



FESTIVALS



**Introducing match
play into your Junior
Programme**

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Introduction

Introducing accessible match play opportunities into your programme is a great way to support children's table tennis development, social skills and enthusiasm for the game.

Along with the TT Kidz Awards, TT Kidz festivals can provide the perfect next step for children who have just entered the game such as through the eight-week programme.

This guide is to support you to introduce meaningful match play opportunities in a short time frame that can be delivered during coaching sessions, a weekend or school holiday consistent with the idea of providing a fun, engaging and inspiring table tennis experience.

What do we mean by meaningful match play?

- Matches against similar level
- Not too much sitting around

In the early stages of match play we encourage you to put children into teams so it's less pressurised and allows children to develop friendship groups.

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Introducing team based shorter format matches

TT Kidz festivals are designed to be team based and completed in a short time period.

Team Based

Putting children in teams doesn't mean it has to be team vs team – what's more important is that children are playing evenly matched opposition. You could have round robin matches with groups based on playing ability with children aiming to win points for their designated team.

Shorter Formats

Using shorter formats you can have children playing many matches, reduce the time not playing and keep to a short time window. Think about adopting either:

- Timed matches, e.g. 2-3 minutes
- Two or three set matches – play three sets regardless with a point for each set won
- Playing to 7 points



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Where do festivals and match nights fit in?

Festivals are designed to be the ideal introduction to match play in a low pressure, non-elimination format.

They can provide the ideal steppingstone into the Table Tennis England competition journey (National Cadet League & 1*s). The idea is shorter matches, not much sitting around and complete in 2-3 hours.

Match nights are something you can use within your weekly schedule, perhaps at the end or mid way through a school term.

Match
night

School half term

Festival

Match
night

School half term

Festival



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Organising match nights

Sometimes instead of a coaching session, organising a session where children just play matches can be great for their development, enjoyment and retention in the game.

Some golden rules:

- **Work out how long you have (allow room for welcomes and session conclusion, e.g. a 1 hour session might only be 45 minutes)**
- **How many players? Find out from parents expected attendance that week.**
- **Decide on teams. Teams should be as evenly matched ability wise as possible**
- **Choose the format based on your time and number of players which maximises game time for each child (more on formats later)**
- **Think about prizes and presentation**

How to choose a format

This can be tricky but hopefully the following guidance will help you choose.

Step 1 – how many matches?

Work out how many matches or rounds will need to be played? If for example you had 10 children and five tables you could have two teams of five and five rounds of matches (each member of Team A will play each member of Team B). If you had an odd number, say 11, one team would have 6 players and would rotate round each player missing one round.

Step 2 – timings and tables

Think about what time you have as well as the number of tables at your disposal.

Step 3 – match format

Think about adopting shorter format games, e.g. best of threes, two / three sets (a point won for each set), up to 7 points or even timed matches. As a guide:

Three sets = 10 minutes (shorter if third set from 7-7 or 5-5 for example)

In the example above, 5 rounds of matches using the three set format would take 50 – 60 minutes to complete. Each child would play 15 sets of table tennis in a one hour period.

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Organising match nights

Round Robin teams

As an example, you have 16 players for a match night which creates four teams of four. You could have all four teams play each other which will be six team matches in the evening. Depending on your time frame and the number of tables a team match could either be all players play two games or just one game, e.g. player 1 vs player 1.

- **16 Players 4 Teams in One Hour on Four Tables**

Step 1 – Teams

Put the teams in evenly matched teams, e.g. the best four players in four different teams. Then put the teams in ranking order.

Step 2 – Format

Using the format of each player playing two games there are eight matches in a team match. Scorecards can be found in the appendix. Teams will all play all using a timed format of three minutes per match.

Timings for a 5pm – 6:00pm session

5:10pm – Team 1 vs Team 2 & Team 3 vs Team 4 – 15 minutes

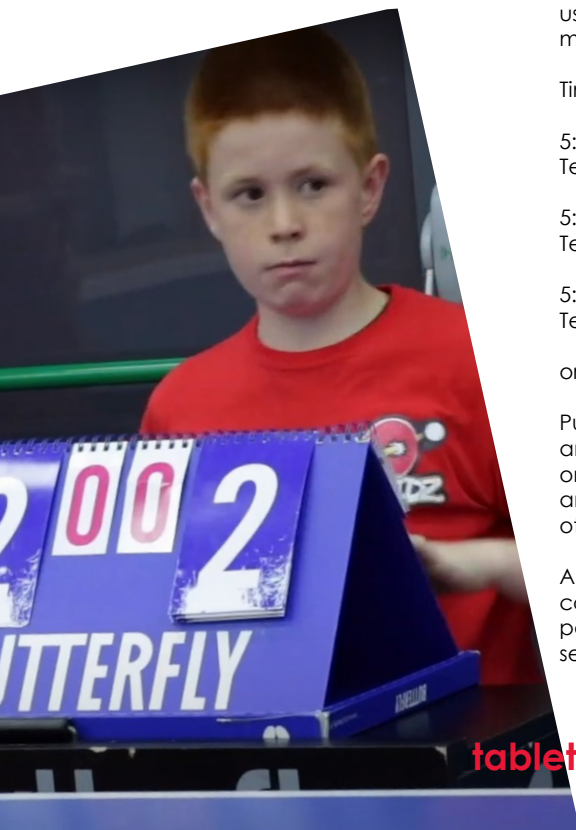
5:25pm – Team 1 vs Team 4 & Team 2 vs Team 3 – 15 minutes

5:40pm – Team 1 vs Team 3 & Team 4 vs Team 2 – 15 minutes

or

Put the players into evenly matched teams and create four groups. All the number ones in one group, all the number twos in another and so on. All players play each other in their group; a table per group.

