



GUIDE TO PLAYING WALKING FOOTBALL

**Promoting Health, Fitness,
Fun & Friendship**



Charities Buying Group



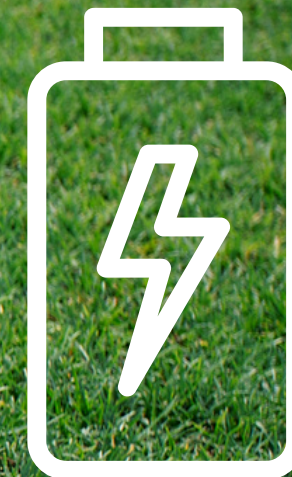
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**IMPROVE
MENTAL
HEALTH**

**HIGHER
ENERGY
LEVELS**



**MOOD
BOOST**

**ACTIVE
MIND
ACTIVE
BODY**



WHAT IS WALKING FOOTBALL?

Walking football is an inclusive sport that encourages the older generation to create relationships and become part of a community. The sport gives older people, who may not have regular social activities, an opportunity to interact with others, make friends, and exercise.

Although the game mirrors the traditional rules and regulations of football, evident changes are incorporated to make the ball game inclusive. That is why tackling is non-contact only, kick-ins replace throw-ins, and there is absolutely no running involved.

The game is also often played on small pitches with smaller goals and six-a-side teams.

"I love playing walking football because it's a way for me to get out, keep fit and socialise with friends."



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I have played walking football since the very start. I used to coach and have been involved in various aspects of the sport all my life. After having had a heart attack, walking football has helped with my physical health, as well as my mental health. Playing with the same people and meeting new people builds friendship, team spirit and a real sense of camaraderie. It's a sport that has a huge potential for the future!

- Bob Day, 74

WHO CAN PLAY WALKING FOOTBALL

Even though the game was designed with men over 50 and women over 40 in mind, all ages are welcome to play walking football. The game has a multitude of different age groups who participate in the sport, as there is no immediate contact or running involved. However, similar age groups will play against one another to make matches fair.

If you're thinking of joining a club, you can have a look at our website directory and [find an existing club](#) near you!



HEALTH BENEFITS OF WALKING FOOTBALL

There are countless physical and mental health benefits for players of walking football. Playing the sport can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and strokes.

The game can also change and/or improve postural balance, blood pressure, cholesterol, resting heart rate, blood sugar levels and bone density.

Being part of a team also improves an individual's mental health, as the game gives people a sense of purpose and belonging.

In addition to regular matches, players can become involved in various roles that are necessary for the games to go ahead, such as planning and training.



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IAN ODENNELL, 75

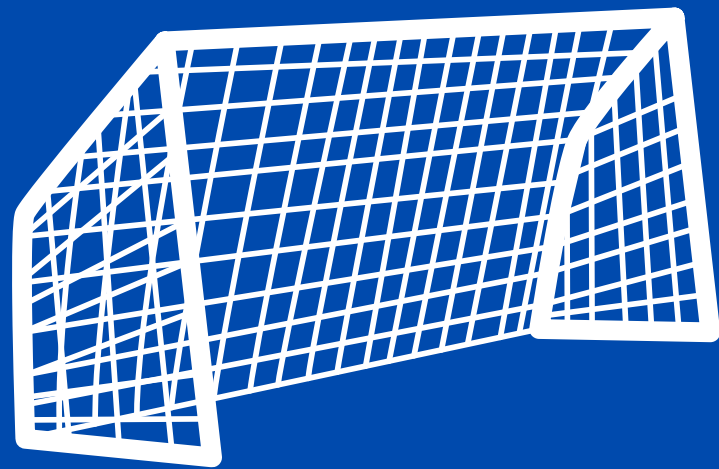
Ian has been playing walking football for 8 years. Ian is ex army and was in the paratroopers for 18 years. He found out about walking football through his friend called Ronnie Coltman, who was one of the founding members of walking football, and through a TV advert. He started playing to keep fit and has had a few medical issues in the past and says that walking football has improved his physical health a lot.

He has had a hip replacement and a stroke but still plays walking football, as he gets great health benefits from it. Ian also lost his wife to cancer but the social side of walking football really helps him to feel happy. Ian has played walking football all over the North of England and has played in Scotland as well. He thoroughly recommends walking football as he says it keeps growing and getting better every year and playing helps him with his physical and mental health.



BARRY TODD, 72

Barry has been playing walking football for many years. His first walking football experience was just after retiring, aged 65. Barry was out for a walk and bumped into a friend who recommended walking football. He has played lots of football through his life including 11 and 6 a-side football. Barry has also been involved in the England set up of walking football. He has played in high level walking football competitions in the North East and Midlands, in the over 60s and 70s category as a goalkeeper. He has also been chosen to play for the England National walking football team over 70 age group. Barry highly recommends that people get involved in walking football, not just for physical benefits but also for the mental health and social side of things as well.



