



HOW TO – Deliver Football Fun & Development

Whilst every coach has their own style and will put their own stamp on the delivery of all of their programmes, the Football Fun Factory has a tried and tested formula for how to deliver your programme brilliantly. This guide includes:

- Preparing for your sessions
- Providing a warm welcome
- Safeguarding measures
- Session structure
- Putting on a Show
- Blue Card presentations
- Leaving on a high
- Facing challenges

Preparing for your sessions

Syllabus

You have access to an extensive syllabus of Football Fun & Development session plans and can choose which sessions to deliver at any time. We do it this way to give you the freedom and flexibility to select the sessions that will work best for the children that you coach. For example, you may choose a more fun and less technical session for a younger group or more challenging session plan for a group with older children or a higher level of ability.

If you have assistant coaches that deliver alongside you, you should provide them with session plan that you would like them to deliver at least 24 hours prior to the training session. This will allow for adequate preparation time and an opportunity for them to ask you any questions they may have.

Equipment

It is advisable for the Head Coach to be responsible for bringing all equipment to the session. As many assistant coaches are part-time self-employed coaches with other commitments, it is not advisable to rely on them to bring equipment to your session.

Ensure that you have enough equipment for your sessions. It is important that you have enough footballs and bibs for every child. You will also need cones and depending on the goals available at your venue, it may be useful to have some target goals too.

Registers

For safeguarding reasons and to deliver the best possible service to children and parents you should have a printed register at your session each week. The register should have any medical information you are given for your participants and an emergency number, just in case you need one.

Your register will be a good tool to get to know your participants' names and also make sure you can give any children attending a trial session an especially warm welcome.

Arrival time

You should arrive at least 30 minutes in advance of your session. Whether you are able to gain access to the facility at this time will be at the discretion of the facility where you deliver your sessions. Most venues will allow you set up time at least 15 minutes prior to your session, however this may not be possible if there is a session in the timeslot before yours.

Typically, you will have some parents that arrive early and you should aim to be set up and prepared in good time ahead of the first child arriving. You can then focus on providing a warm welcome instead of setting up for your session. Being set up to welcome children and parents also gives you an opportunity for face to face engagement with parents and enhanced 1-2-1 engagement with your participants.

Providing a Warm Welcome

Children and parents alike may be nervous when attending the FFF for the first time and whilst we try to calm any nerves with effective email communications, attending any new group or activity can be nerve-wracking, especially for particularly young children. We put in place a number of measures to provide a warm welcome to everyone attending our Football Fun & Development sessions. Try to ensure each of the following measures are met consistently:

- Set up near the entrance

Whether it's a sports hall door or AstroTurf gate, it's important to be near the entrance for when people arrive. Being positioned near to where parents will congregate will also give you the chance to showcase your superstar coaching abilities right in front of the parents.

Setting up at the far end of the AstroTurf or Sports Hall wouldn't provide a very warm welcome and may add to any nerves or trepidation for new participants.

- Welcome every child by name.

Take pride in knowing every child's name and even parents' names. If you don't know every child's name there are some brilliant subtle ways to find out, which are highlighted in the Football Fun & Development delivery training.

- Have a consistent set up that children and parents become familiar with.

More detail is listed below in the 'session structure' section of this guide. Things such as a safe-zone for water bottles and arrival matches, offer children and parents consistency week to week. When children are attending for the first time you can

take the opportunity to showcase the professionalism of the programme and structure involved. You can achieve this by introducing yourself and other coaches, showing a child where to put their belongings and explaining that each week they will take part in arrival matches. Taking the time to introduce a new participant to the programme and settle them in will impress their parent.

- **Speak to parents**

A simple hello, or perhaps asking how somebody's day has been will go a long way. Part of your role as a Head Coach is to build relationships within your community. Your aim should be that the parents of the children you coach should feel comfortable to speak to you and ask any questions that they may have. Making yourself approachable will also encourage enquiries about birthday parties or younger siblings attending Tots Football Fun.

Building relationships with parents and children will be a key long-term strategy in retaining your weekly training participants.

Safeguarding Measures

As detailed above, having a printed register with all participants listed is key to your safeguarding procedures. As parents arrive with their child it is important to ensure that each child is on the register and that you have the correct contact details for them as well as any relevant medical information given at the time of booking.

