



Creating Positive Environments Toolkit



Objectives

- The *Let Them Play* initiative is focused on fostering a positive, inclusive, and respectful environment for youth football in Scotland.
- This toolkit provides guidance, strategies, and resources to support clubs, coaches, parents, officials and players.



Content

- *Let Them Play* is designed to make youth football more enjoyable for players and safer for match officials.
- Built into the association's [Player Journey Strategy](#), which nurtures participants “from 5 to 95 years of age”.
- The campaigns bring a fresh focus on enjoyment, equal opportunities and positive sideline behaviour.

“Let Them Play is about giving young players freedom to express themselves, solve problems and fall in love with the game.”

-Andy Gould, Chief Football Officer





Resources

Get Involved: Help us Let Them Play



You can make a real difference in creating positive football experiences for young players.

Over the next few months, we will be sharing a series of films, aimed at showcasing good practice and tackling poor sideline behaviour head-on. We encourage you to share these when they are published.

We also recommend use of this toolkit and the resources contained within at training, festivals and matchdays.

Together, we can build an environment where young people play, learn and build a life—long love the game.

Sideline Guidelines

You can help make football the best part of a young person's day. We encourage you to follow the *Sideline Guidelines* and share them with all stakeholders at your club.

The graphics below are available to download by [clicking here](#).



Videos

The *Let Them Play* film series delivers a clear message: football should be fun, inclusive, and focused on the child's experience, not the scoreboard.

The Team Talk reminds parents to take a step back and support positively from the sidelines.

The Journey shows how pre-match and post-match conversations can make or break a child's love for the game.

The Game and *The Festival* highlight the value of creating friendly, flexible environments where every player gets the chance to play and enjoy themselves. Together, these films encourage adults to build a culture that helps young players thrive and stay in the game for life.

Key Messages from the Films:

- **The Team Talk:** Let the coaches coach and the referees referee — parents should focus on positive encouragement.
- **The Journey:** The car ride matters—swap pressure and criticism for support and have fun messages.
- **The Game:** Focus on enjoyment over instruction—keep formats flexible and fun to maintain participation.
- **The Festival:** Promote inclusivity, respect, and equal playtime — make football about friendship and learning.

[The videos are available to download here.](#)

Suggested social media copy

- Football is for fun, not pressure. Let's create positive sidelines! #LetThemPlay
- Support, don't shout. Encourage kids to enjoy the game and learn. #LetThemPlay
- Coaches coach, referees referee and supporters support! Together, we can make football better for everyone. #LetThemPlay
- It's not about the score, it's about smiles. Let's keep the game fun! #LetThemPlay
- One message, one mission: Let Them Play. Be part of the change. #LetThemPlay
- If they've had fun, they've already won. Help make football the best part of a young person's day, by letting them enjoy the game. #LetThemPlay

Touchline Behaviour Module

An online learning module has been created to educate coaches, parents and participants of the effect that poor behaviour has not just on the referees but on players and participants too.

While the course isn't mandatory, we strongly encourage all participants in the grassroots game to take the online course.

You can take the course here:

<https://scottishfa.thewhistle.academy/touchline-behaviour-reg-form/>

Scottish Grassroots Football WhatsApp Channel

The Scottish Grassroots Football WhatsApp channel is a channel available to join where we will share resources, updates, news and more dedicated to supporting people involved in grassroots football.

We strongly encourage you to join and to forward content from the channel to your own WhatsApp groups for your clubs, teams and parents.

You can join the channel [HERE](#).





Matchday Checklist

Checklist

As part of the over all initiative we are asking all teams to have the following at all games, which should become part of the Matchday Checklist, like having footballs, strips, checking the nets etc.

All clubs are asked to have the following in place before each game:

