



THE WFA GUIDE TO SETTING UP & RUNNING A WALKING FOOTBALL CLUB



The WFA is the national governing body for walking football in the UK



Sponsored and created in collaboration with





WHAT IS WALKING FOOTBALL?

Walking football is different to regular association football in many ways and is aimed at the **over 50's age group**, and many tournaments are now catering exclusively for the **over 60's age group**.

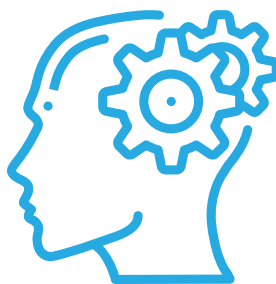
All running is banned, instead players briskly walk through matches and zero physical contact is permitted between players. To ensure that the sport is played safely for the participants' age, the ball is not permitted to travel above head height and all free kicks must be indirect. Teams are either 5 or 6-a-side and are often played on state of the art 3G artificial grass pitches.

As a result of these rules, games are played at a slower pace which reduces the threat of pain, discomfort and injury. This means that both those who have loved the sport all their lives and those who have never considered playing football before **can get involved safely**.

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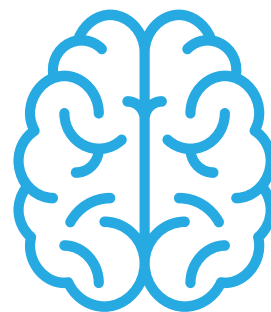
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MENTAL WELLBEING



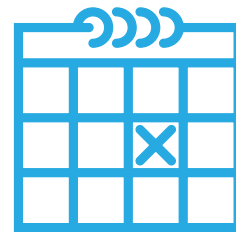
43%
OF PLAYERS
IMPROVED
MENTAL
WELLBEING

BOOST
MEMORY
AND
DECISION
MAKING



96%
FELT OPTIMISTIC
OFTEN OR
ALL THE TIME

HIGHLIGHT
OF THE
WEEK



BIGGEST
BUZZ
IN YEARS

SWITCH
OFF
FROM LIFE



INTRODUCTION

Walking football has become increasingly popular since it was created by John Croot in Chesterfield in 2011. There are now over 1500 clubs in the UK, with more than 60,000 players enjoying this unique sport. Internationally it is now played in over 40 countries across all continents.

Walking football is a new bespoke non-contact sport created for the older generation, with very simple age-appropriate rules which prioritise health and safety.

People who play have seen many **physical, mental and social benefits** including lower heart rate and blood pressure, weight loss, more energy and better mobility.

Participants can make friends, escape from isolation and interact regularly with individuals and small groups.

This is a sporting activity that is suitable for all participants over the age 50 of both genders and all skill levels, including those who have been inactive for some time, or even have never played sport before.

SOCIAL WELLBEING.....



SUPPORTIVE PEER NETWORK
92% **FEEL TOGETHERNESS**

SHARE A COMMON GOAL!

HAVE A LAUGH
JOIN IN THE BANTER
FEEL WELCOMED

FEEL CLOSE TO OTHERS OFTEN OR ALL THE TIME

PHYSICAL WELLBEING.....



IMPROVED BREATHING

MORE ENERGETIC

MORE FLEXIBLE STRONGER MUSCLES

HELP LONG TERM HEALTH CONDITIONS AND INJURY RECOVERY

HEALTH BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL

Walking football offers a multitude of health benefits to older people, including reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and strokes. It promotes positive changes in postural balance, blood pressure, cholesterol, resting heart rate, blood sugar levels and bone density, all of which are indicators of general good health.

Walking football is an excellent way of staying fit and healthy – studies have shown it can be effective in the treatment of mild to moderate hypertension, and it can produce high aerobic activity with marked improvements in fat oxidation and aerobic power. It is good exercise, yet the levels of stress and exertion while playing are lower with traditional football.

Importantly benefits are felt whilst having fun, which makes people far more likely to exercise rather than perhaps just seeing it as chore.

