

Why Play Walking Football?

1. It's fun

There is a reason that football is called "The World Game" and Brazilians call it the "jogo bonito" (beautiful game).

It's a simple game, yet with endless possibilities. It takes years to master but can be played immediately with little instruction.

There's a saying that people are encouraged to play "with a smile on their face" - for many people they don't need to be told, the joy of playing simply happens by magic.

2. It's social

The emphasis is social and not on winning. It's all about getting out of the house and meeting new people.

Walking Football is particularly social because it is less competitive and usually not based on set teams. So you get to play with, and get to know, different people every game. A few games into the seasons and you'll know everyone.

Many of the Walking Football organisations try to include social gatherings after games. Whilst this sometimes hasn't been possible due to COVID restrictions, we hope that this will once again become a feature in the future.

3. It's great form of exercise

Most people who play Walking Football are pleasantly surprised to find that they do feel they get a good 'work out'. Their pulse is raised and they work up a sweat.

Research in the UK (where the game has been played for 10 years) has shown that it is a good cardio-vascular exercise.

You might feel a bit tired after a game, but the recovery time is much shorter than running football where you might feel the effects of a game for a few days.

4. It's a much safer form of football

Walking Football is strictly non-contact. The very rare collisions that do happen are accidental and at a low speed. So the chances of getting injured are dramatically reduced.

Players are consistently reminded not to become too competitive before games and during games by the refs and other players.

5. It's more like running football than you might first think.

As well as the obvious constraint of having to only walk, Walking Football does have some modified rules, but these are usually to ensure the safety of all participants.

Other than that, it's very much like 'normal' football.

People who return to the game via Walking Football after years of not playing are almost always surprised at how similar it is to what they remember, some even think it's more fun because of the camaraderie, short recovery time and reduced chance of injury.

6. It improves existing football skills and creates a new technical skill set.

The application of football skills is unique to this adapted version of the game. Walking Football can enhance your existing skills and encourage you to learn new techniques.

Just like 5 v 5 futsal and 11 v 11 full pitch football are the same game but require a different application of football skills, Walking Football encourages you to improve different aspects of the 'core skills' like striking the ball, first touch and one vs one. It also enhances your tactical acumen.

It improves passing accuracy, you learn to carefully weight each pass, or you master the art of applying backspin - otherwise, you are likely to find the ball will roll out of play.

Players can't rely on speed so they have to be clever in the way they manipulate the opposition's positioning to create chances - movement *off* the ball becomes even more important.

Ultimately, whilst feeling like a regular game of football, Walking Football also offers players the chance to learn and master a new set of football skills.

Some common questions / reactions to Walking Football

1. "I won't be able to stop myself running!"

This is the most common reason people give for not trying walking football.

From our experience, we know that most people, in fact, are able to very quickly adjust and stop themselves from running.

Generally, new players are given gentle reminders if they start to run (or are unaware that they are running) rather than giving away free kicks (or being sent off!).

In very extreme cases some players not only can't stop themselves running, they can't believe it when they are told they are running! It usually helps if a family member or fellow player takes some videos of that player so they can visualise what they are doing.

The game is much like running football in many other respects, but we find players learn to play with more subtlety - long passes in front of a teammate never work, you generally pass to feet! - and you learn new tricks to help adapt and thrive playing this format.

We find people tend to walk fast *all the time* during a game, whereas with running football it's more sprints with rests in between.

For that reason, Walking Footballers find that the game offers excellent cardio-vascular exercise and most people work up a sweat and feel pleasantly tired afterwards.

Unlike running football, recovery is much quicker - Walk Footballers don't suffer the consequences the next day after a game, something running footballers of any age experience - and for older players playing running football, it's usually for two or more days.

2. "Walking football won't be much fun, I prefer to run."

This is the second most common reason we hear, mainly from current or former players. Sometimes we hear this from people who aren't actually still playing running football at all!

We know many ex-players who played very competitively who now love playing Walking Football.

Our mantra is "don't knock it until you've tried it".

If you don't want to sign up for a whole season, that's fine, but come and try it **just once** and then tell us what you think ... we dare you!

3. "I haven't played football / any sport in years"

Many people playing walking football started after a gap of many years between playing sport. Because it is a social game, there is no pressure to perform or to be 'good' to start with. Some current players started having never played football /sport of any sort before.

You really can play at your own pace, and as you get more comfortable and confident, you will find you naturally get more involved.

Because it is non-competitive (more on that later) you will find that Walking Football has all the social and exercise benefits of sport without the aggravation that can happen when sport is played too seriously.

4. It'll be too competitive / not competitive enough

Walking Football is still in its early stages in Australia. Most games are played for fun and social reasons, **not** because winning is important. Often no score is recorded during or after games.

As more people discover the sport, it's entirely possible that there will be different levels you can choose to play at, and that will include a competitive league, but we aren't quite at that stage yet.

In the UK, where the game has been played for over 10 years, there are leagues for different age groups, social, competitive, even leagues for people with specific medical conditions.

We don't want to make Walking Football competitive to the detriment of its original purpose: Getting people out, socialising and meeting new people, having fun and enjoying playing our great game.

5. "I have a medical condition / injury and I'm unsure if I should play"

You should always consult with your doctor or person supervising your rehabilitation before trying any sport.

Whilst walking football might play a part in rehab for some, we don't want to give the impression that it will be the right choice for **all** people with an injury or medical condition.

Please check with the medical professionals first, and if they say 'yes' but with conditions/restrictions, you need to tell the organisers of your Walking Football game.

As you get older, even if you don't have a medical condition or injury, you should play it safe and talk to your doctor before resuming any sport, even if it's a slower one like walking football.

6. "Footballers who head the ball have the potential for brain injury."

Heading ***isn't allowed*** in Walking Football. The ball must be below head / shoulder height. Some play with rules where you can't shoot powerfully, especially if it might endanger another player. Some games are played with small goals and other rules to discourage 'blasting' the ball.