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BASIC RULES

The rules of the game were defined after discussions between clubs, referees and players. These rules, that can be found listed below, are to ensure that walking football is fair and safe.

- Running or jogging will often result in an indirect free kick
- No contact (such as tackling)
- The ball must stay below head height
- No heading of the ball
- All free kicks should be indirect
- The offside rule doesn't apply
- No tackling from behind
- No direct goal from kick-off
- One-step penalty kicks
- Cornering a player is not permitted
- Zero tolerance on abusive behaviour
- Defenders must retain a 3m distance during all free kicks
- Players may not play the ball whilst grounded – to include slide tackling and slide blocks
- No tackling across an opponent at a wall
- Playing with reckless or dangerous intent is penalised
- No restriction on passing back or out from the goalkeeper

***"Great way to keep fit without the usual risks connected with playing football.
I used to play but it was having an effect on my body."***



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THE LAWS OF THE GAME

Fairness and respect are the ethos of this evolving ball game as it continues to grow in popularity. It is expected that every player, referee, and club manager conducts themselves in a professional manner and every participant is treated equally. When it comes to involvement, players' gender, age and ability must always be taken into full consideration.



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KIT

Although specific kits aren't a requirement, players are advised to opt for clothing that is designed for exercise. This is because the fabrics used are more breathable, so can regulate body temperature and help air to circulate better.

A more suitable choice in clothing will prevent players from overheating and make the game, and warm ups, more enjoyable. Football boots aren't essential but sensible footwear should be worn to stable footing and assist with better ball control.

If walking football changes from practise to playing competitive matches, a recognisable team kit will be required.



We recommend:

- Football boots
- Shorts & t-shirt suitable for exercise
- Shin pads
- Football socks

The **Charities Buying Group** has teamed up with **Grassroot Football** to repurpose football boots that are still fit for purpose, so that no one is left out just because of financial restrictions. If you would like to donate a pair, or would like a pair donated to you, please get in touch.



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FACILITIES

The size of the pitch and facilities is dependant on the team and area, however the key components of each match is almost identical.

The game can be played indoors or outdoors, and will typically consist of 6-a-side teams.

When clubs gain more members, it is common for matches to be categorised by age groups. For example: over 50s, over 60s, over 65s, disabilities, ladies.

KEY TIP:

To make the most of the social side of walking football, try to join a team that has amenities for refreshments. This will provide an opportunity to create relationships with fellow players.



EQUIPMENT

- Two goal posts
- Bibs (at least 2 colours)
- A whistle
- and of course a football.



To be prepared for flat or fly away balls we recommend having more than one football available.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Like every sport, certain factors must be considered before each match. Participants must:

- Wear appropriate clothing and footwear
- Alert organiser of medical conditions
- Keep contact details and medical requirements in kit bag in case of an emergency
- Warm up before play
- Have weighted down goals
- Mention concerns over equipment, venue, etc.
- Use of qualified referees
- Have access to medical equipment
- Have a qualified first aider present at every match and training session
- Have a safeguarding policy

"Love the sport and love having a fixed appointment every week to see friends and catch up."





FIRST AID

Like every sport, a warm up and warm down are easy methods to prevent injury as it prepares the body for exercise. In case of an emergency there should always be a qualified first aider present at every session, and access to a first aid kit and defibrillator. To minimise casualties, it is important to make the event organiser aware of any existing medical or health conditions that could affect a player during the session.

"I thought I would never be able to play my favourite sport, but I found this and it's a great alternative!"

SAFEGUARDING

Each club must be aware of safeguarding to ensure the health and safety of every player. The club you choose to join should implement the following policies:

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





NEW PARTICIPANTS

Every approachable and respectful individual is encouraged to join a walking football club. It is advised to speak with the team's organiser to discuss what you want to gain, level of fitness and what area of sport you wish to help with. Once you find a team that is the right fit, you may be asked to complete a Health Declaration form and discuss payment methods. There is typically a small fee per session to help with running costs so the game can be held.

PLAYING THE GAME

The purpose of playing the game is to exercise and build relationships with others. Some clubs can operate in slightly different ways should they need to cater for a diverse range of players, however the ultimate goal is to have fun.



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INCLUSIVITY

Inclusivity is paramount to the vision of walking football, as the purpose of the game is to bring people together. Most clubs through the country run mixed sessions in regards to age, ability and gender to emphasise this core message.

There are now several women lead teams in the sport, and clubs that enable people with disabilities to reap the benefits of the game.

