



HOW TO – Deliver Tots Football Fun

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
- A visually inspiring set up
- Providing a warm welcome
- Parental involvement
- Session structure
- Impressing parents
- Safeguarding measures
- Hand stamps & leaving on a high
- Expecting high emotions
- Facing challenges

Preparing for your sessions

Syllabus

Head Coaches have access to an extensive syllabus of Tots Football Fun session plans. You 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. This is particularly relevant for Tots Football Fun as often there are separate sessions or groups for 2-3 year olds and 4-5 year olds.

If you have assistant coaches that deliver alongside you, it is a good idea to 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 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. For the Tots Football Fun programme

there is a range of different things that are useful to support the delivery of your sessions and allow you to deliver the full range of session plans. These include:

- Target goals – As many of the sessions include shooting into goals, having at least 1 set of target goals is advisable. They are also great for the free play element of the session.
- Agility rings – Different coloured agility rings are a fantastic visual that can be used for many of the session plans.
- Ball pit balls – Many of the session plans utilise these balls.
- Bean bags – Many of the session plans utilise bean bags.

Registers

For safeguarding reasons and to deliver the best possible service to children and parents it is advisable to 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 a warm welcome.

Arrival time

It is advisable to arrive for your session at least 30 minutes in advance of your session to allow for the set up time required for your Inflatable Football Pitch. Your aim should be to have your session ready 15 minutes in advance of the session start time. As you will need to set up your inflatable pitch, you may need to arrive at the venue more than 30 minutes in advance as it may take some extra time to unload and transport your inflatable to your sports hall (or other indoor space).

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. As Tots Football Fun sessions often take place early on a weekend mornings, it is likely that you will be able to gain access in good time. When your first make your venue booking for your Tots Football Fun sessions it is important to raise the question of the time that you can access the facility from. If it is clear that you will not be able to access the facility ahead of your booking start time, you may need to consider starting the session at least 15 minutes into your booking timeslot.

Typically, you will have some parents that arrive early and it is ideal 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

The Tots Football Fun programme is unique in the way that parents are often actively involved within the sessions. Children and parents alike may be nervous when

attending for the first time and whilst we try to calm any nerves with effective pre-session email communications, you should expect that some children may not take to the programme straight away. For this reason, we put in place a number of measures to provide a warm welcome to everyone attending our Tots Football Fun sessions. Try to ensure each of the following measures are met consistently:

- Your pitch is inflated, ready for the first child's arrival

Your Inflatable Football Pitch is the exciting visual within your sessions, so make the most of it by having it set up and inflated, ready for the first child to arrive. It would be such a shame for the early arrivals not to feel the same sense of excitement as those arriving a few minutes later.

- Set up near the entrance

In larger facilities such as sports halls, it is important to set up your session near the entrance. If your Inflatable Pitch is set up at the far end of the sports hall it can be a nerve-wracking walk and can feel less welcoming. By set up near the entrance it means that you personally are near the entrance and can be the friendly face that welcomes children and parents as they arrive.

- 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 Tots Football Fun 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. The set up should be your inflatable pitch, filled with fun and exciting visual equipment. This can be whatever you choose but is often made up of sponge footballs, giant footballs, cones, bibs and goals. 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 explaining that the first 10 minutes of the session is free-play.

- 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 older siblings attending your Football Fun & Development programmes.

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

Parental Involvement

Typically, children aged 2-3 will require full 1-2-1 support from a parent or family member and children aged 4-5 will be a little more independent. However, there are no rules around this. The level of parental involvement may also depend on the task that the children are taking part in.

Parents can sometime be a little nervous or unsure about their own involvement in the sessions. For this reason we have a template email communication that is sent to parents prior to their first session with the Football Fun Factory. This communication includes information on the involvement of parents within our tots sessions. It is your job to reinforce these messages face to face at the sessions. Your guidance should be presented along the lines of the below:

“You are welcome to be as involved in the sessions as you see fit. You are welcome to support your child 1-2-1 and equally, if you feel that your child may benefit from you taking a step back, you are welcome to do so”.