There are also many psychological and mental health advantages to playing walking football

as participants experience high levels of personal reward and satisfaction. Walking football gives an often isolated section of the community the chance to become involved in something they really enjoy, make new friends and generally increase their overall quality of life.

Older people can also get involved with walking football off the pitch. They can sit on the club management committee, be a team manager, take part in administrative activities, organise fixtures or even just be involved in a social capacity for the good company and friendship. All these things can help to keep older people mentally active and give their lives a very real sense of purpose and belonging, the value of which cannot be overstated.

Many of us struggle as we get older with our balance, strength, stamina, weight and worst of all confidence and self-esteem levels. Walking football can make a significant impact by building body strength, improving muscles, core stability and hopefully losing some of the weight usually gained during the ageing process, as well as boosting self-confidence and self-esteem.



BASIC RULES

While there are no universal rules of walking football, these guidelines set out the basic rules of play.

For more detailed guidance on the rules of play, please see [Helpful links](#) page.

- Any running or jogging will usually result in an indirect free kick.
- Non-contact.
- Above head height restriction on ball.
- Deflection above head height by goalkeeper – ball retained by keeper.
- No heading the ball.
- All free kicks indirect.
- Whistle stops and resumes play – no quick free kicks.
- No direct goal from kick-off or any dead ball situation.
- All free kicks have defenders 3-metres distant.
- Players may not play the ball whilst grounded – to include slide tackling and slide blocks.
- Cornering a player is not permitted – allow opponent to turn.
- No 2 versus 1 tackling at barriers/wall.
- No tackling across an opponent at a wall/barrier.
- Playing with reckless or dangerous intent is an infringement.
- One-step penalty kicks.
- No restriction on passing back or out from the goalkeeper.
- Sin bin time out for three either same or different infringements.
- Zero tolerance on abusive conduct towards the referee.



FACILITIES

The facilities and size of the pitch available at each walking football venue will vary. Walking football can be played indoors or outdoors, but please note that if the pitch is too big the benefits of walking football would be lost whereas if the pitch is too small there will not be enough room to have a meaningful game. As walking football should be a slower game, you preferably need a pitch which has somewhere for players to rest when the ball goes out of play.

The ideal surface is 3G or 4G artificial grass, with touchlines rather than boards. Try to find a venue with facilities for refreshments as the social aspect of walking football is one of the key benefits for players and as such having tea or coffee, etc. after the game is very valuable. Ideally look for a venue where you can keep the cost down for members – typical costs range from £3 - £5 per hour. The facility needs to have emergency first aid equipment and a defibrillator.

The usual team size for walking football is 6 versus 6. However, it depends on how many players turn up – groups usually play in teams of either 5, 6, 7 or 8, and the players will be able to judge if there are too many players on each team. As your session grows in numbers, you might want to consider 3 teams with shorter ‘round robin’ games, or roll on, roll off substitutes, or even a second pitch or second time slot. As clubs grow, they often develop different sections, for example over 50s, over 60s, over 65s, disability, ladies, etc. It all depends on the size of your membership and the facilities you have available.

EQUIPMENT

The basic equipment you will need is:

- **2 goal posts.**



- **Plenty of bibs.** Your numbers could grow quickly. You will only need 2 colours to start with, but this can change over time.



- **Footballs.** Most groups use a size 5 football. Take a few footballs so that time is not wasted if you kick a ball outside of the fence, for example.



- **A whistle.** It is beneficial to have a whistle as you might find one of your group wants to referee or might be injured and cannot play, but can still be a part of your session.



PLAYERS

Walking football is 'traditionally' seen as a game for over 50s but strict age restrictions might exclude other potential participants, such as:

- Players in their late 40s with health issues.
- Younger players returning from injury.
- Referrals from health care providers.

Some players may not have kicked a ball for years, and as a result they probably won't have shin pads, boots and a full kit. Players can wear anything they feel comfortable in, and if they turn up in week 1 in jeans and a t-shirt and they are happy playing football in them, then that's absolutely fine. This is recreational football so players should be able to wear whatever they're comfortable in and as the players attend more sessions, they will probably buy more appropriate kit. If you want to enter your team into any competitive football, you will need to buy or get a sponsor for a proper kit.



