

The Pre-Season Checklist

For grassroots team managers and coaches

What this is. The things that genuinely catch new managers out before a season - grouped by why they get missed. Not every action you'll take in pre-season; the things you can't leave until the week before.

How to use it. Print it, stick it on the fridge, work through each group. If a section doesn't apply to your team (youth-only or adult-only items), skip it. If something here is in hand, tick it. If something isn't, raise it with the club now - not in the week before kick-off.

Things that expire silently

These creep up on you. They don't announce themselves, and if they've lapsed you can be barred from operating on matchday.

- Enhanced DBS check current (youth teams - check renewal date)
- FA Safeguarding Children course current (youth teams - check renewal date)
- Emergency First Aid in Football current (check renewal date)
- Coaching qualification current and logged with the club
- For any assistant coaches or other adults involved with a youth team: the same checks done for them

Things with lead times

These can't be done in the last week. If they're not in hand now, they won't be ready in time.

- DBS processing (if anyone needs a new one - can take weeks)
- Safeguarding course booking (places go, schedule ahead)
- First aid course booking (same)
- Customised kit orders (4+ weeks typical for any new kit the club is ordering)
- League registration window dates noted - confirm with the club secretary when they open and close
- Tournament entry closing dates for anything you plan to enter

Things to check the club has sorted

The club handles these, not you. But if they haven't been handled and you don't know, you're the one finding out at the worst possible moment.

- FA affiliation renewed for the new season
- Insurance in place for the team and its activities
- Pitch bookings for training and home fixtures confirmed for at least the first month
- Match kit ready (or ordered with lead time)
- Emergency action plan in place - you know who calls 999, where emergency contacts are kept, the escalation path
- Safeguarding escalation process clear - you know who the welfare officer is and how to reach them
- Player registration status for your squad - you know who's registered and who isn't

If the answer to any of these is "I don't know" or "nobody's confirmed", raise it with the club secretary or chair now.

Easy-to-miss specifics

The things smart people still miss because nobody flagged them.

- League handbook for the new season read cover to cover (check for rule changes)
- FA grassroots pages checked for any announced format or rule changes
- WhatsApp group admin rights - not just membership - so you can pin announcements and manage the group
- Development badge setting appropriate for the age group (auto-default for U11 and under; worth confirming)
- Clash kit identified for any fixture or tournament where colours might conflict
- League fine structure read (adult teams especially - don't learn about fines after one lands)
- Team sheet / match reporting process clear for your league (deadlines vary and bite)
- Pitch availability confirmed for the dates you've planned (cricket crossover, council schedules, maintenance windows)

Additional - youth teams

- Two-adults rule covered for every planned training session and match
- Pre-season message to parents setting expectations on sideline behaviour
- Parent WhatsApp group pinned with key info and group rules
- Welfare officer's direct contact details saved and accessible on matchday

Additional - adult teams running standalone

- At least one other person formally helping (deputy, treasurer, match secretary) - don't be the committee-of-one
 - Player registration ownership explicit (you, unless formally delegated)
 - Affiliation and insurance for the team current - you're the one sorting this, not a club secretary
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If the categories above are in hand, **you've covered the things that most reliably catch new managers out**. Everything else in pre-season is the job itself.

This checklist is a companion to *So You're Managing a Team This Season*, the full Grassroute team manager handbook. Find it at grassroute.co.uk/resources.

Spotted something missing or out of date? Tell us at contact@grassroute.co.uk - feedback from real managers is what keeps this honest.