

UNIFIED SPORTS - FOOTBALL

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Special Olympics
Great Britain



Special Olympics
Unified Sports



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Spirit of the Games: Excellence through competition.



Football is the nation's favourite sport, currently played by a diverse range of people across the country. Having pride in playing football or our new offer of futsal for your school is something that every young person should have the opportunity to experience.



Enjoyment should be at the heart of the game for everyone involved. Therefore, respecting our opponents, teammates and officials is paramount.



Whether you win, lose or draw, do it with integrity.



Have the courage to be creative and try new things whilst focusing on your team objective.



Football is a game that relies on the combined effort of the whole team. Success will be determined by how well individuals come together and strive towards a common goal.



At some point, you will meet challenges. To be successful on the pitch, you will need to be determined and resilient – both essential life skills.

What are the benefits of playing Unified Football?

Special Olympics Unified Sports is an inclusive sports programme that combines an approximately equal number of Special Olympics athletes (individuals with intellectual disabilities) and partners (Individuals without intellectual disabilities) on teams for training and competition. Unified Football is a particularly appropriate sport for individuals with intellectual disabilities as it:

- Involves all participants constantly.
- Is easy to teach and immediately rewarding to play.
- Allows rapid initial improvement in skills and basic game understanding. Above all, football is a fun, exciting and engaging team sport.

Priority competitions:

Name of the competition: Unified Football 5-a-side and 7-a-side team competition

Age group: Key Stage 3 Years 7,8 & 9 (U12-14) Note that players should be grouped across two year age groups only.

Who can run it? Level 1: Schools.

How to enter: Local entry through Inclusion school or SGO.

When does it take place? Competition runs April–June

Other Competitions: The competition may be played within a school setting, or schools can join together to form a unified team/s. For development through to international pathways please connect to your local Special Olympics GB Club.

Young leader/Officials courses/qualifications available

Special Olympics GB is made up of Regions and Clubs delivering a wide range of sports and training opportunities in the three home countries of England, Scotland and Wales. To find your Region and nearest club, please head to www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk/find-a-club

Relevant web links

<https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/unified-sports>

Differences of Unified Football

Unified Football has players with and without intellectual disabilities playing together on the same team at the same time, against other teams with the same make up. Unified Sports break down barriers, enabling young people to play side by side in inclusive competition, building positive experiences and confidence.



Name of competition:

Unified football

Age Group:

Key Stage 3 (U12, U13, U14) but Unified Football can be played at any age group in mixed teams.

How to enter:

Both competitions can be played within school (intra) or through Special Olympics GB Community pathways.

Tournament format:

Unified Football begins within school or local events or leagues which could take place within one school. Unified Football is a mechanism to get more young people involved in football and to breakdown some of the barriers to participation for players with an intellectual disability. Special Olympics clubs across the country provide pathways for sustained participation beyond the School Games. Don't forget that players with an intellectual disability are eligible to play in Pan Disability football. For more information on the Pan Disability offer within School Games check out the pan disability cards. For more information about the community pan disability football opportunities visit www.thefa.com/disability or contact your local County FA.

Simple rules:

- Recommended playing surface is a third generation artificial turf pitch.
- The Ball: Size 4 ball.
- For goalpost dimensions please refer to pitch diagrams for 7-a-side, mini soccer goals are also permitted.
- For 7-a-side teams of 7 (recommended is a squad of 12) during play, a team may not exceed: four athletes and three Unified Partners. For 5-a-side teams of 5 (recommended is a squad of 8) during play, a team may not exceed: three athletes and two Unified Partners.
- Substitutions are unlimited in number (players may return on the field after being substituted).
- Substitutions can be made at any time the ball is out of bounds, between halves, after a goal is scored or during an injury timeout, with the referees permission.
- Shin pads are required by all players.
- It is recommended that the duration of the game for 5-a-side is two equal 15 minute halves (for 7-a side 20 minutes) with a half time interval of five minutes.
- If the score is level at full time, two five minute overtime periods are used. If the game is still tied, penalty kicks will be used to decide the winner.
- Ball in and out of play: ball over the touchline results in a kick in. Ball over the goal line results in a goal kick or corner kick. The ball must be completely over the goal line to be considered out of play.
- There is no offside.
- All freekicks are direct.
- A penalty kick is taken from the penalty mark.
- Free kick: opposing players must be at least five metres from the ball.
- A corner kick is awarded to the attacking team when a player from the defending team kicks the ball over their own goal line.
- Players with physical disabilities can participate as Unified Partners.