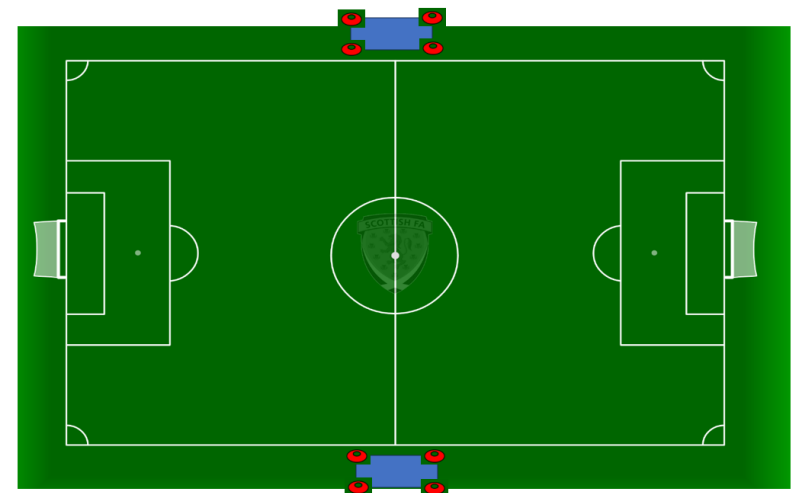
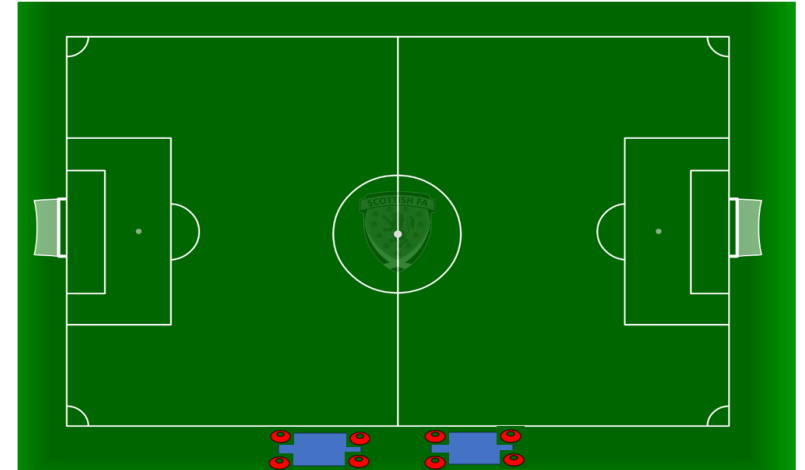
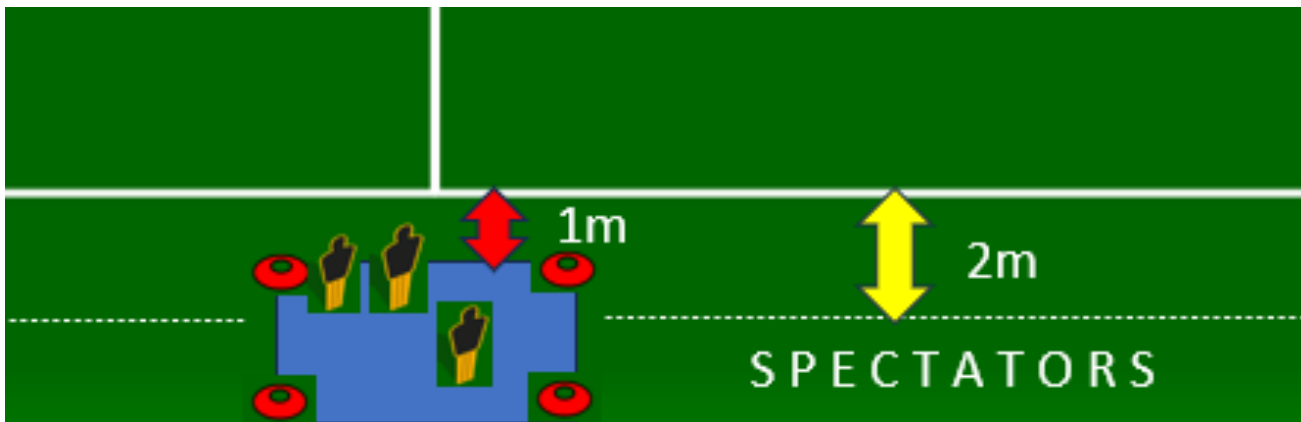
- **Designated technical area:** All teams should adopt a technical area at the side of the pitch that only team officials can occupy. This will help manage coaching behaviour and prevent unnecessary encroachments onto the field of play.
- **Spectator distance from the pitch:** All spectators should be positioned at least two meters back from the sideline. This measure aims to reduce crowd influence on officials and players, fostering a safer and more controlled environment.

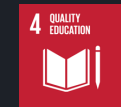


Technical Areas

Technical areas should be:

- Side by side or opposite on sides of the pitch.
- One metre back from pitch, with spectators two metres back.
- Only registered team officials and players should be in the technical area.
- The size of the technical area should be 4 metres x 2 metres and out marked by cones.
- Flexible, where local facilities dictate.





**LET
THEM
REF**



Let Them Ref

We all have a role to champion respect for referees at every level of the game. *Let Them Ref* is the complimentary campaign to *Let Them Play*.

It is aimed at improving behaviour on the sidelines and on the pitch, specifically targeting the way in which we interact with referees.

As well as the *Let Them Play* videos and graphics, there are assets within this toolkit to support this initiative.