There are two common areas of safeguarding risk during your sessions, as follows:

1. **A child needs to go to the toilet during your session**

The procedure for this will depend on the facility you use and the proximity to the nearest toilet. The age of the child in question should also be taken into account when considering how best to deal with the request from a child.

Where possible, a child should be escorted to the toilet by their parent. Failing this children may be sent in pairs. Please refer to our Safeguarding Policy for further guidance.

2. **Children departing the session safely**

Ensuring that children depart safely at the end of each session is very important. The procedure for this is for the Head Coach to facilitate collection at the AstroTurf gates or sports hall doors. This procedure has the added benefit of ensuring a 'grandstand goodbye' and gives parents an opportunity to interact with the Head Coach if they wish to.

Session Structure – Up to 30 Children

Session-Game-Session-Game

The basis of the session is that children take part in a session, followed by a game, followed by a session, then another game. For sessions with more than 12 children you should have 1 assistant coach and deliver a session and game each, before swapping groups and both coaches deliver the same session again with the other group, followed by a match.

See below a rough guide for your 60-minute sessions:

- 0-5 minutes - Arrival matches
- 5-7 minutes – Group introduction
- 7-20 minutes – Session 1
- 20-22 minutes – Drinks break
- 22-30 minutes – Small-sided game (match)
- 30-32 minutes – Drinks break
- 32-45 minutes – Session 2
- 45-47 minutes – Drinks break
- 47-57 minutes – Small-sided game (match)
- 57-60 minutes – Blue Card presentation and departure

Session Structure – 30+ Children

Session- Session-Session-Game

For sessions with more than 30 children you should have the appropriate number of groups and the children should take part in 3 sessions followed by a game.

See below a rough guide for your 60-minute sessions:

- 0-5 minutes - Arrival matches
- 5-7 minutes – Group introduction
- 7-17 minutes – Session 1
- 17-20 minutes – Drinks break
- 20-30 minutes – Small-sided game (match)
- 30-32 minutes – Drinks break
- 32-42 minutes – Session 2
- 42-45 minutes – Drinks break
- 45-57 minutes – Small-sided game (match)
- 57-60 minutes – Blue Card presentation and departure

Flexibility With the Timings

Whilst the above guides offer ideal timings, there are many factors that may affect the timings that you apply to your sessions. For example, whether there are bookings at the facility immediately before or after yours or the size of your group and how many coaches you have delivering the sessions.

The key to getting the session structure right is to apply the use the structures suggested above appropriate to your group size.

Set Up

As detailed above in the 'Preparing for your sessions' section of this guide, it is ideal to arrive at least 30 minutes prior to your session and to be set up and ready before the first child arrives. However, your ability to do this will depend on whether you can access your facility ahead of your session start time.

When setting up your session, it is advised to ensure the following:

- Set up your safety circles

Having a safety circle set out for every child put their water bottles, jumpers etc will help avoid lost property, avoid trip-hazards and showcase your high levels of organisation. It will also help teach children to be responsible for their belongings.

- Have as much of the session set up as possible

During your session, any time that you spend moving cones or other equipment may disrupt your session and affect the timings outlined above. Spending time setting up mid-session will also cause challenges with child management. You may have your pitches set out for matches and sessions set up elsewhere to ensure that you can focus on the delivery of the session for the full 90 minutes. However, your ability to do this will depend on the space available as you may need to set up your sessions on your pitches.

- Use goals instead of cones on your pitches

Each venue will be different in terms of the goals that are available for your small-sided matches. Having a goal to shoot into improves the match experience for the children and it is therefore advised to invest in target goals if your facility does not have enough goals for the required number of pitches.

Putting on a Show

Your aim when delivering all programmes should be to put on a show for the watching parents. Your aim should be to impress parents with you coaching ability, the interaction that you have with their child individually, your passion and enthusiasm for the game and how much you love and care about your role as a FFF Head Coach. There are a number of practical things you can do to put on a show:

Coach in front of the parents

Giving parents a front row view of your coaching sessions demonstrates your confidence in your own ability and allows you to showcase your talent. Parents love watching their child play with a big smile on their face and hearing the positive feedback that our coaches give to their child. At the Football Fun Factory we allow and actively encourage parents to watch the sessions from inside the AstroTurf, which in turn makes them feel part of the experience.

Speak to the children as a group

Calling the children in at the start and end of your sessions and periodically within your sessions showcases your group control and child management. It also builds your position as the leader of the programme.

