



# THE WFA GUIDE TO PLAYING WALKING FOOTBALL



The WFA is the national governing body for Walking Football in England



Sponsored and created in collaboration with





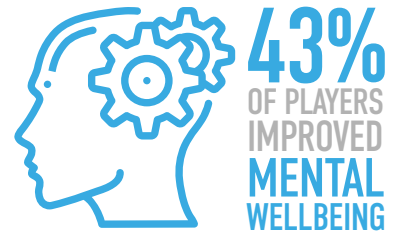


FUN, FRIENDSHIP AND FITNESS

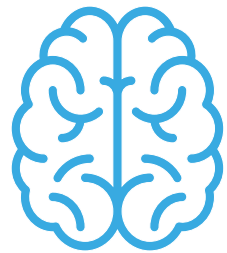
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## MENTAL WELLBEING

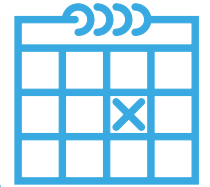


BOOST  
MEMORY  
AND  
DECISION  
MAKING



**96%**  
FELT OPTIMISTIC  
OFTEN OR  
ALL THE TIME

HIGHLIGHT  
OF THE  
WEEK



BIGGEST  
**BUZZ**  
IN YEARS

SWITCH  
**OFF**  
FROM LIFE



**“The regular contact with my team mates  
is invaluable in making me feel better”**



# WHAT IS WALKING FOOTBALL?

Although Walking Football shares similarities with regular association football, the two have many differences. The biggest difference is that running is off-limits – this includes jogging! But you can ‘walk’ as fast as you want, as long as “one foot is in contact with the ground at all times”.

Walking Football is a bespoke, non-contact sport created in 2011 by John Croot for the older generation, with age-appropriate and very simple rules designed with health and safety as the paramount consideration. This is why tackling is only allowed with no contact, all free kicks are indirect and the ball must never go over head height.

We play on small pitches with small goals and typically six-a-side teams. Walking Football can also be played indoors, on 3G/4G artificial grass pitches or natural grass.



“Playing Walking Football is something I really look forward to during the week. It is a great way for me to look after myself. I am careful with what I eat and drink as I know I must keep myself ready for the game. Walking Football keeps me moving. I no longer sit or lie about as was previous because I am aware that I must try to keep fit for playing. I see my friends and get the latest news. We discuss football matters and our favourite teams and talk about health problems and such and learn from and support each other.”

**Tom Charlton, WFA Ambassador**

# WHO CAN PLAY WALKING FOOTBALL

Walking Football was conceived as a sport to be played by men over 50 and women over 40. However, Walking Football can be played by any age group, due to the non-contact and no running. We now have thousands of players including people in their 70s and 80s playing regularly and have seen games where three generations of one family are all playing together on the same team.

It's common to have mixed-age teams playing friendlies or regular club matches, but all competitive matches do have a strict age policy. So you will only have people of the same age group in your team and the opposition team. The age groups are:

## Men

Over 50s (50-59)  
Over 60s (60-69)  
Over 70s (70+)

## Women

Over 40s (40-49)  
Over 50s (50-59)  
Over 60s (60+)

## So you want to play Walking Football?

If you're reading this, then you've either just joined a local Walking Football club or session or are thinking of doing so. That being the case, you will have some understanding of what Walking Football is, but we have created this guide to give you everything you need to know to get the best from this great new sport.

All of the skills and memories you've made over possibly decades of watching and playing will come flooding back to you when playing Walking Football. It's the game you love and remember, played in a new way.

To find a club near you please check the WFA website club directory.



**Over 70% said it was  
the highlight of their week**

The Walking Football Association Survey September 2020

 Pure Retirement

# 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.

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.

You can also get involved in Walking Football off the pitch. There's a chance to 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.

As we get older, many of us struggle with our balance, strength, stamina, weight and worst of all confidence and self-esteem levels. Walking Football has the potential to make a significant impact by building body strength, improving muscles, core stability and losing weight as well as boosting self-confidence and self-esteem.