HEALTH & SAFETY

- Footwear should be worn that is appropriate to the playing surface.
- Players should bring any injury or medical condition to the attention of the organiser.
- Players should warm up before playing.
- Goals should be weighted down.
- Any concerns with equipment or facilities should be reported to the venue.

FIRST AID

A good warm up and warm down will help to prevent injuries. However, a qualified First Aider should be present at each session, together with a first aid kit and defibrillator.

SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding the safety and health of the players is important. It is essential that player details are collected, with any health issues, medication and emergency contact numbers.

Safeguarding also includes the wellbeing of players during the session, ensuring that the rules regarding 'zero contact' are followed and that the facility is checked and safe. If playing outdoors, inclement weather conditions need to be taken into consideration.

The club should have policies in place as follows:

- Safeguarding policy
- Vulnerable adults policy



ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

When trying to attract new players, focus on the social, mental and physical benefits of walking football:

- Meeting new people.
- Being part of a team.
- Getting out in the fresh air.
- Exercising to stay fit and healthy – both physically and mentally.
- Boosting self-esteem and confidence.
- Keeping active in semi or full retirement.
- Reliving younger sporting days, but in a slower and safer environment.

Or

- Trying something completely new.

Remember, the vast majority of people play walking football for fun, friendship and fitness, rather than for competitive tournaments. New players may not have played for some time and may be very nervous about joining you – they might need to be encouraged to watch first and then join in when they feel ready.

PROMOTING YOUR CLUB

- Ask your local football team or club if they would be happy to promote your walking football sessions.
- Talk to your county FA as they will often have resources to support and encourage recreational football.
- Use local newsletters and noticeboards as a quick, cheap and simple way of getting your message out there.
- Get in touch with your local press and radio – they are often very keen to promote health and well-being stories.
- Speak to other local walking football clubs – they might be at bursting point and keen to help new clubs.
- Word of mouth is often the best promotion – players will often bring friends with them.
- Social media can be great for attracting new members, as well as organising teams and tournaments, etc.



NEW PARTICIPANTS PROCEDURE

Both the facilitator and players should be approachable, flexible in their approach and able to welcome all abilities to create a friendly atmosphere for the players.

No football-related qualifications are necessary, but the facilitator should be able to engage with the players and facilitate the session in a safe, fun and friendly way.

All new participants should be asked to complete the Health Declaration form (please see Helpful links), and the new players should be introduced to the group and have the basic laws explained to them.

As not everyone will enjoy walking football, it is advisable to let new players attend a few sessions before talking about payment.

If you run more than one session, it is also important to assess which session is suitable. It might be that your session is not suitable for some reason and that you can recommend the player to another local club or facility that is.

PLAYING THE GAME

The majority of walking football will be played at your local facility, and you might have an open or inclusive session in which everyone is welcome of all ages and abilities on a 'pay and play' basis.

Some clubs will operate in a different way if they have a range of sessions catering for the diverse needs and abilities of different groups of people.

Walking football is supposed to be a slower version of the beautiful game - so no running or physical contact and the ball should be kept below head height. No other complicated rules are required. But in certain circumstances such as a low number of players, it might be appropriate to use rules including 3 touch, rush goal-keepers, only scoring in your opposition half.

In all circumstances, walking football is best played with a smile on your face and some banter. The fewer touches a player has, the less the chance of getting tackled. Moving the ball around the pitch, keeping possession and creating space is the best advice on how to play and enjoy the game of walking football.