Relevant web links

For further information on Unified Sport – please visit

<https://resources.specialolympics.org/sports-essentials/unified-sports>

Think Inclusively!

- Modify pitch sizes within the minimum and maximum size guides.
- Use rolling substitutions to ensure equal playing time amongst the team.
- Allow 'roll-ins' rather than 'throw-ins/kick-ins' to make controlling the ball easier for players with limited movement.
- Use a different coloured football for the engagement of visually impaired players.
- Ensure pitches are clearly marked and try to avoid using facilities with lots of different line markings and poor lighting where possible.
- Ensure referees support the inclusion of deaf players by using flags to signal decisions made.
- Ensure deaf players are permitted to wear hearing aids (if they choose to) during game play.

Roles for young people:

- Assistant Coach/Team Manager – delivering warm-up activities and games.
- Allow young referees the chance to officiate in these games, with support from a more experienced adult.
- Give young people the responsibility of organising and delivering the competition and fixture programme.
- Writing match reports to feature on the school website.
- Respect Ambassador – briefing teams and referees on the Respect Programme and monitoring the behaviour of teams.

How can depth in competition through extra teams be achieved?

Schools should be encouraged to enter more than one team into competitions to give as many players as possible the opportunity to take part. Regular Intra-School football (Level 1) and regular after-school clubs can grow the base of players to allow schools to enter teams into Level 2 competitions.

How can regularity be achieved?

Regular playing opportunities can be created by running a regular 'central venue competition', rather than a 'one off' event. Schools can take it in turns to host, or a regular venue can be booked. Also refer to the FA pan disability offer for additional competition formats. Don't forget that players with an intellectual disability are eligible to play in Pan Disability football. For more information on the Pan Disability offer within School Games check out the pan disability cards. For more information about the community pan disability football opportunities visit www.thefa.com/disability or contact your local County FA.



UNIFIED FOOTBALL

Football pitch diagram

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For 7-a-side competition consider a maximum pitch size of 60yds x 40yds and 40yds x 30yds for 5-a-side



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Football Team Divisioning Form

This form is an optional resource that can be used to ensure meaningful involvement for all players and teams when competing against others.

School Details			
School Name:			
Date of Assessment:	/ /	Type of surface the assessment took place on:	
Team Name: (include names of multiple teams if from same school)			
Notes: (Although each team should be made up of similar ability players, please note any exceptions here).			

Shirt Number:	Full Name:	Gender:	Year Group:	Member of a Special Olympics Club?	Athlete or Unified Partner?
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner
		Male/Female		Yes/No	Athlete/Unified Partner

Average ability level of the Football team: (Please rate each technique below in the end box out of 4) 4= Low, 3= Medium, 2= High, 1= Advanced			
1) Personal physical fitness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> endurance/condition average body size 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> average body age 	1 2 3 4
2) Individual ball skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> dribbling control and passing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> shooting – heading attacking/defending 	1 2 3 4
3) Goalkeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> anticipation & awareness positioning stopping & blocking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> catching distribution 	1 2 3 4
4) Team performance			1 2 3 4
Level 4:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has a very low level of spatial awareness plays with little team work of integration between the players finds it difficult to use game tactics at set pieces or in the run of play. 		
Level 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has better spatial awareness with higher level of integration between players struggles to work as a team in defence situations uses basic tactics at set plays. 		
Level 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has good spatial awareness and high level of integration between players works as a team in defence and can better anticipate their opponent's moves uses the game tactics both at set pieces in the run of play. 		
Level 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> has very good spatial awareness and utilises the whole playing area performs good team work in attack and defence, even under strong pressure from opponents can adapt set pieces and game tactics to what the situation requires. 		

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