# BASIC RULES

The WFA have developed the Laws of the Game after regular consultation with clubs, players and referees.

These guidelines set out the basic rules of play.

For more detailed guidance on the rules of play, please see the 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
- No offsides
- No tackling from behind
- 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



**“Great exercise and social interaction. Always loved football but never had the chance to play before (60+ female)”**



# THE LAWS OF THE GAME

The WFA 'Laws of the Game' acknowledges that this unique sport is evolving and developing as it grows, but holds fast to the basic ethos and values of the game - to ensure all matches are played safely with full consideration of every participant's age, gender and ability. It is therefore expected

that all players, managers and club members will conduct themselves accordingly, respecting all fellow participants, including referees and other match officials. Head to the WFA website to download the official Laws of the Game.







# KIT

Players can wear anything they feel comfortable in but we do recommend that you wear 'breathable' clothing if you can. Shirts and shorts made specifically for sport have properties that allow body heat to be expelled and air to better circulate around the body, keeping players cooler and helping to prevent overheating.

If you do feel like you want to invest in more appropriate kit, it doesn't have to be expensive. The only thing you may need to buy that you don't already own is a pair of shin pads and perhaps some appropriate footwear.

Of course, you can wear any kind of training shoe to play Walking Football, but getting 'football-specific' trainers will give you more stable footing and better control of the ball.

Venues may stipulate specific types of footwear that are allowed/not allowed. You are advised to contact the club/sports centre before attending.

However, if you begin to play Walking Football competitively, you will need to wear the appropriate kit.

**We recommend:**

- Surface appropriate trainers or boots
- A breathable shirt
- Breathable shorts
- Shin pads
- Football socks
- Hat, cap or gloves – as appropriate for weather



**Nearly 40% have been playing for more than 4 years**

The Walking Football Association Survey September 2020

# FACILITIES

The facilities and size of the pitch at each Walking Football venue will vary. The sport can be played indoors or outdoors but if the pitch is too big, the benefits of Walking Football would be lost. But then if the pitch was on the smaller side, it runs the risk of there not being enough room to have a meaningful game.

The ideal surface is 3G or 4G artificial grass, with touchlines rather than boards. Try to find a session with facilities for refreshments as one of Walking Football's key strengths is the social benefit it can bring for participants.

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 5, 6, 7 or 8, and the players will be able to judge if there are too many players on each team. As clubs grow in numbers, they often develop different sections, for example over 50s, over 60s, over 65s, disability, ladies etc. It all depends on the size of your club and the facilities you have available.



The world's largest walking Football Club is Birmingham WFC established in 2014 by Paul Murtagh, and now has over 800 members.

# EQUIPMENT

The basic equipment you will need:

- **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. The sharing of bibs is not allowed during COVID 19 restrictions.



- **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.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

- Footwear that is appropriate to the playing surface should be worn
- Players should bring any injury or medical condition to the attention of the organizer.
- Personal and medical condition details should be carried in kit bag (e.g. message in the bottle) or player registration form
- Players should warm up before playing
- Goals should be weighted down
- Any concerns with equipment or facilities should be reported to the venue
- Use of WFA qualified referees

## 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.

## COVID-19

The WFA have published Return to Play Safely guidelines and all clubs are advised to carry out a COVID-19 Risk Assessment and to follow the relevant Government restrictions.

## SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding the health and safety of the players is important. You must give the session organiser details of 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 adhered to and that the facility is checked and is safe. If playing outdoors, inclement weather conditions need to be taken into consideration.

The club you join should have, or at least be working towards, the following policies:

- Safeguarding policy
- Vulnerable adults policy
- First aid
- Risk assessment
- Financial accountability
- Selection for teams

If these are not in place when you join, we’re sure the club would welcome some help in getting the policies in place – the WFA will have templates that you can work from.



