



RECREATIONAL



WALKING FOOTBALL

GUIDANCE

CONTENTS



P. 03	INTRODUCTION
P. 04	WHAT IS NEEDED TO ORGANISE RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES?
P. 05	HOW TO STRUCTURE A RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL SESSION
P. 05	- BRIEF OVERVIEW
P. 06	- ARRIVAL OF THE PLAYERS
P. 06	- WARM-UP
P. 08	- SKILLS AND DRILLS
P. 08	- MATCH
P. 08	- COOL-DOWN
P. 09	- SOCIAL GATHERING AND DEBRIEF
P. 10	WHICH RULES TO CONSIDER IN RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL?
P. 13	ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES
P. 14	CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING A RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL EVENT
P. 15	FORMS
P. 16	- PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM
P. 18	- HEALTH DECLARATION

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

THIS DOCUMENT PROVIDES NATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, LEAGUES, CLUBS AND OTHER FOOTBALL ORGANISATIONS WITH GUIDANCE ON HOW TO ORGANISE RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES. IT HIGHLIGHTS THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS AND PROVIDES TOOLS TO HELP KICK-START THESE ACTIVITIES.

'Recreational' walking football refers to walking football for the purpose of exercise, relaxation or pleasure, and includes both playing and teaching the sport. Flexibility is a priority, and activities should be tailored to local contexts, needs, resources, objectives and player abilities. This document features examples of how recreational walking football is played in different countries. It also provides checklists, session plans, exercises and forms to help organise the sessions. These materials are intended to inspire and offer recommendations, and are in no way mandatory.

Walking football is a version of association football whose rules have been modified to promote health and safety. It is aimed primarily at older people and people with limited mobility. However, it is inclusive and can accommodate individuals of all ages and abilities.



RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

WHAT IS NEEDED TO ORGANISE RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL ACTIVITIES?

Organising a recreational walking football session does not require a lot of equipment or funds.

Here you can see a checklist of the minimum required:

CHECKLIST

- A FACILITATOR AND PLAYERS**
 - See 'Key roles' in Section 2 of the Walking Football Toolkit
- A SUITABLE FACILITY**
 - A well maintained, non-slippery, flat pitch (indoor, outdoor, artificial or turf)
 - A space for players to gather, chat and enjoy refreshments together after the session
- FOOTBALL EQUIPMENT**
 - A few balls
 - Cones
 - Two goals
 - Bibs
- PLAYERS' EQUIPMENT**
 - Comfortable footwear and clothes
 - A bottle of water
 - Shin guards for additional safety
- A SESSION PLAN**
 - See examples on page 5

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

HOW TO STRUCTURE A RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL SESSION

Recreational walking football should be flexible and take into consideration the players' objectives and abilities. The examples provided here give the facilitator a structured yet flexible agenda to keep players engaged from the time of their arrival through to the training session, social gathering and debrief.

BRIEF OVERVIEW



Session duration

60 minutes of physical activity followed by a social gathering



Frequency

Ideally two to three times a week (minimum once a week)



Objective

A fun, moderate-intensity and socially engaging physical activity for older people, focused on improving cardiovascular health, mobility, coordination and teamwork

SESSION AGENDAS

EXAMPLE 1

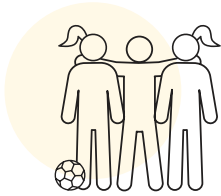
Arrival of the players	-
Warm-up	10 min
Skills and drills	15 min
Match	25 min
Cool-down	10 min +
Social gathering and debrief	30 min
TOTAL	90 min + extra time

EXAMPLE 2

Arrival of the players	-
Warm-up	10 min
Match	15 min
Skills and drills	10 min
Match	15 min
Cool-down	10 min +
Social gathering and debrief	30 min
TOTAL	90 min + extra time

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

ARRIVAL OF THE PLAYERS



Always foster a positive and welcoming environment.

