.
- **Each team:** supply one Linesman / Assistant Referee.

Interchange and substitutions

- Up to four interchange players may be used at all levels.
- Players may be rotated on and off at any time. Ensure the outgoing player has left the field before the replacement enters.
- Equal playing time should be a priority for all players, regardless of age, gender or ability.
- When sideline space permits, substitutes should be encouraged to practise skills or play small-sided games in a designated area without interfering with the match.

Safety and behaviour

Topic	Rule
Shin guards	Shin guards must be worn by all players without exception.
Concussion	Any player suspected of concussion should be assessed by a medical practitioner before returning to play. If in doubt, sit it out.
Yellow card	The player leaves the field for 10 minutes and may be replaced by another player.
Red card	The player is excluded for the remainder of the match. The matter is referred to the player's school for formal follow-up.

4. Starts, Restarts and Basic Playing Rules

Start of play and restart after a goal

Play starts with a pass to a teammate from the centre of the halfway line. All players must be in their own half. Opponents must be at least 5 metres 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 touch line (on the ground or in the air), or when play has been stopped by the Referee or Game Leader.

Throw-ins and return to play

For a throw-in, the player must face the field of play, keep part of each foot on or behind the touchline, use both hands and deliver the ball from behind and over the head. The thrower must not touch the ball again until another player has touched it. A second touch results in a free kick against the thrower.

Coaches / Game Leaders may allow kick-ins early in the season where appropriate to support learning and participation.

Year level	Throw back into play	Kick back into play
Year 4 (Referee / Coach discretion)	No	Yes
Year 5	Yes	No
Year 6	Yes	No

Offside

Year 2/3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
No	No	No	Yes

Fouls, handball and free kicks

SAAS primary soccer uses indirect free kicks for fouls, except for a penalty kick. Any indirect free kick awarded inside the penalty area must be taken outside the 8 metre penalty-box line.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • kicks or attempts to kick an opponent • trips or attempts to trip an opponent • jumps at or charges an opponent • strikes or attempts to strike an opponent • pushes or holds an opponent • tackles from behind to gain possession 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • makes contact with an opponent before touching the ball • deliberately handles the ball • plays in a dangerous manner • impedes the progress of a player • spits at an opponent
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Handball: No player may deliberately handle the ball. The goalkeeper may handle the ball inside their own penalty area where a goalkeeper and penalty area are in use.

5. Sportsmanship Rules

These rules are designed to prevent blowout results, promote respectful behaviour and improve the playing experience for both teams. The team that is leading applies the requirements below.

Score margin	Leading team requirements
Stage 1 5-0	At the trailing team's kick-off, throw-in or goal kick, the leading team must remain in its own half while the trailing team is in possession. Before the leading team can score again, every player on that team - including the goalkeeper - must touch the ball at least once. If the other team touches the ball during the passing or shooting sequence, the requirement resets.
Stage 2 8-0	Apply Stage 1, plus the leading team may only use the weaker foot to pass or shoot at goal. If this is not followed, the Referee may award a free kick to the trailing team.
Stage 3 10-0+	Apply Stages 1 and 2, plus remove the player who scores after each goal. If the trailing team scores, one removed player may return to the field.

IMPLEMENTATION Coaches and match officials should communicate these steps calmly and positively. The focus is player development, not punishment.

What Game Leaders and Referees should reinforce

- Encourage players to pass, dribble and involve teammates rather than simply kick the ball long.
- Reward positive decision-making, creative play and respectful conduct.
- Use the restrictions as a learning opportunity for the leading team and a confidence-building opportunity for the trailing team.
- Keep the message simple and consistent: every player should be challenged, involved and safe.

6. Game Leader Guide

Each game is controlled by one Game Leader. The Game Leader can be a club official, parent, older child/player or beginner referee. The role is to keep the match moving, teach the rules and create a fun, safe environment with maximum involvement.

THE RIGHT MINDSET Children are learning the game. Be flexible, patient, enthusiastic and approachable.

Game Leader checklist

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage all children to have fun and give different children opportunities to take restarts. • Ensure the correct number of players are on the field. • Discourage players from permanently guarding the goal. • Check that all players are wearing shin guards. • Use a “Ready, Set, Go” prompt to encourage quick decisions at restarts. • Encourage players to dribble or pass to teammates rather than kick the ball long. • Keep the opposing team at least 5 metres outside the penalty area for goal-line restarts. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help team officials and parents maintain a safe, enjoyable and positive environment. • Encourage every player to attack and defend. • Award free kicks where appropriate to help players understand rules and consequences. • Explain the decision and why the free kick has been awarded. • Let the game flow wherever possible and give instruction on the run. • Praise and encourage both teams. |
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Recommended preparation

Game Leaders are encouraged to complete the free FFA MiniRoos Certificate before the season.