A group of four involves 6 matches so you could play each match three sets to 7 points. Simply add up the total amount of sets won per team.



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Golden rules

Working out number of matches in a Round Robin

To work out the number of matches needed in a Round Robin, simply take the number of players playing, minus 1 and multiply those two numbers. Then half that number.

For example, a Round Robin of 6 players:

**6 players minus 1 = 6 x 5 = 30. Divide by two and you have 15
Therefore a 6-person Round Robin will be 15 matches**

You can now work out how long this might take to run based on match format and tables. On two tables using 3-minute matches (5 minutes total including change over) would be:

15 matches x 5 minutes = 75 minutes spread over two tables = 37.5 minutes

Quick on the fly Round Robin

You can simply organise round robins on the fly using this system.

For example if you have 5 players:

1 v 2	Keep the 1 where it is and move the other numbers anti clockwise	1 v 4	1 Rest	1 v 5
3 v 4		2 Rest	4 v 5	3 Rest
5 Rest		3 v 5	2 v 3	4 v 2

Why not try ...

- Use different bats - try hard bats and / or mini bats
- Add some music - in timed matches players could play until the music stops



Club Festivals

Club festivals are a great way to engage your junior participants and could be held at a weekend or school holiday.

A club festival could be just for your club or involve other children from the area such as local schools and other clubs.

Using timed matches or three sets only you can accurately predict the finish time which is perfect for parents picking up.



Format

- Set the date or dates if planning several throughout the year.
- Children enter the festival in advance – Google Forms are a great tool.
- Organiser puts participants into evenly matched teams based on playing ability.
- Choose a format, remembering to keep it short and to be completed within three hours. Formats can be seen in the match play section.
- You can use various scoring, e.g. games up to seven, from five-five; timed matches etc.
- Round robin allows players to play lots of different people in a short space of time. This could be a player from each team is in a round robin based on playing ability or a team vs team round robin.
- Players compete to win points for their team over a short series of matches.

Add some action fantasy

For example, you could have teams in round robin group which could be the initial group stages in a tournament such as World Championships, Olympic Games or Commonwealth Games. Each team could represent a country.

Teams can then move into the final stage and begin to play off for positions.

You can even have a list of scenarios on strips of paper which players can pick and play out.

For example: It is down to the final match in the World Championships final team event between England & China. Liam Pitchford is playing Ma Long with the score two sets all and about to play the deciding set. Play out the set.

This can also be used for the match play sessions too!

Another example could be setting up actual match courts. For many of the children who are new to the game they may never have seen a match court with barriers and an umpire's tables and scoreboard.

The idea being behind adding action fantasy is to make it different to that of a training session and add a certain 'wow' factor.



Other top tips

Think about refreshments

Could be as simple as a jug of juice and a few biscuits.

Music

Can create a nice atmosphere and if using timed matches, children could play to the music.

Food afterwards

To encourage social interactions why not lay some sandwich platters on. This could involve the parents too giving you a chance to get to know them and giving a great impression of your club. Or, why not ask parents to bring certain food items which can help build a community spirit in your club.

Presentation

- Print certificates and build some presentation time into your plan. This could be your 'closing ceremony.' Try and print the certificates on nice card to add value to the presentation.
- You might want to consider getting some nice trophies also.
- Your festivals may even be themed with prizes related to this, e.g. Chinese New Year, Easter etc.

Involving parents

Why should children have all the fun? Perhaps some parents would like some informal match play too. They may also help with tasks like scoring etc.

Involve some of your older juniors

The older juniors could act as team captains, do some officiating and perhaps play a match at the end to show what the younger children can aspire too.



Schools Festivals

We have also developed a schools festival resource pack which you can use to help promote school club links in your area. Clubs can play a huge role in influencing local schools and School Games Officers (SGOs) to deliver a school's table tennis competition by providing support, guidance as well as sharing of equipment.

For more information contact your local county active partnership.

Remember!

TT Kidz festivals are all about being fun, engaging and inspiring to support the retention of children in our game. How do we make this happen:

- **Fun** – team based, being with friends
- **Engaging** – short, sharp matches against evenly matched opponents
- **Inspiring** – add some action fantasy, use music, print certificates on nice card, get nice trophies

Above all else, ask the children for feedback. What did they enjoy? Have they got suggestions for themes etc.

Resources

Visit tabletennisengland.co.uk/tt-kidz/tt-kidz-festivals/ to download a range of resources designed to help you successfully introduce match play into your programme.

