



Junior Netball - Kids just want to have fun!!

In the first of our Junior Netball articles we talked about the *Journey of Junior Netball* and highlighted the research and pilot information that helped to shape the National Junior Netball programme for our Year 1-8 players.

In this article we are going to look at what kids want from sport and information about small sided games.

Kids just want to have fun

We want children to be active and to have fun. Research shows that's exactly what they want, too.

There are numerous research studies on the top reasons why kids play sport and here are the top five reasons kids gave;

1. To have fun.
2. To do something I'm good at.
3. To improve my skills.
4. To stay in shape.
5. To get exercise.

Surprise; "winning" didn't even make the top ten reasons.

Study after study comes up with the same #1 result. Kids play sports for the fun of it.

And not having fun is one of the major reasons 70 percent of kids quit playing sports by the time they're 13.

Most often it's parents and coaches who want to win. Kids hardly care. For them, winning is just icing on the cake. They're focused on simpler things.

Even at the high school level, most kids would rather *play* on a losing team than sit on the bench of a winning one. That doesn't mean that kids don't value winning, just that they prefer playing.

If you want your children to play sports, all you have to do is make sure they are having fun.

One of the main ways we can ensure our kids enjoy playing sports is for them to be involved in a format of the game that allows them to participate and develop in an age and stage appropriate way where they can experience the joy of success and learning skills with their friends.



Small-sided Games

Small-sided games (**SSG's**) with modified aspects are becoming more prominent in youth sport across the world.

	Netball	Rugby	Hockey
NZ	<p>ANZ futureFERNs Games change for each age group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Year 1 & 2 = 4v4 Year 3 & 4 = 5v5 Year 5 & 6 = 6v6 Year 7 & 8 = 7v7 	<p>Small Blacks have a development model from Under 6s to Under 13s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Game length, ball size, and player numbers progressively increase <p>Scrum rules change throughout age groups</p>	<p>Fun Sticks – U6 – 4v4 on 1/8 of field Mini Sticks – U9 – 6v6 on 1/8 or 1/4 field Kiwi Sticks – U11 – 6v6 on 1/4 or 1/2 field Kwik Sticks – U13 – 6v6 on 1/2 field or 11v11 on full sized pitch</p>
Australia	<p>'Net-Set-Go!' aimed at 5-10 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 seconds to pass the ball Strict '1-on-1' defence Players must defend a shot at goal Post is 2.4m (8ft) <p>4 x 10 minute quarters</p>	<p>Modified games start at Under 6s and rounds off at Under 12s.</p> <p>VIVA7s is a social game, where you make touches not tackles, aimed at all ages and genders.</p> <p>Game On is a 5-week programme, which provides primary school children with their 'first taste of rugby'</p>	<p>Hookin2Hockey is aimed at children less than 10 years and is a 4-10 week programme where they learn skills in a modified game based environment.</p> <p>After this grades and level of competition varies through states/territories</p>
England	<p>High 5' aimed at 9-11 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post is 2.74m (9ft) Pass or shoot within 4 seconds Size 4 netball used 4 off-court roles <p>Continual rotation of positions</p>	<p>Junior rugby ranges from Under 7s to Under 12s:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player numbers, pitch size and ball size progressively increase <p>Support and contact a child can do/make changes based on age</p>	<p>Quicksticks is designed for 8-11 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4v4 format with no goalkeepers <p>In2Hockey is aimed at 11-14 year olds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6v6 format for 11-13 year olds as well as a 7v7 format for 11-14 year olds <p>Size of stick, weight of the ball and pitch size varies</p>

We've learnt that different sports in different countries transition from modified games to the full game at a variety of ages,

But what is it about SSG that are persuading coaches from around the world to use them at youth level? What are the benefits?

- More contacts** on the ball, allows for increase in practice time.
 Parents will know that their child loves playing netball when they have time on the ball and love to be involved. It's good news that some of the benefits address this and means, as they get older they can draw on their SSG knowledge when playing the traditional game.



- Practice of **decision-making** opportunities
More contacts on the ball allows SSG players to practice many decision-making opportunities that will come about in competitive matches – ‘What type of pass? Where can I go to support? If I am playing against someone taller than me then how can I move to ‘get away’ from her or to intercept her? As well as the consideration of physiological (sprinting, change of direction) and movement demands (jumping and landing).
- Play occurs in an **engaging** and social environment
Small-sided games are fun, rewarding and **motivating** for all.
According to Sport New Zealand, 9-12 year olds should be playing sport in an engaging, social environment and coaches will be glad to know SSG offers just that.
- SSG's target a range of **fitness** components
Netball is fast paced and requires great reaction times, agility and aerobic capacity, all of which SSG have been found to improve, not just in Netball but across a range of sports.
- **Advances acquisition of skills and tactics**
Attack and defence – two of the most dominant principles in Netball can be hugely developed through the manipulation of rules and equipment in SSG, helping player's later transition to the traditional game.

Too demanding?

Adult formats of Netball can be very demanding and require development of cognitive and physical attributes. This can potentially place too many demands on our growing players and force children out of the sport. However incorporating modified rules in SSG will help reduce the pace and momentum of the game and allow for the development of tactical awareness, game understanding and appreciation.

Read more about what benefits **ANZ futureFERNs** hold for your child here:

<http://www.mynetball.co.nz/futureferns/parents/about-futureferns.html>