Without clear guidance parents are often reluctant to enter the Inflatable Pitch or will just conform with what everyone else is doing. If no parents enter the pitch, parents can be nervous of being the only one to do so. It is your job to continually invite parents in to support their child, whilst showing your appreciation that they may not wish to.

Session Structure

See below a guide for your 45-minute sessions:

- 0-10 minutes – Free-play
- 10-12 minutes – Group introduction
- 12-22 minutes – Session 1
- 22-24 minutes – Drinks break
- 24-34 minutes – Session 2
- 34-36 minutes – Drinks break
- 36-44 minutes – Match-play or similar activity
- 44-45 minutes – Hand Stamps and departure

Whilst the above guide offers ideal timings, there are many factors that may affect the timings that you apply to your sessions. Not least, how well the children have taken to the task you set them.

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:

- Make it visually appealing

The excitement a child feels when walking into your facility and seeing the Inflatable Pitch is what makes the Tots Football Fun programme so fantastic. Putting lots of visually inspiring equipment inside the pitch adds to the excitement each week.

- Hold something back

As the first 10 minutes of the session is free-play, it's advisable to hold back some extra equipment to mix up this 10 minutes. For example, you may start with sponge footballs and target goals inside the pitch, then add your giant footballs after 5 minutes.

- Use target goals

Children love scoring goals, especially children aged 2-5! So having some target goals inside the pitch will give more children the chance to do this.

Impressing Parents

Delivering the Tots Football Fun programme is a real skill and once honed, you'll be able to really impress parents with your delivery. Because of the age of the children, parents are often blown away by the programme as it's their child's first football experience. There are a number of ways that you can impress parents within your Tots Football Fun delivery:

- Sit down with the children and parents at the start of the session

Whilst the programme is about the children learning basic football techniques, learning the structure involved in being part of a group is also a big part of the programme. Sitting down with the children at the start of each session is a great way to showcase your passion and enthusiasm for the programme and add some structure.

- Use numbers and colours

Children aged 2-5 take pride in learning things like numbers and colours and showcasing what they know. Asking what colour a ball is or counting the number of goals is a great way to add an educational element to your sessions.

- Celebrate success

Encourage children to celebrate the goals they score by cheering and clapping. Praise and encourage the children's efforts throughout.

Safeguarding measures

Having a printed register with all participants listed is key to your safeguarding procedures. The Tots Football Fun programme is a little easier than Football Fun & Development in terms of safeguarding as the children are often in the 1-2-1 care of their parents. Toilet breaks tend not to be an issue as parents simply escort their child to the toilet.

The main safeguarding measure to ensure is that children depart the session safely with their parents. One consideration is making sure that you know when parents leave with their child. Due to the age of the participants there may be occasions where a child leaves early. To ensure that you know when this happens it is advisable to ask parents to notify you if they are planning to leave. You can then also ensure that you get to say goodbye and you know that they have gone home safely.

Expect High Emotions

With such young participants you should expect high emotions within your sessions. New participants may be very nervous and even cry and there may often be tears for any injuries. It is common for children to get upset due a lack of understanding of the rules. For example, when they are tackled in a game.

In these situations the parent will often take care of the child. Your role will be simply to show compassion and understanding.

It is likely that there will be children that dip in and out of the sessions and sometime don't even join in at all. In this circumstance you should encourage the child, without pressuring them to join in. You should explain to parents that this is perfectly normal and that it sometimes takes a number of week before a child full joins in with the programme.

Hand Stamps and Leaving on a High

The best way to ensure that children leave on a high is by giving everyone a Football Fun Factory stamp on their hand at the end of the session. Children tend to love this part of the session and take huge amounts of pride in their stamp!

Due to the age of the children there are often tears, tantrums and challenges. However, a hand stamp can be the answer to all of these challenges and can often quickly turn tears into smiles!