**“I love everything about it. I have made some very special friends since I joined”**



# NEW PARTICIPANTS PROCEDURE

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

We'd suggest seeking out the organiser of the group and let them know your level of fitness, footballing (if any) past and perhaps what you are hoping to get from playing Walking Football. Find out as much as possible from the organiser about the structure of the sessions to ensure it fits with your expectations.

You should be asked to complete the Health Declaration form by the organiser but not all sessions or clubs will do this - if you're unsure, just ask!

There will normally be a fee for each session (typically £5 per hour) that's either paid in advance or on the day. Clubs with lots of players and sessions may introduce regular subs that you may pay by direct debit. We suggest that you ask about the payment arrangements in advance of the first session that you attend.



## 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.

# INCLUSIVITY

Walking Football is a very inclusive sport with most clubs running mixed sessions in terms of age, ability and gender. However, the number of 'women-only' sessions is growing quickly.

The Dick Kerr Cup has been running for several years and was the first 'women-only' Walking Football competition. The WFA now runs England Women's teams for over 40s, 50s and 60s.

In 2021, the WFA will hold the first Women's National Cup with plans to also run a Woman's National League for regional teams.

There are also a growing number of clubs running disability and recuperation sessions including Birmingham WFC, Abbeymead Rovers in Gloucester and Guernsey Walking Football to name but three.



**Over 80% of players are interested in playing in tournaments**

The Walking Football Association Survey September 2020



# INCLUSIVITY – WE ARE UNDEFEATABLE

There has even been Virtual Walking Football during the national lockdown. Stuart Langworthy, England Over 60s Manager, was asked to lead the 'We Are Undefeatable Virtual Walking Football Team' – a 10-week programme aimed at engaging those living with long term health conditions.

Groups were sent weekly video demonstrations of training drills and had the opportunity to take part in weekly

competitions plus a Keepie-Uppie Challenge. All members made significant progress and were provided with a great support network allowing them to form new friendships and most importantly have great fun.

The tremendously successful pilot scheme proved that it is possible to be part of a virtual Walking Football team as well as showing that a supportive team and a focus all help towards doing exercise. Find out more about the plan on the We Are Undefeatable website.

<https://weareundefeatable.co.uk/team-undefeatable>







# WARM UP

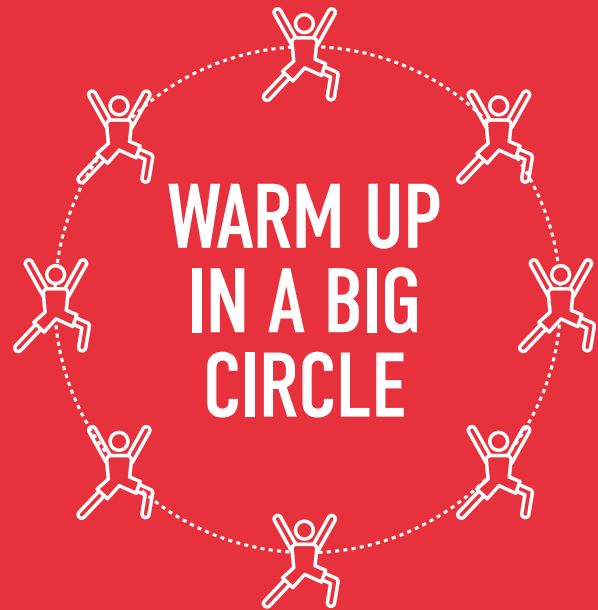
Warming up is vital and is one of the most important parts of the session so that the risk of injury is reduced and everyone is prepared for the game. Many members will have played football in the past and will know warm-up drills.

Walking and dynamic stretches prepare your muscles for activity and, more importantly, help your heart slowly prepare for physical activity. Walking is probably the most simple and effective way to warm up, but when carrying out dynamic stretches, players often work in pairs and lean on each other for support if needed.