At the beginning of each session, the facilitator should:

- greet players and introduce newcomers to the group;
- explain the mandatory adaptations and principles of walking football, the Laws of the Game and the purpose of the session;
- remind players of the importance of reporting any discomfort or pain, and of going at their own pace.

WARM-UP



A warm-up is essential before any form of physical activity to prevent injuries.

A warm-up is a fun and engaging way to start the session. It is important to incorporate progressions and regressions in each exercise so that everyone can find the right level of difficulty for them and safely challenge themselves. Below are some examples of exercises designed to improve team tactics and strategy.

Begin the warm-up as follows:

- 01.** Taking a slow walk twice around the pitch or playing 'follow the leader' for five minutes.
- 02.** Practising various game-based walking speeds within the players' individual limits

(e.g. a leisurely walking pace, a brisk walking pace and a short-burst fastest walking pace). Remember that walking is defined as always having at least one foot in contact with the ground.

- 03.** Passing the ball: against a wall, with a partner, in groups of three (two plus one) and 6m apart in a line, in a circle with a group of four attackers passing and one defender in the middle trying to intercept the ball.
- 04.** Dribbling the ball: around a random scatter plot of cones, in groups of three (two plus one) and 6m apart in a line.
- 05.** Stretching and joint mobilisation
 - Ten shoulder, ankle and wrist rolls
 - Ten knee lifts
 - Ten hip circles
 - Ten arm swings
 - Ten calf stretches
 - Ten hamstring stretches

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

Below are some examples of exercises designed to improve team tactics and strategy.

TEAM TACTICS AND STRATEGY TABLE

Defence	Attack	Transition
Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple passes between two players: stop and control the ball. • One player passes the ball, the receiving player controls it and turns 180 degrees to pass it to another player or return it. 	Shooting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up small goals or target areas and let players shoot at the target, concentrating on technique rather than power. Emphasise accuracy and control. 	Balance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk in a straight line.
	Passing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a circle of cones and ask players to practice passing the ball as they walk. • The players form two lines facing each other and practise making short passes. They walk to where they passed the ball and join the back of the opposite line. • Three players form a triangle and pass the ball to each other while maintaining their walking rhythm. 	Dribbling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place cones in a zigzag pattern and ask players to practice dribbling the ball through the cones using both feet alternatively.
	Indirect free-kicks and short corner kicks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-mate approaches corner-taker along the end-line. • Team-mate approaches corner-taker from same side and defensive half of the pitch. • Team-mate approaches free-kick-taker from the side or slightly behind the ball in order to shoot on target before opposition defenders block the shot. 	Muscle strengthening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate-intensity walking lunges, side steps and hurdles. • Heel and toe elevation. • Side arm raise.

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

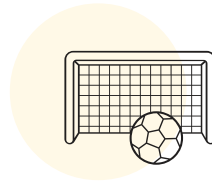
SKILLS AND DRILLS



Make sure that the exercises are demonstrated to new players and to those who have difficulty with them.

Be patient with the players and, if necessary, separate them by fitness level during the exercises to help minimise the risk of injuries.

MATCH



Familiarise players with friendly matches.

- At recreational level, rules should be flexible to accommodate the players and the local setting, but the mandatory adaptations should always be followed.
- The facilitator is responsible for setting the tone and applying a zero-tolerance policy towards running and physical contact to ensure the safety of all players. They should encourage teamwork and low passing.
- It is important to ensure that everyone gets to participate and rest.

COOL-DOWN



After each session, a cool-down is fundamental to aid in the recovery of the players' muscles and bring down their heart rate.

- Start with a slow walk around the pitch.
- Conduct a series of gentle sustained stretches, focusing on the same major muscle groups as in the warm-up. Maintain regular breathing throughout the exercise and never push to the point of pain. Mild discomfort or a light stretch is what you're aiming for.
- Finish with deep breathing exercises for relaxation.

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

SOCIAL GATHERING AND DEBRIEF



The social aspect is just as important as the physical.

