



The Ontario Soccer Association

GRASSROOTS FESTIVAL GUIDE



L.T.P.D.
long-term player development





The Ontario Soccer Association GRASSROOTS FESTIVAL GUIDE

A. Purpose

In support of Long-Term Player Development , “Festivals” are the only form of competition for both male and female players in the Under-8 age group and one form of competition for the U9-U12 age groups. This document has been prepared to assist both District Associations, Academies and Clubs understand why a festival playing format is of greater benefit to individual player development and, most importantly, ensures all young players have fun.

Please use this document and other associated resources (outlined at the end of the document) to help educate coaches and parents so they understand that these changes are in the best interests of their children that play soccer.

B. Philosophy

“No Scores, No Standings and No Trophies”

At this stage, individual player development is paramount. Coaches and teachers should create a stimulating learning environment where the atmosphere is “Freedom and Fun”.

The philosophy underlying the Festival format is to focus on FUNdamentals and emphasize skill development and movement through games and activities that promote a feel for the ball, while teaching basic principles of play within a fun but structured environment.

C. The Festival

Event Type	Explanation
Season Festival	Festivals where local Club/Academy or District Association member teams play a regular schedule, same teams at a central location over the course of a season. These festivals would be arranged for preferably a Saturday or Sunday. Typically involving 20-30 teams playing 2 games each during the festival day.
Fixture Festival	One-off festival where local Club/Academy or District Association member teams come together for one day of activity on a Saturday or Sunday. Typically involving 20-30 teams playing 2 games during the festival.
Skills Festival	One-off festival for local Club/Academy or District Association member teams. There is a mixture of skill activities, coaching sessions and matches on a Saturday or Sunday. Typically involving 20-30 teams playing 2 games during the festival plus the various fun activities taking place.
Club Festival	A festival that only teams from within the same Club/Academy participate in. This Club Festival would take place on a Saturday or Sunday.
Futsal/Futsal Festival	Futsal is a 5v5 indoor soccer game that is typically played in school gymnasiums. It takes the form of Futsal Festivals and leagues . The leagues and Festivals are usually managed by Clubs, leagues or Festival hosts. Festivals are organized by Clubs, Academies and District Associations.



Format and Specifications

Game Format	Squad Size	Game Duration	Ball Size	Field Size		Goal Sizes (no larger than)
4 v 4	Max 8	2 x 20 min	3	25 to 30m	30 to 36m	5ft./1.52m x 8ft./2.44m
5 v 5	Max 10	2 x 20 min	3/4	25 to 30m	30 to 36m	5ft./1.52m x 8ft./2.44m
7 v 7	Max 12	2 x 25 min	4	30 to 36m	40 to 55m	6f / 1.83m x 16f / 4.88m
9 v 9	Max 16	2 x 35 min	4	42 to 55m	60 to 75m	6f / 1.83m x 18f / 5.49m

For further information on age appropriate competition formats see OSA Game Organization Guide—Physical Literacy (U4 –U12) available at <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/game-organization-guide>.

A Festival can be structured in many ways but must work within the parameters set in the development stage table above . The points below also give further guidance for Festival formats.



- 4 v 4, 5 v 5, 7 v 7 or 9 v 9 playing formats
- A Festival could take the form of a basic schedule of matches but no standings should be kept (taken from Wellness to World Cup Volume 1).
- In 4 v 4 playing formats a goalkeeper is not recommended. If playing 5 v 5 the use of a goalkeeper is optional, if you choose not to use a goalkeeper please reduce the goal size.
- All players must play equal time and try all team positions, including goalkeeper [if a goalkeeper is included in the playing format in 5 v 5].
- If the Festival format is purely game based the U8 games are to have Game Leaders and the u9-u12 games are to have referees. This would be a good introduction to match management and education of coaches and parents.
- The Retreat Line is in place in grassroots soccer. For more information on the retreat line please visit: <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/retreat-line-presentation>.
- Game Leaders replace referees at u8 games. Game Leader information can be found at <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/game-leader-guidelines>.

D. Registration

All players participating in a Festival must be registered with their Club and District Association for the appropriate program.

District Association residency rules still apply.

E. Team Travel

Player development and Festivals should occur only within a Club or District Association. There is no need for expensive, time consuming travel at these younger ages, that travel time is better spent with players training and developing within their local Club or playing other sports and being with friends.

