

### The benefits of small sided games:

Recent studies undertaken by a plethora of football (soccer) institutions in the US and abroad have highlighted the benefit of children being engaged in a variety of small sided games.

#### Technical Development:

The following statistics evidence why small sided (4x4) as opposed to 8v8 – 11v11 games are now being advocated by and utilized in the best development programs in the world.

Table 1: Manchester United Pilot Scheme: Source FA Insight

	Number Of Passes	Scoring attempts	Goals	1 v 1 Encounter	Dribbling opportunities
2 Goal Game	<b>177</b>	44	18	51	39
Line Ball Game	160		<b>37</b>	56	<b>58</b>
GK Game	149	49	17	<b>92</b>	36
4 Goal Game	106	<b>62</b>	28	52	45
8 v 8 Game	<b>108</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>16</b>

It is clear that no single game holds the highest totals. Instead each game offers opportunities to excel in different areas, something the 8 v 8 structure simply does not do. What is evident is that the 8 v 8 format offers less opportunity for individual technical development 100% of the time when compared to small sided practices.

On **AVERAGE** 4v4 games vs 8v8 had:

- 135% more passes
- 260% more scoring attempts
- 500% more goals
- 225% more 1 v 1 encounters
- 280% more dribbling opportunities

In an effort to further justify the use of small sided games, an overview of results attained from the Scottish Football Association's research (Small, 2006) will be offered. This study found the following:

Table 2: Findings from Small's (2006) small sided games study of young players in Scotland

	Average touches per game	Average individual touches per game	Average touches per minute	Attempted 1 v 1's	Total Goals	Attempted Passes	Total time with the ball out of play (mins)
4 v 4	<b>917</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>3.2</b>
7 v 7	769	55	1.4	79	11	241	5
11 v 11	<b>489</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0.74</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>13.1</b>

These results comprehensively highlight that small sided as opposed to larger numbered team games are more conducive to a child's technical development. They are offered more opportunities to practice refine and execute key technical skills along with being more involved in the games as a whole. Further to this, they have more opportunities to play/practice given the ball is in play far more often during 4 v 4 games.