Make sure you are heard

If there is something you are saying that would impress parents then make sure you are heard! For example, if you take time on a hot evening to talk to the children about hydration then ensure you strategically position yourself in front of the parents. If a particular child deserves individual praise or feedback, are you able to do this within earshot of the parent? This may be more challenging, but these opportunities may arise, depending on the set up and layout of your venue.

Blue Card Presentation

Presenting a Blue Card is a brilliant way to show case the values of the Football Fun Factory and the fact we place greater importance on developing children as young people, than developing footballers! It is an opportunity to impress parents and showcase yourself as an excellent communicator. We advise that you deliver your Blue Card presentation in the following way to ensure that you maximise the opportunity to showcase yourself and the brand:

Present the Blue Card in front of the parents

Call the children in close to where the parents are standing and ensure as much group control as possible. Often as the children are desperate to find out who has won the Blue Card they listen well.

Avoid disappointment

The Blue Card presentation should end the session on a high note. However, some children may be disappointed not to win the award. If not carefully managed the presentation can lead to children leaving the session disappointed. There are several ways to manage children's expectations which are covered in our training modules. One of the best ways is to ask a particular child to stand at the front facing the other children. This suggests to the children in advance of the announcement

who the Blue Card winner is and allows them time to get over any disappointment in time to clap and cheer the child who wins the award.

Advising the children that “everyone will win a Blue Card at some point, as long as everyone keeps trying their best and showcasing a brilliant attitude”.

Encouraging Celebrating Others

A really good tactic to encourage the children to celebrate each other’s success is by giving out a Blue Card based on their reaction to their peers winning the award. You can do this by saying something along the lines of “Tonight I’m giving out 2 Blue Cards. The first goes to Billy who clapped and cheered last week when Ella won the award”. Doing this every few weeks will encourage the children to applaud each other, creating a brilliantly positive end to your training session.

Talk Passionately About Celebrating Great Attitudes

Each week you have an opportunity to reinforce the ethos of the Blue Card reward system. You can do this by talking about how we don’t give out yellow and red card for bad things, but instead present Blue Cards for good things and great attitudes. You can learn some fantastic ‘Power Phrases’ as part of your Football Fun & Development training.

Leaving on a High

Your aim should be that everyone leaves on a high. By standing at the gate/sports hall door you can ensure that you say goodbye to each child and parent. Offering some of the children individual feedback can really impress parents and send them and the child home happy. For example saying “well done tonight Ryan, see you next week”. Each week you can try to target different children so that over the course of a term of training, you can make each child and parent feel special at least once.

Facing Challenges

However well you plan ahead there are some ‘uncontrollables’ that may give you challenges to the quality of your delivery. There may be things you can do to prepare for these challenges and some recommended actions to take if you are faced with each challenge. Each challenge has guidance listed below:

Inclement Weather

We cannot control the weather conditions and for young children in particular, cold evenings or wet weather can affect their enjoyment of the sessions. It is the role of the coaches to add positivity to the session and keep the children as motivated as possible. Coaches can achieve this by:

- Planning sessions that keep the children moving
- Being even more animated than usual in your coaching style
- Encouraging children to keep moving
- Offering even more praise than usual

At the Football Fun Factory we have a phrase that we use to put a positive spin on wet weather conditions. This can be delivered to the children as follows:

“At the Football Fun Factory we call rain ‘perfect football conditions’! When it’s wet the ball skids across the turf and if we need a drink we just put our head back and open our mouths!”.

Session Cancellations

We cannot control the weather conditions and in the event of an unsafe playing surface your session may need to be cancelled. Often this will be the decision of the venue. The main area of concern is ensuring that the parents of the participants are informed in good time. Please refer to the template emails guide for an email to send to the parents. Following this process will help ensure that nobody makes a wasted journey and the best possible communication with parents.

No Access to Your Venue

Most venues will have somebody on site that you can ask to open to facility for you. However, some locations may have somebody that comes specifically to open up at a certain time. In the unlikely event that the keyholder is late your session may be compromised. When you first hire your venue it is advisable to quickly build a good relationship with the facility manager or keyholder and to have a mobile number for them in the event that they do not turn up in time.

In the highly unlikely event that it gets to your session start time and you have no access to the venue you may decide to relocate the session to a nearby grass pitch if there is one and if the time of year/light allows. If this is not possible you may decide to wait to see if the keyholder arrives.