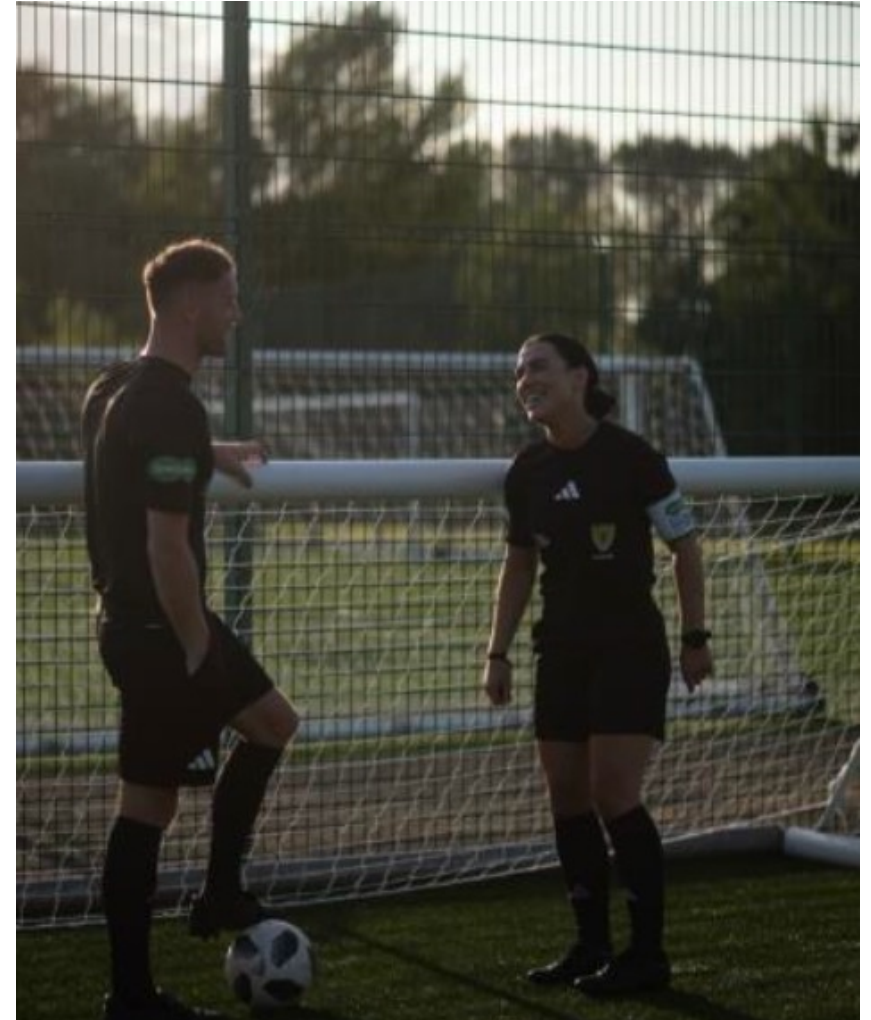
This section of the toolkit provides guidance, strategies, and resources to support clubs, coaches, parents and players in how to interact with referees and create a positive environment for officials.



Support for young referees

In order to improve behaviour on the sidelines and increase respect towards match officials, the Scottish FA Referee Operations Department have agreed that at all matches:

- **Only the Captain Speaks to the Referee at key moments in the match.** This will help reduce instances of dissent and create a more respectful atmosphere on the pitch. This approach has been successful in the professional game.
- **Designated Technical Area:** All teams should adopt a technical area at the side of the pitch that only team officials can occupy. This will help manage coaching behaviour and prevent unnecessary encroachments onto the field of play.
- **Spectator Distance from the Pitch:** All spectators should be positioned at least two metres back from the sideline. This measure aims to reduce crowd influence on officials and players, fostering a safer and more controlled environment.



Support for young referees

- **Support for Young Referees:** Newly qualified referees or those under the age of 18 will wear an armband to indicate their status, and clubs will be required to appoint a designated Referee Liaison Officer as a 'safe person' to support them. This informs all participants that any inappropriate behaviour will be dealt with under Child Protection Procedures.
- **Touchline Behaviour Module:** An online learning module has been created to educate coaches, parents and participants of the effect that poor behaviour has not just on the referees but on players and participants too.
- **Post-match survey:** To allow the Scottish FA to monitor behavior at all matches, referees will fill out the a questionnaire around compliance with Let Them Play guidance as part of their post-match administration.



Referee Liaison Officer

The role of the Referee Liaison Officer (RLO) is to:

- Act as a support for the referee before, during and after the match.
- Ensure referee's payment is made.
- Be point of contact for any issues with the teamline before commencement of the match.
- Liaise with the referee in relation to player concerns and welfare.
- Liaise with the referee in relation to sideline and coaching infringements.
- Provide sideline crowd control throughout the match.
- Act as the sideline official during the fixture to facilitate control of the sideline.



Downloadable Resources

A full suite of assets for both *Let Them Play* and *Let Them Ref* is [available to download by clicking HERE.](#)

Assets include:

- Images
- Graphics
- Videos
- To join the Scottish Football Grassroots WhatsApp channel, [click HERE.](#)