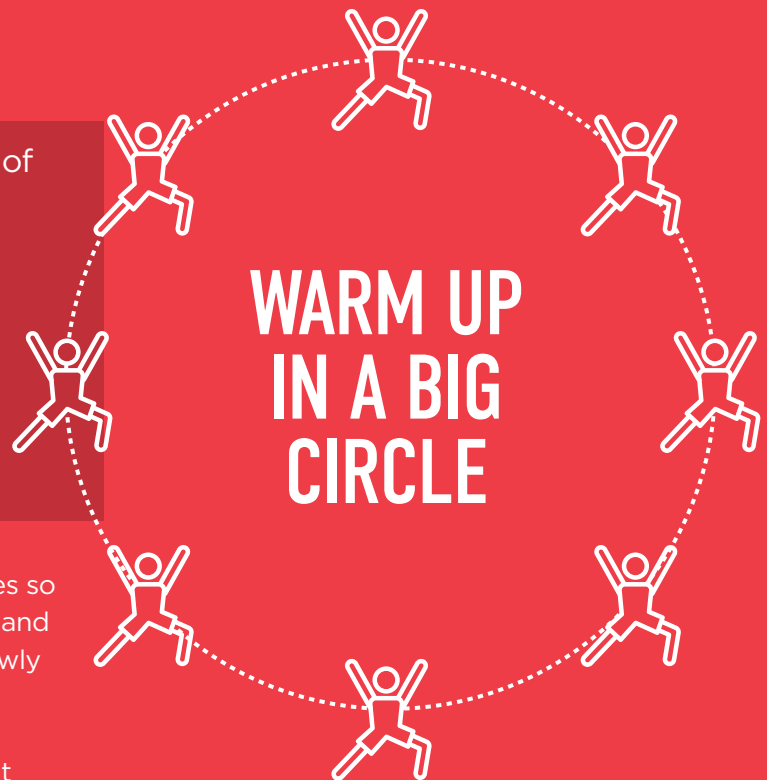
WARM UP

Warming up is vital and it is one of the most important parts of the session so that risk of injury is reduced and you can prepare everyone for the game. Many of your members will have played football in the past and will be familiar with warm-up drills.

Introduce walking and dynamic stretches so that their muscles are ready for activity and more importantly to help their heart slowly prepare for physical activity. Walking is probably the most simple and effective activity to introduce to the warm up, but when carrying out dynamic stretches, encourage players to work in pairs and lean on each other for support if needed.

It is important to remember the players are not professionals and while they need to stretch effectively, they don't need to complete a professional warm-up and may not be able to stretch their legs as far as you'd like them to. Include stretching in a fun, enjoyable way and be patient! An example warm up routine is below.

1. Shoulder rolls with elbows. Shake out arms one by one.
2. Walking from foot to foot, pressing into big toes so ankles don't roll.
3. Press up on one foot and roll ankle. Repeat on other foot.
4. Walking to middle on tip toes and then back out.
5. Come in closer into circle so arms round each other and lift one knee then other (using each other for balance). Repeat focusing on using core to lift knees.
6. Calf raises in circle (still holding on to each other to help balance). Up on tip toes and down.
7. One big step back and repeat the above knee lifts and calf raises without the support of each other for balance.
8. Take a few more steps back to bigger circle. Quick walking races into centre of circle turn and slow walk back.
9. Sideways walk to centre and back out.
10. Side crab walks, in squat, back to starting position. Into centre and back.
11. Knee/hip openings – 'open the gate and close the gate'.
12. Heel kicks walking into circle, quick walks back.
13. In smaller circle with arms around each other – leg swings.
14. Step back – individual stretching.
15. Keepers warm each other up – teams with a ball pass and follow.



WARM DOWN

After your session, get players to do static stretches so they cool down and don't feel too sore the next morning. One of the most valuable parts of the session is the social interaction afterwards – encourage players to stay for a drink, chat and have a laugh about the game.



1. Ankle circles as in warm up.
2. Calf, quad, hamstring stretches in circle holding onto a neighbour for support!
3. Roll downs for spine.
4. Head and neck releases standing.
5. Spine twists lying on back arms wide.
6. All fours (hands and knees) cat and cow stretches, child's pose.
7. Standing together shake out arms, legs, etc.



FUNDING

Walking football clubs normally have a strong case for receiving funding due to the proven physical, mental health and social benefits.

The WFA is happy to advise affiliated clubs on how to apply for these funds.