Socialising and community-building activities are an essential part of the training session, as they promote mental health and social well-being.

For this reason, the venue should have an area where players can chat and enjoy snacks and refreshments together. The social aspect of the training is crucial to encourage long-term participation, as it helps create a sense of belonging and purpose, and contributes to better overall mental health.

This space can be used to host small workshops on health and the importance of regular check-ups. It can also be used for quizzes and board games or to host other social groups to encourage interaction.

This part of the training is also an opportunity for regular communication between players and the facilitator to ensure that any concerns or feedback are addressed.

UEFA recommends monitoring the success of your activities by tracking the players' physical and mental progress. Collecting this data will enable you to effectively promote the advantages of walking football, attract more players and foster a sense of community. Additionally, regularly seeking the players' opinions can help you understand their motivations and identify areas where the activity can be improved. A player feedback form can be found at the end of this document.



RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

WHICH RULES TO CONSIDER IN RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL?

In recreational settings, some adaptations are mandatory, as they are the essence of walking football. However, there is more flexibility regarding other rules, allowing each facilitator or organisation to choose from an array of options to best suit the game's objectives and the players' needs.

MANDATORY ADAPTATIONS FOR WALKING FOOTBALL

NUMBER	ADAPTATION	SPECIFICATION
1	No running	No running with or without the ball. Players must walk and always have one foot on the ground.
2	No physical contact	In order to reduce the risk of injury, no physical contact is allowed (non-contact sport).
3	No offside	In order to simplify the game, no offside rules apply.
4	No heading	In order to reduce the risk of injury, no heading is allowed.
5	Indirect free-kicks	All free-kicks must be indirect, and opponents must be at least 3m away from the ball.
6	Limited height of play	The ball must not be played above crossbar height.

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

Below are several adaptations tested at the **UEFA Walking Football Cup – Pilot Edition 2024**. These are for inspiration and to provide ideas for structuring and running recreational walking football activities. While these examples are useful, one of the core values of recreational walking football is its flexibility. Each facilitator or organiser should identify which adaptation works best for their local context, taking into consideration the activity's objectives and the players' abilities.

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS	EXAMPLES	REMARKS
NUMBER OF PLAYERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walking football is flexible. Some play 7 vs 7, 6 vs 6, 5 vs 5 or 3 vs 3. The most popular format is 6 vs 6. It can be played with goalkeeper or without. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Games played without a goalkeeper are generally played with smaller goals.
PITCH SIZE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The size of the pitch is flexible. It depends on the venue and the number of players per side. You may also wish to consider the standard of the players. 	
PITCH MARKINGS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Penalty area = semi-circle 6m from goal line and 2m from goal posts. Only the goalkeeper is allowed in the area. If the defender goes in, it is a penalty kick. If the attacking team goes in, it is a free-kick. If the goalkeeper leaves the area, it is a penalty. Penalty area = line across pitch. Penalty will only be given if a defender touches the ball in the area. A free-kick will be awarded if the attacking team touches the ball in the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the penalty area is the line across the pitch, it is recommended to use small goals and to play without a goalkeeper.
GOAL POSTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2m high and 3m wide (futsal goal) 2m high and 5m wide 1m high and 3m wide (no goalkeeper) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some games do not use goalkeepers as the focus is on ensuring everyone is exercising and moving during the activity. There is also a concern about potential injuries to goalkeepers when diving, particularly in a larger goal. Others prefer having goalkeepers to better resemble the game that players may have played in the past. You also need to consider the focus of the game and the age and level of the players. If the goals are too small, this could lead to very tight games which could increase physical contact.

