



A GUIDE TO PERMITS

Festivals, tournaments and friendly matches



Clear approval routes • consistent terminology • safeguarding and discipline

Document owner	SYFA Head of Operations
Applies to	SYFA member clubs, teams, leagues, associations, players and officials
Rules basis	SYFA Supplementary & Playing Rules 2026-2027, particularly Rules 125-130
Status	Guidance document. Where any conflict arises, the SYFA Rules and formal decisions of the Board prevail.

1. Purpose and scope

This guidance explains when approval is required for football activity outside a team's normal league, regional or SYFA fixture programme, who must apply, and which body issues the relevant approval. It is intended to create a consistent national framework while recognising that member leagues and associations may operate their own administrative procedures for friendly matches.

Core rule: No club, team, league, association, player or representative under SYFA jurisdiction may stage, play in or be involved in an unapproved match or competition. Every match must be sanctioned by the SYFA or an appropriate member region, league or association.

1.1 Rational

The permit system has been in place for many years and is designed to regulate all fixtures outside the routine control of the regional leagues and SYFA.

A permit, whether a Host permit, a Participation permit, or a Friendly permit, is required for several reasons:

- a) The permit application process enables league secretaries to confirm that the proposed event or match will not conflict with any scheduled fixtures.
- b) All authorised permits are kept on record in case of an insurance claim. No claim will be filed if the event has not received prior approval, i.e., a permit has not been granted.
- c) Permits ensure that accountability and responsibility are placed on the organisers and hosts of a festival or tournament.
- d) Any reported disciplinary reports received from the hosts will be logged against the player or coach/official's Comet record.
- e) All events must be recorded whenever any complaint, concern or allegation is raised by anyone. This aligns with the Safeguarding and Child Wellbeing responsibilities of the clubs and SYFA.
- f) All host permit applications must be accompanied by a copy of the festival/tournament rules to ensure compliance with the SYFA Supplementary & Playing Rules and the Scottish FA Player Journey.

Teams applying for a permit will be checked by the SYFA or the relevant league to ensure compliance with current registration and affiliation regulations on qualified coaches and First Aid provision. It is vital that all teams ensure that coaches, officials, and players are Comet-compliant before applying for a permit.

2. Key terminology

Term	Meaning
Host Permit	Approval issued by the SYFA for an SYFA club, team, league or association to organise a festival or tournament. The host's member league/association must support the application.
Participation Permit	Approval for an SYFA team to take part in an approved festival or tournament. It is issued through the team's member league/association after the host event has been approved.
Friendly Match Permit	Approval is issued under the appropriate league or association procedure for a match outside the normal fixture programme. The SYFA is not necessarily involved where both teams are SYFA members.
SYFA Permit	Approval issued directly by the SYFA where the opposition or location places the activity outside the normal authority of a member league/association, including certain non-SYFA and international activity.
Permit Tracker	The SYFA record of approved host festivals and tournaments. Participating teams should check that the event is listed before applying or paying an entry fee.
Registered team	A team affiliated for the relevant season with active players and officials in its COMET competition catalogue. "Affiliated team" in this guide means a registered SYFA team.

3. When approval is required

Approval is required for any match, festival, tournament, selection match, showcase, or other football activity that is not already included within an approved SYFA, regional, league or association programme. The description given to an event does not remove the requirement for approval.

League-programmed activity: A festival or fixture expressly scheduled and administered as part of a member league or association's approved programme does not require separate host and participation permits. The league or association remains responsible for authorising and recording that programme.

The SYFA reserves the right to refuse any application for a Host Permit on any grounds it considers reasonable. This includes, but is not limited to, previous breaches of SYFA rules, coach or spectator behaviour, and complaints. The decision of the SYFA is final and no appeal will be considered.

4. Festivals and Tournaments

4.1 Festival

A festival is a series of non-competitive matches for age groups up to and including Under-12, covering all Scottish FA Player Journey small-sided game formats.

A festival may be tiered to provide appropriate playing levels, but it must remain non-competitive:

- no team lines are permitted
- no overall winner or runners-up may be declared;
- no cup, shield or trophy may be awarded for sporting results;
- results or league tables must not be published; and
- participation medals or equivalent participation recognition may be provided to every participant.

A festival may operate over more than one venue. One Host permit may cover multiple age groups within the same event, provided every age group, venue, date and format is declared in the application and event rules. A permit normally covers no more than five consecutive days. A separate application is required for a later, separate block of activity.

