



Setting Up A Walking Football League

Obviously the first step is to garner interest from teams in your local area, who you may think may be interested in joining a competitive walking football league. It helps if your own team has played in a competitive environment, for instance in a one-day Festival or Tournament.

You will have come across other like-minded people and hopefully have their contact details. Most organisers often bulk email teams that are competing in their tournaments, so you will have potential participants email addresses to work from.

A league can be started with as little as four teams and in some areas this is certainly the case, but six teams is a good number to start with. Some teams might not want to join the league all at once, so always plan ahead.

So, you have a list of teams, what is next? We recommend you take these steps to set up your league:

- 1. Communication** - Are you a good communicator? If not, recruit someone who is. Efficient communication is vital when organising any walking football league, without it, it will soon all fall apart. It is essential to have a website and use as many of the social media outlets as you wish, always be prepared to put your message out there as quickly as you can.
- 2. Affiliation** - Most of the larger and established leagues are affiliated to their local FA, who are of course the National Governing body for all versions of football. To be affiliated to your local FA, will ensure you will have access to qualified match officials, and gain the appropriate cover, such as Public Liability Insurance and Personal Accident cover for players, which are a necessity for all walking football leagues. Costs for affiliation do differ from one local FA to the other, but you will get access to the FA's Technology systems, see page 3.
- 3. Playing Rules** - Most of the larger walking football leagues are County leagues affiliated to their local county FA and playing to the FA Laws of the Game ('LOTG'), some with local amendments, which would then be classified as 'local competition rules,' which are allowed by the FA. A copy of the current version of the FA's LOTG's and the WFLA Cup Competition Rules can be found under 'Resources' on our website.

4. **Constitution** - You will need to draw up a League Constitution. Some banks insist on this before you can set up a business account.

5. **Seasons, Age Categories, Divisions & Fixtures** - Will you count a Year as a Season or have more than one Season per year? Depending on the number of teams in your league and the format you wish to use, you need to think about the number and names of the Division. Six to eight teams playing each other twice in a season or four times in a season? Most walking football leagues now divide their Divisions into age categories e.g. Over 40's (women only), Over 50's (all genders), Over 60's (all genders), Over 65s (all genders) and Over 70's (all genders).

6. **Bank Account** - Running a walking football league means taking entry and FA affiliation fees from member clubs. Venues, referees and trophies also have to be paid for, so a bank account is essential.

7. **Code of Conduct** - All your member clubs and players should be issued with the League Code of Conduct or 'Fair Play' rules. This sets out your requirements on issues such as fair play and discipline on and off the pitch.

8. **The Venue or Venues** - Pretty obvious, but all leagues need at least one central point to play unless teams are happy playing each other home and away on their own particular venues, and therefore there is no need for a central venue. Venue costs can differ enormously in what can be charged per pitch hour. Always ask for a discount, pleading the age and financial position of the players. It usually works, especially if you can provide them with regular bookings and be prepared to be asked for money upfront if booking with a local council. With the increase in venues providing new 3G all-weather surfaces, you are unlikely to suffer cancellations due to bad weather, but this should not stop you using other types of pitches with playing surfaces like grass or astro.

9. **Referees** - No league, however small, can survive without good referees. We have seen leagues suffer from a reduction in numbers and even fold because of poor refereeing. If physical contact is allowed, then without doubt you can certainly expect teams to withdraw from that league.

10. **Costs** - Apart from the venue costs and referee's fees, if you are considering awarding trophies to winners, runners up and medals, this will add to your costs. Admittedly not a great deal but it still needs to be a consideration. Do you intend to offer post fixture refreshments? It all adds up when deciding what entry fee you intend to charge your potential league entrants. Do you charge per league session or an upfront total for all league sessions? It can depend on how many sessions you intend to run in a league season.

11. **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** - An Annual General Meeting is where any changes to elected officers, rule amendments or any other business are discussed and voted upon by member clubs.

12. **Election of League Officers** - As a basic requirement, your league will require a Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary. Possible also a Fixtures and Results Secretary and Disciplinary Secretary.

If you need any further advice or information please use the 'Contact Us' page of the WFLA website <https://wfla.uk/contact-us/>.

FA Technology Systems

The FA now have several Technology Systems in place designed to ease the administration of grassroots football.

Whole Game System - The FA's Whole Game System is a long-standing platform that has historically been used for grassroots clubs' administrative tasks, such as affiliation, discipline, player, and team registration.

Club Portal - Club Portal is being designed as the basis for all club administration activity. At the start of the 2022/23 season, it is used to submit player registrations and to gain England Accreditation, but enhancements are being planned to use the Club Portal for affiliation and discipline, which currently takes place in the Whole Game System.

Player Registration - All player registration now takes place online through the Club Portal. Clubs are able to search for players, invite new players to join the club using a hyperlink or direct invitation and then register them with their league. Leagues set the specific requirements for registration (whether photos are needed, or proof of age ID), although all players will be required to have an email address to register.

Full Time - Full-Time is used by many leagues in order to find out results, arrange fixtures and then provide details of the players that have played in each match. It is linked on online player registrations and the Club Portal, in that officials listed, and players registered are transferred automatically into Full-Time, as well as The FA Matchday app. Results can be submitted by logging into Full-Time, by sending a response to an automated text or by submitting details on The FA Matchday app.

Match Day App - The FA's official Matchday app has been developed specifically to automate everything around your football life – whether you are a player, club secretary, manager, or coach. Who is in the team? Who are the opponents? Where is the game? When's kick-off? Is anyone currently suspended? With Matchday, all the answers are instantly available at your fingertips. And it is all in a safe and secure environment, backed by The FA. We will also ensure it has up-to date, comprehensive information on players, clubs, fixtures, and leagues.

As The FA begins to align all of their platforms and club admin through the Club Portal, some existing platforms such as the whole game system will continue to be used by club volunteers including Club affiliation.