



Organizing a football tournament – Checklist

Planning template with 12-week timeline

This document was provided by areacopa.com.

TOURNAMENT NAME

DATE

TOURNAMENT DIRECTOR

12 weeks out: Date and foundational decisions

Five things that must be locked in before the first email goes out.

- Date cross-checked against federation calendar, school holidays and local competition
- Pitch or hall enquired and reserved
- Tournament format decided (round-robin, group + knockout, double group stage, pure knockout)
- Age group and pitch size defined
- Budget frame calculated (fixed costs + 15 % buffer ÷ teams = entry fee)

As soon as the date is set: Invitation

A single email or PDF with exactly these points.

- Date, time, location, directions and parking noted
- Age group and maximum squad size stated
- Tournament format and match length listed
- Entry fee and payment method stated
- Hard registration deadline set (no "around X")
- What teams bring (second shirts, own balls, water bottles)
- What the host provides (balls, referees, drinks, lunch)
- Own phone number and email for questions

As soon as the date is set: Acceptances & waiting list

Expect 10–20 % dropout rate, even after firm acceptances.

- Main list maintained (confirmed teams with contact person)
- Waiting list maintained (teams that want in but missed out)
- Per-team status tracked: invited / accepted / fee paid / squad size reported

4 weeks out: Schedule & rules

The core of the tournament is built now.

- Time budget calculated (teams × matches × (match length + buffer) ÷ parallel pitches)
- At least 15 extra minutes of buffer planned (penalties, injuries)
- One-page rules sheet written (6–8 points)
- Rules sheet sent with the invitation, not later with the schedule
- Digital tournament tool set up and schedule entered
- Live schedule link shared with all coaches and parents

Sports and organizing equipment (1 week out)

No Friday-night packing — prepare three days ahead with a list.

- Match balls in the correct size (at least 3 ready to go)
- Warm-up balls, ideally one per player
- Bibs in two colours
- Cones in two colours
- Ball pump and needles
- Spare goals or nets if the old ones are brittle
- Printouts of schedule and rules sheet (two copies, one posted centrally)
- Whiteboard or flipchart for the live standings
- Stopwatch or horn
- Smartphone, charger, power bank
- Certificates, trophies or medals

First aid & catering (1 week out)

- First-aid kit: plasters, bandages, disinfectant, cold spray, tape, scissors
- Ice packs prepared in the freezer
- Phone numbers of the nearest doctor and A&E noted
- Sunscreen and rain ponchos depending on weather
- Water: 2 litres per player per day
- Fruit, cereal bars, pretzels
- Drinks, sausages, cake for parents and spectators
- Rubbish bags and disposable (or washed) dishes ready

Referees & plan B

Book referees early, agree the weather-cancellation rule before the tournament.

- Referee need per match clarified (one per match recommended from U11 upwards)
- District referees' committee contacted as soon as the date is set
- Fee and travel allowance agreed in writing
- Weather-cancellation rule defined (alternative venue, cut-off time, info channel)

Matchday: Setup timeline (kickoff 10:00)

- 07:30 — organizing team on site, keys and changing rooms checked
- 08:00 — pitches marked, goals checked, balls pumped up
- 08:15 — catering setup, cake and drinks ready
- 08:30 — first teams arrive, changing rooms assigned, entry fees collected
- 09:00 — coaches' meeting, rules sheet handed out, questions clarified
- 09:30 — warm-ups on the pitches
- 10:00 — first match kicks off

Matchday: Assign roles

Three to four people, every role clearly owned.

- Tournament director: central contact, updates results, keeps schedule current
- Referee coordination: assigns refs, keeps time, ensures punctual kickoffs
- Catering and infrastructure: grill, cake, drinks, restocking, cleanliness
- First aid and parent contact: injuries and explanations for parents

After the tournament

Proper awards, plus 20 minutes of notes the next day.

- All teams on the pitch for awards, not just the top three
- Certificates or medals for every child
- Short speech (2 minutes), name the clubs and thank the referees
- Plan a photo moment deliberately
- 20 minutes of notes the day after: what worked, what did not, three changes for next time

