

NZF Junior Framework Frequently Asked Questions for Parents

Why do players experience skill activities on game day rather than just playing a game?

Although station rotation is not at the heart of the day, it provides a valuable platform for players to continue developing the football skills that will be later applied in to the real game situation. Focus should be placed on individual development; particularly between the age of 4-8 years, which will lead to more confident and technically competent players. ***Greater skill levels will only increase the child's love and appreciation of the small sided game.***

Why do players keep rotating rather than just playing the one game?

The junior framework places the needs of children at the heart of the structures. As you will be aware, young children have a limited concentration span and therefore require lots of variation in order to keep them engaged and interested. By offering an environment which has lots of variation with different components, we aim to maximise the limited time players experience football. The amount of time spent in a small sided game has not reduced from previous formats, it simply has been split in to shorter bite size chunks to increase motivation levels for more of the time, as well as reducing the impact on high score lines and over dominant players.

What is involved in the rotational activities?

New Zealand Football has researched what children at different stages of their development require to provide them with the foundation for effective future participation. Love for the game is at the heart of the junior framework and core to that is players' feeling competent at the sport, therefore it is crucial that the right ingredients are provided to players.

There are four key components to a player's development:

General Movement provides players with fun energetic activities which generally take place without the use of the ball. It develops physical literacy and is the fundamental foundation for players to learn more complex movements as they progress through Junior Football

Football Coordination provides the opportunity for players to familiarise themselves with the ball through lots and lots of touches. Players, particularly at the younger ages should be allowed to just explore and use their imagination, whilst dribbling and changing direction quickly with the ball.

Football Technique is developed through fun, motivational activities which offer players lots of dribbling, shooting and for the fun footballer fakes and turning. The use of competition and games in skill sessions offers repetition of techniques in a motivational setting.

Small Sided Games provide players with the chance to practice their individual skills in a group setting. It promotes freedom and exploration, which is more motivating for a player than anything else. At these young ages no emphasis should be placed on team tactics, with game leaders encouraging and praising individual play. With small numbers and small pitches, playing small sided games provides players with lots of opportunities to be successful and provides them with the much needed confidence.

Is there much flexibility for the club when delivering the framework?

New Zealand Football has provided standardised playing and operating formats for both game day and training, however within these formats is flexibility to best meet the needs of both clubs and players.

What is flexible?

Pitch sizes

We have provided a minimum and maximum pitch size range

Goal Sizes

We have provided a minimum and maximum goal size range

Station activities

Clubs can alter the timing and number of station activities prior to playing small sided games on game day, with a requirement to run at least one.

Playing formats

At both First Kicks (3v3 & 4v4) and Fun Football (4v4 & 5v5) we have allowed clubs to choose between two formats based on the needs of the club and the number of players registered.

Why do game leaders stay on a station and not move with groups of players?

This format has specifically been designed to support both coach and player development.

Players are exposed to different game leaders throughout a season, who will all have different things to offer a child's development. Players are therefore not restricted by the weaknesses of one game leader and can access the strengths of others, whilst been provided with the much needed variation. We have also tried to support game leaders more, with the requirement to run only one activity for short amounts of time rather than running a whole session and having to manage young players for long periods.