Listed below are the prime sources of potential funding:

- The Big Lottery Fund small grants of up to £10,000 www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
- Sport England small grants of up to £10,000 www.sportengland.org/funding/small-grants/
- Local council specific funds are often made available to encourage activity. Contact the council to see what is available. For example: www.activenorfolk.org/funding
- Charities - Numerous charities fund local schemes. For example: www.spacehive.com/Profile/Better/funds/BetterCommunitiesFund or www.postcodetrust.org.uk/Government
- Check out the fund finder www.gov.uk/apply-funding-community-project

GENERAL ADVICE

Finding the right funding is a challenge all walking football clubs face. Successful applications do not happen by accident and there are some useful steps you can follow.

- Many applications fail because groups complete the application without reading the guidelines first. Make sure you are eligible and have answered all of the funder's questions.
- Evidence that your project is needed. You will need the right data to make your case and you may have to do consultations to show that people really need this service or activity.
- Be clear about the project or service you are offering. It is vital to explain in simple terms what you want to do.
- Do your sums – a well thought out budget is important and needs to be realistic. Know what you will achieve, for who and by when.



INSURANCE

The WFA have negotiated an excellent insurance package for walking football clubs at great rates with insurance broker Mead Sports and Leisure.

We strongly advise that clubs consider the importance of taking out cover for public and professional liability as well as personal accident.

The Mead Walking Football Insurance Package includes:

- Public and Products Liability to a limit of £5,000,000
- Directors and Officers Liability to a limit of £500,000
- Professional Liability to £1,000,000
- Cyber cover to £100,000

PLUS:

Personal Accident Insurance to £30,000 Death & Permanent Total Disablement and £30 per week contribution to Loss of Earnings (28 day Excess)

Options available on application

Premiums start at £100.00 including 12% Insurance Premium Tax

All subject to 2018 Policy Terms & Conditions (available on application)

For further details, please go to www.sportsinsurancemead.com/walking-football

THE WFA

Aims & Purposes:

The company's purpose is to promote and facilitate the playing of walking football as a unique amateur sport in all parts of the United Kingdom for the purpose of recreation, physical exercise and competition.

Mission:

Raise the profile of walking football as a unique amateur sport throughout England, promote participation in the sport, inspiring activity, seeking to have an impact on physical and mental wellbeing, and maintain a high standard of competitive play leading to success on the national and international stage.

The Walking Football Association

- Launched in December 2016
- The only National Governing Body (NGB) for walking football.
- Inspiring safe and social activity.
- Run by active passionate playing WF aficionados.
- Registered as a "not-for-profit" company.
- Signed up to the SRA Voluntary Code of Governance.
- Key priorities include the eradication of running and the reduction of the over physicality currently in the sport, and the establishment of specialist WFA referees.

REFEREES

One of our priorities is to create a properly trained and accredited team of referees.

This initiative is a crucial element of our plans to eradicate running, and to reduce the physicality problems currently being experienced.

Our intensive theory and practical course has been devised by experienced players and referees. It has been endorsed by former Premier League referee Uriah Rennie.

Training courses are run monthly. If you would like to be amongst the elite team of WFA qualified referees please contact: wfarefereesadmin@thewfa.co.uk

You do not need to be an FA qualified referee, but ideally you will be a regular and enthusiastic walking football player. There will be no upper age limit. Male and female applications are welcome.

The WFA will provide post qualification support in the form of assessments, mentoring and coaching.

WFA REFEREE STRUCTURE

Strategic Oversight/Governance

(Paul Carr)

WFA Referee Academy

(Bill Goreham & Dick Plowman)

Design

- Curriculum
- Training materials
- Teaching aids
- Referee newsletter

Update

- Laws of the game

Provide Courses for

- (National) trainers
- Regional mentors
- Tournament referees
- Club Referees

Oversee

- Club referees

Other Responsibilities

- Disciplinary panel

WFA Referee Operations

(John Garrett, Nigel Genner & Alan Rose)