The organiser will appreciate that 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 they'd like them to. The organiser will try to include the stretching in a fun, enjoyable way and be patient!

The group organiser will likely start the warm-ups for you, but on the rare occasion that they don't, below is an example of a warm-up routine.

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 tiptoes and then back out.



5. Lift one knee then the other (using a wall or another player for balance). Repeat focusing on using your core to lift your knees.
6. Calf raises (with a wall or player for balance) up on tiptoes and down.
7. One big step back and repeat the above knee lifts and calf raises.
8. Quick walking forward, then turn and slow walk back.
9. Sideways walk to the left and back to the right.
10. Side crab walks, in a squat, left then right.
11. Knee/hip openings - 'open the gate and close the gate'.
12. Heel kicks walking forward, quick walks back.
13. Leg swings using a wall or player for balance.

We would further advise, prior to your session, some ball movement exercise. This allows the body to specifically accustom to kicking a ball. For example, stay in your circle and pass a ball between the players.

**“The buzz I used to get when playing football and the fact at my age I can still play. Brilliant”**

**Pure** Retirement

# COOL DOWN

After your session, you should do static stretches to cool down and don't feel too sore the next morning.

Cool down as follows:

1. Ankle circles, as in warm-up.
2. Calf, quad and hamstring stretches holding on to your neighbour for support!
3. Roll downs, for the spine.
4. Head and neck releases, standing.
5. Spine twists, lying on back, arms wide.
6. All fours (hands and knees) cat stretches, (arch back up, head down, tuck chin in) and cow stretches (arch back down and lift head up).
7. Standing together, shake out arms, legs etc.

Finally, one of the most valuable parts of the session is the social interaction afterwards – so try to make friends with the other players and stay for a drink or a chat if there are facilities.



# THE HISTORY OF WALKING FOOTBALL

Walking Football was created as a bespoke sport by John Croot in Chesterfield in 2011. It's since become increasingly popular, now with over 1,500 clubs in the UK. It's played in over 55 countries with more than 60,000 participants (in the UK) enjoying this unique sport.



## 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 England 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 increasing participation, the eradication of running, the reduction of the over physicality currently in the sport and the establishment of specialist WFA referees.

## Welcome from the Founder and Chief Executive of the WFA

Thank you for visiting this new guide to our wonderful unique sport.  
Once you try it, you will love it. It is all about the **FUN, FRIENDSHIP AND FITNESS.**  
Paul W Carr

**Two thirds of players would like to play at a higher level**

The Walking Football Association Survey September 2020





## 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**



The 1st ever Walking Football team - The Senior Spireites from Chesterfield.

# 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. By 2020 the WFA had trained over 250 referees.

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](mailto: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

(Les Burgess & 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 & Ian Davies)

##### 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, at the time of writing, has England Teams at Over 50, 60, 65, 70, 75 and Women's Teams at Over 40, 50, and 60.

A series of trials have taken place around the country to establish squads at all ages, with scouts and regional teams been appointed in order to observe more players

in an ongoing process of spotting and selecting the best players to represent the national team.

If a club has an outstanding player that they believe is worthy of consideration, they should contact the WFA to arrange for the player to be seen.





# HELPFUL LINKS

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



“Being able to still play a game I love.  
The exercise and the banter with like minded people.”

 Pure Retirement

# 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](mailto: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](http://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.

## MENTAL HEALTH



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

Visit: [www.hubofhope.co.uk](http://www.hubofhope.co.uk) and [www.chasingthestigma.co.uk](http://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](http://www.pureretirement.co.uk)

**#PureEmpowerment**

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[www.pureretirement.co.uk](http://www.pureretirement.co.uk)



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London EC1V 2NX



FIND A CLUB:

<https://thewfa.co.uk/club-directory/>

Email: [info@thewfa.co.uk](mailto:info@thewfa.co.uk)

Tel: 07517 033248

The WFA is a member of FIWFA,  
the World's Governing Body for  
the unique sport of Walking Football.

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