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Positions guide:

who is in a team?

Goalkeeper

Full-back

Wing-back

Central defender

Sweeper

Central midfield

Wide midfield

Behind the striker

Striker

Positions guide: who is in a team?



Regulation football is played by two teams of 11 players but there is a variety of formations that can be employed.

In a European competition, Premiership or League match, three subs from a nominated seven are allowed.

More can be used in friendlies.

In an 11-a-side match, a game cannot begin if either side has less than seven players.



Positions guide: Goalkeeper



Everybody says you've got to be a bit crazy to wear the number one jersey.

But there is no doubting it is one of the most important jobs on the football pitch.

You need agility and bravery to be a keeper.

And you are allowed to handle the ball, but only in the penalty box.

It can get lonely between the sticks.

You need to be always ready and alert for that crucial save - especially if you have not had much to do during the game.



Positions guide: Full-back



Football pundits say that good attacking football starts with the defence.

There is no better feeling than a sliding block, or chasing after a striker and nicking the ball off their toes.

Scoring is important but your manager will be just as happy to see you stopping a goal.

Full-backs, who play on either side of the defence, have quite a varied role.

Their main job is to stop the opposition attacking in wide areas and to support the central defenders.

And the modern defender will often venture beyond the halfway line - unheard of until relatively recently.



They play an important role in supporting their team's own attack by pushing forward to supply crosses.

Positions guide: Wing-back



In the modern age of football there are many different roles and jobs a defender can have.

And a wonderful sight in the game is seeing the wing-back fly up and down the touchline terrorising the opposition.

Their role is more attacking than the full-back's, and it basically involves a great deal of running.

They are a nightmare to defend against as you never know where they're going to be.

They are usually employed in a formation that includes just three players in midfield.

This allows the wing-backs to supply all of the width in the team.

Because their job is to attack, there will usually be an extra central defender to give more defensive cover.

To be a useful wing-back, you've got to be good at all parts of the game.



Fit, strong, good with both feet, a great tackler, an amazing passer and a fine crosser of the ball.

Roberto Carlos (pictured) is never happier than when he's motoring forward for Brazil or Real Madrid.

Positions guide: Central defender



Being at the centre of defence puts you up against the opposition's strikers, which can be a real challenge.

You will have to be a good tackler and strong in the air.

But the ability to read the game by spotting where the likely danger will come from is the biggest asset.

Central defenders need to be very committed and focused on their role.

If you let the opposition striker get in behind you then it can easily result in a goal against your side.

You cannot relax for one second - there is danger on the football field from every possible angle.

Where are the strikers going?
Which midfielders are bursting through?



John Terry provides defensive solidity for Chelsea and England

And when your keeper's got the ball, should you make yourself available for the easy pass?

Positions guide: Sweeper



This is a very specialised position, and you are more likely to see it in continental football than in Britain.

Italy's Franco Baresi was a master.

The sweeper's job is mainly to play behind the defence to add extra security and improve the passing out of defence.

They must be able to read the game well, and also be calm and confident enough with the ball at their feet to carry it forward and support the midfield.

So no broomsticks required to be a good sweeper, just a good set of eyes, a fine footballing brain and two good feet.



Positions guide: Central midfield



It is in the centre of midfield that games are often won or lost.

The best clubs in the country all have world-class players in this position, such as Frank Lampard for Chelsea, Roy Keane for Manchester United and Steven Gerrard at Liverpool.

They are described as the orchestra conductors, the engines of the team, the players pulling the strings from the middle.

You have to have stamina by the bagful to play in this position. It involves endless running.

You will need to be a strong tackler to win the ball back and have the skill to create opportunities for the strikers ahead of you.

A lot of your work will go unnoticed as you will make forward runs to join your attackers.

But so too will your opposite number, and you must match those runs to assist your defence.



Frank Lampard is one of Chelsea's most influential players

Positions guide: Wide midfield



Wingers, wide midfielders, call them what you like, they are some of the most exciting players around.

Ryan Giggs at Manchester United, Shaun Wright-Phillips or Theo Walcott at Arsenal.

It is a varied and hardworking job, though - it's not just about showing off a few tricks and letting the defenders clean up behind you.

Energy and stamina are needed to give defensive cover to the full-backs playing behind you.

And then when you've got your breath back, you'll be expected to fly down the wing to create the chances for your strikers.



Arsenal's Theo Walcott is a true wide man

Playing right out on the touchline when your team are in possession gives greater space and options.

Then when your team lose possession you should tuck infield.

This gets you closer to your central midfield colleagues and helps provide a greater barrier to the opposition.

Positions guide: Behind the striker



The player tucked in just behind the striker could be tagged as someone who has a "licence to roam."

It's a vital role and is seen more and more in football - especially at international level.

Zinedine Zidane has been one of the best players in the world in this position for both Real Madrid and France.

Another world class player who done this with pure class and excellence was Dennis Bergkamp, formerly of Arsenal.

The player drops into the area between the opposition midfield and defence, giving them more time and space on the ball.

It is very difficult to mark this player because they can be playing quite deep one minute and then burst forward to link up with their striker.

They'll be very comfortable on the ball, have great vision and a very quick turn of pace.

They will usually create plenty of chances for team-mates, but also bang in more than a few themselves.

Positions guide: Striker



Scoring goals is beautiful, but being a striker means you may take a bit of a battering from opposition defenders - particularly if you're any good.

There are all sorts of different characteristics that make up a good striker.

Michael Owen and Thierry Henry have fantastic pace, while others rely on strength and power.

What some strikers lack in pace, they make up for in speed of thought and ability to move away from markers to create chances.



Fernando Torres Liverpool has a thirst for goals

But most of the top strikers in the world are selfish in front of goal - and their finishing skills are deadly.