"It's fun, keeps me busy and my mood has never been better!"



photo credit: Nortfolk FA

WARM UP

A warm up is imperative before any training session or game to reduce the risk of injury. It is likely that team members will have different versions and tricks to prepare for a game, that will have been learnt when playing other matches in the past. Sharing warm up drills, methods and games is a great idea to get everyone on the team involved.

Walking, dynamic stretches and circular movements are easy and effective methods to prepare the body before exercise. The organiser will appreciate that not all players can carry out vigorous warm up techniques, and will offer suitable alternatives to players who may not be able to get into certain positions. From heel kicks to shoulder rolls, there will be a variety of movements incorporated into the routine to prepare every participant.

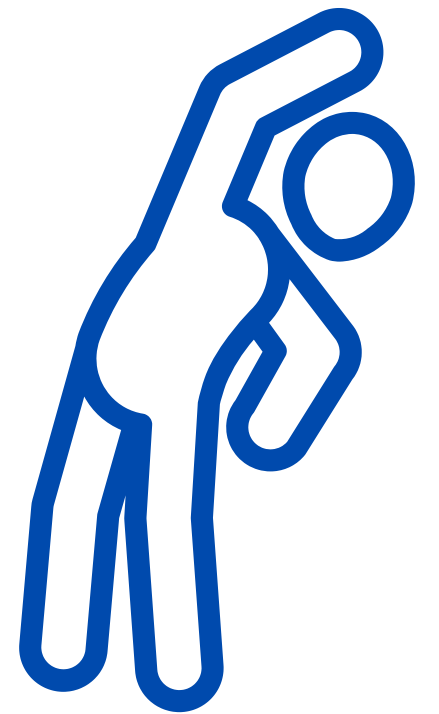
If sport has been on the back burner for some time, we would advise some ball movement exercises prior to your session. This will help your body ease into the motions of the game.



COOL DOWN

Cool-downs are the correct way to finish any training session or match to prevent aches and pains the following morning. Here are a handful of cooling down methods:

- Head and neck releases
- Shake out arms and legs
- Ankle circles



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THE HISTORY

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 alone enjoying this unique sport.

The NWFA, previously known as NorthEast Walking Football Club, is an idea that materialised in 2021. Two friends, Stevie Hill and Tom Cowan, wanted an organisation that represented the sport in the North East.

Sadly, Tom Cowan passed away before the idea became a reality, but Stevie Hill continued to pursue the vision and make NWFA happen. Hill achieved this by enlisting the help of Steve Morgon, who built a relationship with the Charities Buying Group (CBG), now a main sponsor. The union of CBG and the NWFA is here to help with the expansion of walking football clubs and communities in the North East as well as on a national level.



A NOTE FROM THE FOUNDER

"I have a passion for walking football.

Tom Cowan and I had a vision for walking football in the North East. We started to set this up together but it was only after Tom sadly passed that I realised this could be shared on a national basis.

I currently play socially twice a week and have also started my own competitive team, Benfield Walking Football Club. In addition, I manage the North East Regional Walking Football Team and most recently, I have had the honour of being appointed Manager for the England over 60s team.

The vision myself and Tom had has become an even bigger reality that we anticipated, with the options to play this great sport from beginner through to national competitive level."

Stevie Hill





The purpose of CBG 4 Health is to encourage people, particularly the elderly, to participate in social activities to improve mental and physical well-being. That is why supporting walking football is at the forefront of the Charities Buying Group, as the inclusive ball game brings people together.

To make the game as accessible as possible, CBG 4 Health is here to support teams and players. Clubs that need support with kits, equipment, and transportation can contact us directly to see how we can help.



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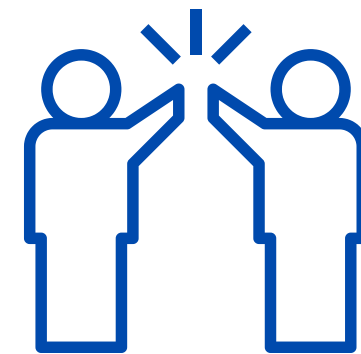
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Please contact us directly for further information and to get started.



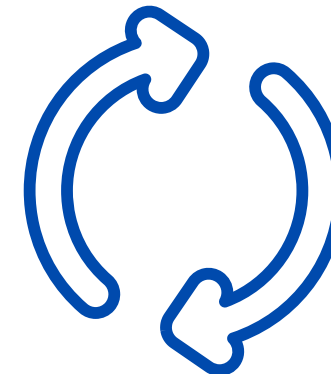
**HAVE FUN
& MAKE
FRIENDS**



**STAY
FIT &
LEAN**



**BETTER
FITNESS
& FASTER
RECOVERY**



**GREAT TO
IMPROVE
HEART
HEALTH**



**STAY
FLEXIBLE
& STRONG**



NWFA

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