Allocate referees for

- International matches
- National finals

Assess & Develop

- International referees
- Tournament referees

Establish & Maintain

- International referee list
- Tournament referee list



NATIONAL SQUAD

The WFA have recently appointed an England Management Team for over 50s and over 60s - Paul Murtagh is the over 50s Manager and Stuart Langworthy is the over 60s Manager, and a series of 4 trials have taken place around the country to establish a squad at both ages. Scouts have been appointed in various geographical areas and other players will be observed at tournaments and competitions, in an ongoing process of spotting and selecting the best players to represent the national team with a similar process taking place in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. A European Championship was held in the UK in 2019 and a World Cup is planned for 2020. If your club has an outstanding player who you believe is worthy of consideration, please contact the WFA to arrange for the player to be considered.



THE BENEFITS OF AFFILIATION TO THE WFA

FT Affiliate (Full Tournament) - £40

- ✓ Monthly newsletter.
- ✓ Access to WFA qualified referees.
- ✓ Mitre discount.
- ✓ Free advice on best practice.
- ✓ Free advice on funding opportunities.
- ✓ The right to supply players to the national side.
- ✓ The right to use the WFA logo on website, marketing material and shirts.
- ✓ Priority discounted tickets to WF Euros and WF Word Cup when hosted in the UK.
- ✓ Clubs gain free entry for 2 teams (each age category) to the national tournaments - worth £30.
- ✓ Affiliation fee billed automatically every 12 months.



WALKING FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION TRAINING & COACHING DEVELOPMENT

Grassroots Training Days

- Various warm up activities
- Clarification on rules
- Fun games



Coaching Workshops

- How to run a successful walking football club
- Classroom activities
- Group discussions
- Clarification of rules
- Demonstrations of warm ups
- Demonstration of training sessions
- Opportunity to lead warm up activities



Walking Football Presentations

- How was walking football invented?
- Benefits of walking football
- Development of walking football



HELPFUL LINKS

- WFA Health Disclaimer & Registration form - www.thewfa.co.uk/resource/
- Example Poster / Flyer - www.thewfa.co.uk/resource/
- The Laws of the Game - www.thewfa.co.uk/rules
- Example Action Plan - www.thewfa.co.uk/resource/
- To sign up to our newsletter go to www.thewfa.co.uk/



THE WFA NATIONAL CUP



- Established 2014
- The world's oldest, largest and most prestigious walking football tournament.

Pictured above are the brilliant winners of the 2018 Cup

- OVER 50s - LEGGY MAMBOS
- OVER 60s - WATFORD
- OVER 65s - CLEVEDON
- OVER 70s - PORTSMOUTH



PROSTATE CANCER UK & THE WALKING FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

Prostate Cancer UK and the Walking Football Association work together to raise awareness and funds to help beat prostate cancer.

Many people are unaware that prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men. It's a huge issue that cannot be ignored.

One man will die from prostate cancer every 45 minutes in the UK. That's over 11,000 men a year.

Based on current trends, if we ignore prostate cancer and do nothing, this number will rise to over 14,5000 men a year by 2026.



To find out more about please contact football@prostatecancer.co.uk

Show your support and get a Prostate Cancer UK 'Man of Men' pin badge to wear with pride, text BADGE to 70004 to donate £5* and help stop prostate cancer being a killer. For more info about the badge and the charity's work in football visit

www.prostatecanceruk.org/whostheman

* Text costs £5 plus network charge. Prostate Cancer UK receives 100% of your donation. Obtain bill payers permission.

Customer care 0800 082 1616

Charity No. 1005541

Helping more men survive prostate cancer and enjoy a better quality of life.

CHASING THE STIGMA



THE WFA AND CHASING THE STIGMA JOIN FORCES TO SUPPORT MENTAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

www.hubofhope.co.uk

www.chasingthestigma.co.uk



Putting you in the driving seat on the road to your retirement



- Lifetime mortgages are helping more and more over 55s finance their retirement
- To see if it could be the right option for you, contact an independent financial adviser

www.pureretirement.co.uk

#PureEmpowerment

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Sponsored and created in collaboration with



Providing solutions for your future

www.pureretirement.co.uk



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