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

OPTIONAL ADAPTATIONS	EXAMPLES	REMARKS
BALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size 5 • Size 4 • Futsal ball 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Size 5 is what adults will have experienced in the past. • The smaller size 4 can be easier as it is lighter than the size 5. • The heavier futsal ball is slower so better for passing, as it doesn't roll away so quickly. However, some players find it too heavy, which can cause muscle and joint pain.
MAXIMUM NUMBER OF TOUCHES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of five consecutive touches, and if a player takes more, it's an indirect free-kick. • Maximum of three consecutive touches, and if a player takes more, it's an indirect free-kick. • No limit to consecutive touches. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limiting the number of touches reduces the level of contact between players, which in turn reduces the risk of injury. It also prevents one player from dominating the game. You need to consider the level of the players when deciding on this.
REFEREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two referees – one for each half (similar to futsal) • One referee to officiate the game with a second referee to observe running offences • One referee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When more than one referee is available, they might also manage the sin bin.
TECHNICAL OFFENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any team committing five offences (any offence where the referee has awarded a free-kick or penalty, except ball above crossbar height) during any one half will be penalised with the award of a penalty kick against them. After the penalty, the count restarts. • As above, but a penalty will then be awarded for every subsequent offence. • Any player penalised for running three times in any one half will be shown a yellow card. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reason for not including the ball above crossbar height is that this usually occurs when a player has blocked a pass or shot. • Using the team offence count is similar to futsal and stops teams from tactically using different players to commit running offences without consequence, which goes against the spirit of the game.
TOUCHLINE RESTARTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot pass-in along the ground • Roll-in • Dribble-in (self-pass) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your choice is the self-pass, be mindful of the maximum number of touches you allow.
GOALKEEPER RETURNING BALL INTO PLAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The goalkeeper can only roll the ball back into play. • The goalkeeper can throw the ball back into play, or kick it from the ground. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All options would result in an indirect free-kick 3m from the penalty area for any breach of this adaptation.
YELLOW AND RED CARDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any player receiving a yellow card is sin binned for two minutes and may not be substituted during this period. Any player receiving a red card will take no further part in that match and may not be substituted during this period. (Tournament rules may impose additional disciplinary measures.) 	

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Football associations, clubs and walking football session organisers can help older people feel more comfortable and confident by ensuring that facilities and equipment are age-friendly, and that the venue provides:

- Easy access to a water fountain
- Benches or chairs for resting
- Shade for sun protection (if played outside)
- Easy accessibility for people with mobility issues
- Proximity to public transport
- Easy access to sanitary and changing facilities
- Appropriate sportswear and footwear for the weather



RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL: GUIDANCE

CHECKLIST FOR ORGANISING A RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL EVENT

STEP 1: Definition and scope	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appoint an event manager or coordinator
<input type="checkbox"/>	Define the objective of the event (e.g. promotion, raising awareness, fundraising)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish a budget and monitor expenses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Find sponsors and/or partner with organisations
<input type="checkbox"/>	Determine the number of participating teams, team compositions, age requirements and equipment needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Choose an appropriate venue, date and time (ensure the venue meets health and safety standards and provides adequate facilities)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Set participation fees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Establish registration procedures and deadlines

STEP 2: Organisation	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Send official invitation to the teams and guests and communicate about the event to attract spectators
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share playing laws
<input type="checkbox"/>	Share health declarations with players and collect signed copies from all
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recommend convenient accommodation and ground transport to and from the selected venue
<input type="checkbox"/>	Take stock of the equipment provided and needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange the necessary medical measures (first-aid kits, ice, defibrillator, ambulance)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Conduct a draw to determine the fixtures and develop a match schedule
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plan an opening and closing ceremony
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recruit qualified referees
<input type="checkbox"/>	Design the medals and/or trophies
<input type="checkbox"/>	Develop promotional materials and branding
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange lunch and snacks
<input type="checkbox"/>	Organise participant accreditation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Arrange a photographer and/or videographer
<input type="checkbox"/>	Display adequate signage around the venue
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gather feedback from the players

FORMS

**PLAYER
FEEDBACK FORM**

**HEALTH
DECLARATION**

Ensuring secure data collection is crucial to protect sensitive information and comply with legal standards. Each organisation should verify and apply their national regulations, and design their own system, forms and processes to protect individuals' privacy.



PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM

INSTRUCTION

In order to monitor your progress and deliver the most appropriate sessions, please complete the form with your honest answers.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full name:

Date of birth:

Sex as stated in passport:

Phone number:

PHYSICAL HEALTH

How would you rate your physical health before starting walking football?	<input type="radio"/> Very poor	<input type="radio"/> Poor	<input type="radio"/> Average	<input type="radio"/> Good	<input type="radio"/> Excellent
How would you rate your physical health now?	<input type="radio"/> Very poor	<input type="radio"/> Poor	<input type="radio"/> Average	<input type="radio"/> Good	<input type="radio"/> Excellent
Have you noticed any physical improvements since starting walking football?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	If yes, please describe:		

MENTAL HEALTH

How would you rate your mental well-being before starting walking football?	<input type="radio"/> Very poor	<input type="radio"/> Poor	<input type="radio"/> Average	<input type="radio"/> Good	<input type="radio"/> Excellent
How would you rate your mental well-being now?	<input type="radio"/> Very poor	<input type="radio"/> Poor	<input type="radio"/> Average	<input type="radio"/> Good	<input type="radio"/> Excellent
Have you experienced any positive changes in your mood, social interactions or overall mental state since starting walking football?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	If yes, please describe:		

PLAYER FEEDBACK FORM

GENERAL FEEDBACK

How satisfied are you with the walking football sessions?	<input type="radio"/> Very unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Unsatisfied	<input type="radio"/> Neutral	<input type="radio"/> Satisfied	<input type="radio"/> Very satisfied
What do you enjoy most about the walking football sessions?					
When did you start attending walking football sessions?					
Are there any aspects of the walking football sessions that you believe could be improved?	<input type="radio"/> Yes	<input type="radio"/> No	Please provide details:		

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Please provide any additional feedback or comments you have about the walking football sessions and your personal experience of them.	
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Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.
Your feedback is invaluable to us and will help improve the programme for everyone involved.

HEALTH DECLARATION

INSTRUCTION

Before engaging in any walking football activities, please get the go-ahead of your healthcare provider and complete this health declaration. The information you provide will help ensure your safety and well-being during sessions.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full name:	
Date of birth:	
Sex as stated in passport:	
Phone number:	
Emergency contact's name:	
Emergency contact's phone number:	

MEDICAL HISTORY

YES
NO

	YES	NO	
Do you have any medical conditions or chronic illnesses (heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, etc.)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, please specify:
Are you currently taking any medication?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, please list medications, dosages, and reasons:
Do you have any allergies, including medication allergies?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, please specify:
Have you undergone any recent surgeries or medical procedures?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, please describe and provide the date(s):
Have you experienced chest pain or discomfort during physical activity in the past?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, please describe and provide the date(s):

HEALTH DECLARATION

LIFESTYLE	YES	NO				
Do you smoke?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, how many cigarettes do you smoke per day?			
Do you drink alcohol?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	If yes, how often and in what quantities?			
How often do you engage in physical activity or exercise?	<input type="radio"/> Daily	<input type="radio"/> Weekly	<input type="radio"/> Monthly	<input type="radio"/> Rarely	<input type="radio"/> Never	Please specify which activity or exercise:

EXERCISE GOALS AND PREFERENCES

What are your goals for participating in exercise or physical activity?	
Do you have any exercise preferences or limitations?	

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that the information provided in this form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that it is my responsibility to inform the walking football coordinator or facilitator of any changes to my health status or medical conditions that may affect my ability to exercise safely.

DATE

SIGNATURE

INFORMED CONSENT

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the information provided in this form. I am aware of the risks associated with physical activity and exercise and voluntarily choose to participate.

DATE

SIGNATURE



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WE CARE ABOUT FOOTBALL

RECREATIONAL WALKING FOOTBALL

GUIDANCE