4.2 Tournament

A tournament is a series of competitive matches for age groups 13s to 18s. Competitive formats are not restricted to 11-a-side and may include an approved small-sided format. Round-robin and knockout formats may be used, and winners and runners-up may be declared, subject to the event rules and the current Scottish FA Player Journey.

Team lines must be provided to the referee or event organisers for every match or for the duration of the event.

4.3 Player Journey and transition formats

All event formats, pitch and goal dimensions, match durations, playing-time principles and transition arrangements must comply with the current Scottish FA Player Journey and any SYFA or Scottish FA transition guidance in force on the event date. Organisers should not rely on fixed transition dates copied from an older guidance note. Where a younger age group is permitted to use the next format as part of an authorised transition, that does not make the event competitive before the team reaches the competitive age group.

5. Eligibility and minimum requirements

- Only a team registered for the relevant season may apply for or use a permit. Applications cannot be made in anticipation of future affiliation.
- Every participating player must be properly registered and active for the team on COMET. A player registered with another SYFA team cannot play as a trialist.
- Each team must have at least two registered officials present during all team activities and must meet the Team Manager, Coach and First Aider requirements in Rule 22.2.
- A suitably qualified First Aider and an appropriately stocked first-aid kit must be available throughout each team activity. A host's central first-aid provision does not remove each team's responsibility unless the Rules expressly permit shared cover for a fixture and the required record is completed.
- Coaches and other officials must hold the registrations, qualifications and child wellbeing training required by the SYFA Rules.
- The permit does not authorise a format, player or official who would otherwise be ineligible under the Rules.

6. Host festival or tournament process

1. Before advertising or accepting entry fees, complete the current SYFA Host Festival/Tournament Application.
2. Send the application simultaneously to the host's member league/association and the SYFA at syfa@scottish-football.com. Electronic correspondence must identify the club/team, age group and registration ID.
3. Attach the full event rules, including formats, age groups, dates, venues, match durations, discipline arrangements, safeguarding arrangements and the process for checking participation permits.
4. Pay the current SYFA Host fee using the published payment method and reference.
5. Obtain any additional approval required by another governing body where participating teams fall under that body's jurisdiction, for example Scottish Women's Football or another Affiliated National Association.
6. The member league/association considers fixture conflicts and local compliance. The SYFA reviews the application and rules against the SYFA Rules and relevant football requirements.
7. Only after written approval and the allocation of a reference number may the event be designated as a SYFA-approved event. The event will be entered into the Permit Tracker.

Important: Approval relates principally to the football activity and compliance with SYFA requirements. It does not amount to approval of accommodation, transport, catering, commercial contracts or every operational aspect of the event. However, concerns about organisation, safeguarding, financial integrity or previous conduct may be relevant when the SYFA decides whether to approve a future event.

7. Participation in a festival or tournament

1. Check the Permit Tracker and confirm that the event, age group, date and host correspond with the invitation.
2. Do not pay an entry fee until the event is approved. Payments should be made only to a club, league, association or event business account, not to a personal account or in cash unless there is a documented and authorised exception.
3. Complete the current Participation Permit Application and submit it to the team's member league/association with proof of the required SYFA payment.
4. Allow sufficient time for checks. A permit will not be issued retrospectively.
5. Keep the approved permit and provide a copy to the host before taking part. The host may refuse entry where evidence of approval is not supplied.



8. Friendly matches

SYFA Supplementary & Playing Rule 127 requires Friendly match permits to follow the appropriate league procedure. Because administrative arrangements and any local charge may differ, teams must use the form, submission route, notice period and fee published by their own league or association. The guide below establishes the minimum approval route.

Situation	Required route
Both teams in the same member league/association	The teams follow that league/association's friendly procedure. At minimum, the home team must obtain approval; a league may require an application from both teams. No SYFA fee applies, but the league/association may set a reasonable local administration charge.
SYFA teams in different member leagues/associations	Each team must obtain written approval from its own league/association. Applications should be submitted in parallel, not passed sequentially between teams. The match may proceed only when both approvals have been granted.
SYFA team v Club Academy Scotland team	The SYFA team must obtain approval from its own league/association regardless of venue. Any additional Scottish FA/CAS requirement is the responsibility of the CAS club.
SYFA team v another Scottish team not under SYFA jurisdiction	The SYFA team first obtains support from its member league/association and then seeks any SYFA/Scottish FA approval specified for that category. The application must identify the opposition's governing body.
SYFA team v non-Scottish opposition in Scotland	The SYFA team obtains league/association support and applies to the SYFA for international authorisation before the match. The SYFA will seek any further approval required through the Scottish FA.
SYFA team playing outside Scotland	Apply directly to the SYFA, with the support of the member league/association, providing the host association, event approval, dates, venue, opposition and travel details. Do not assume that an overseas host's invitation is sufficient.
Teams at different registered age groups	Use the applicable route above. The younger team must provide a written assessment from its Team Manager confirming that the players are physically and mentally capable of the proposed match and that parental/carers consent has been obtained. Where the younger team is outside SYFA jurisdiction, the SYFA team should obtain written confirmation from the opposition's governing body or authorised club official.