The following team travel will be permitted by The OSA;

- **U8's** - Within District Only
- **U9-U10** - Neighbouring Districts up to 45 minutes from the district border. This should only be approved in circumstances where Clubs or District Associations do not have enough teams or there are practical travel benefits for the teams involved.
- **U11-U12** - Neighbouring Districts up to 60 minutes from the district border. This should only be approved in circumstances where Clubs or District Associations do not have enough teams or there are practical travel benefits for the teams involved.
- **Memorable events** - U11 & U12 programs have the option of travelling to two (2) memorable events, for cultural experiences and learning. Travel time controls are waived for these 2 memorable events. At least one (1) event must be LTPD compliant and within Ontario. U11 & U12 programs are permitted to use one (1) of their memorable events to travel to an event venue of their choice during the season. The one (1) event selected must take place in Canada or the USA. This event may not meet all Development Matrix requirements.





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F. Frequently Asked Questions

Can we give the participants mementos?

Yes, as long as each participant gets the same memento and it is deemed to be a 'Participatory Memento'. Practical items are recommended e.g. ball, t shirt .

Do we have to guarantee each team the same number of games? Yes, each team and each player should expect the same amount of playing time.

Can we have two divisions and have the first two teams play in a final game?

No, this would be a 'play-off' format.

Can we have two divisions and have the second-place teams play in a final game?

No, this would suggest teams are being ranked at the end of the regular games.

Can Festivals be 2-day events?

Festivals are one-day events.

Does a team require a Travel Permit when going to a Festival outside of their District?

Inter District travel is not encouraged at this development stage. In the odd occasion where inter-District competition may occur between neighbouring District teams , then a Travel Permit is required. A team travelling out of District needs a Team Travel Permit.

How does a Club apply and have a Festival approved?

Approval of the Festival is a District Association responsibility. A Festival Application Form (FAF) must be used when applying to host a festival. The Festival Host Organization requires the approval of the District Association which the Festival Host Organization is affiliated with, as well as the District Association in which the Festival is being played, if different than the Festival Host Organization's affiliated District Association.

Can U4 –U6 age groups play in Festivals ?

There should be no Festivals, tournaments or exhibition games from U4 - U6.

Do we still require Player Registration Books ?

Player Registration Books are not required for U8 Festivals . Clubs and/or districts may waive the requirement for u9-u12 games. For detailed information see Procedure 6.0 - O.S.A. Registrant Book and O.S.A. Identification Card. What is critical as stated earlier is the odd exception where players from neighbouring Districts participate in a Festival. This must be approved by both Districts via a Travel Permit.

Where can we get u8 Festival rules?

Please see the guidelines on page 3 or visit the OSA Website and view the FUNDamental Guide. It can be found here: <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/game-leader-guidelines>.

Can boys and girls play on the same team?

Yes. Boys and girls should and can play on the same team.

How much should we charge for a Festival?

Affordability and lowering the barriers to participation is most important. The objective for hosts should be covering their costs for a Festival.

Can we use U7 or U6 players in an U8 Festival?

Under-7 and Under-6 players are not eligible to play in Under-8 Festivals.

How do we mark out a field for a Festival?

There are a variety of ways to mark out a Festival Field and the most simple and effective manner is to mark the field out with cones. Other ideas within existing fields could include using different colour paint. Half way lines and goal boxes are not essential at this development stage. The Field Organization guide can be found on the OSA website here: <http://www.ontariosoccer.net/field-organization-guide>.

What is a Game Leader? Who can be a Game Leader?

A game leader is a person who has been successfully trained by OSA to supervise U8 games. A Game Leader can be a coach, parent, club executive or older player who has taken the GL training.

Please visit the Ontario Soccer Association website to download the appropriate Coaching Brochure designed to support coaches that work with players in each development stage. Additional documents are also available on line:

- Game Organization Guide – Physical Literacy (U4-U12)
- Field Organization Guide
- Grassroots Curriculum Vol. 1
- Grassroots Workbook and practice plans
- Retreat Line Info
- Game Leader
- What is Grassroots Soccer
- Indoor and Outdoor Recreation and Development Matrix
- Player Evaluation Documents