8.1 Notice and match information

Applications should be made as early as possible and within any minimum period set by the relevant league/association. Forty-eight hours is an absolute minimum only where the local procedure permits it; cross-league, non-SYFA and international applications will normally require more time. Each application should include:

- home and away team names, age groups and registration IDs;
- date, kick-off time, venue and playing format;
- name and contact details of the responsible Team Managers;
- referee arrangements, where applicable; and
- any age-group, travel, safeguarding or governing-body information relevant to the approval.

8.2 COMET and referees

The 2026-2027 Supplementary & Playing Rules do not require every friendly match to be entered as a fixture on COMET. Until a national COMET workflow is formally introduced, no friendly matches should be recorded on COMET. Doing otherwise would create additional workload for league personnel and result in an inequitable disciplinary landscape across the country. For example, reported discipline in a friendly in one league area could result in a player's eligibility to participate in league, cup or Scottish Cup matches differing from that of a player from a neighbouring league. Similarly, a player serving a disciplinary ban could serve it by participating in friendly matches.

Where a referee is appointed, both teams should provide the approval documents and team information requested by the referee or league. The absence of a referee in a small-sided match does not remove the obligation to obtain approval or to report misconduct and safeguarding concerns.

9. Host and participating team responsibilities

9.1 Host

- obtain the Host Permit before promoting the event as approved or allowing play to begin;
- ensure the event rules and playing formats match those approved;
- check that each SYFA participating team has supplied a valid Participation Permit;
- confirm any required approval for teams under another governing body;
- maintain appropriate safeguarding, welfare, first-aid and emergency arrangements;
- provide a clear discipline and incident-reporting process to teams and match officials;
- retain the permit and participation records for the period required by the SYFA or the host's league/association; and
- submit the post-event return required by section 10.
- No alcohol can be sold, provided or permitted at any event

9.2 Participating team

- obtain its own approval before travelling or taking part;
- ensure every player and official is eligible, active and appropriately registered;
- provide the required number and qualifications of officials, including first-aid cover;
- read and comply with the approved event rules and the SYFA Rules;
- check travel, accommodation, insurance and financial arrangements independently; and
- report any safeguarding concern, serious incident or misconduct through the appropriate route.

10. Discipline, incidents and post-event return

Misconduct in an approved friendly, festival or tournament remains subject to the SYFA Disciplinary Procedures. An approval does not create a discipline-free event.

- All Disciplinary matters in a Friendly match should be reported to the League where the team participates.
- The host must provide match officials and teams with clear instructions on where reports are to be sent.
- Any offence listed in Appendix 2 & 4 of the SYFA Disciplinary Policy – (EM01 – 10 Player offences & EM11-27 Official offences) must be reported within 7 days to the SYFA at syfa.complaints@scottish-football.com and to the person/body identified in the event approval or relevant league procedure. A referee or match official report should be attached where available.
- Safeguarding or child wellbeing concerns must be reported immediately through the SYFA Child Wellbeing and Protection procedures and must not be delayed until the routine event return.
- Within seven days of the event, the host should submit a short post-event return to the SYFA confirming the event took place and listing any cautions, dismissals, misconduct reports, serious injuries, safeguarding referrals or significant complaints. A nil return should be submitted where there were no reportable matters.
- The post-event return may also record positive feedback and good practice. This helps the SYFA assess future applications fairly.

Unapproved activity: A host, participating club/team, player or representative involved in an unapproved match or tournament will be dealt with under the SYFA Disciplinary Procedures and may be debarred pending consideration by the relevant committee.

11. Financial and commercial matters

The current published SYFA fees should be checked on the application form or the SYFA website before payment. As at the date of this publication, the costs are:

Host Permit fee £50

Participation Permit fee £10

International or overseas applications may attract different charges. The SYFA Board may set or revise fees annually.

A member league or association may apply a separate local administration charge to process a friendly approval, if permitted by its constitution and rules. Any such charge should be clearly published and must not be described as a SYFA fee.

The SYFA permit confirms authorisation for the football activity. It does not guarantee an organiser's solvency, validate a commercial contract, or make the SYFA responsible for entry fees, travel, accommodation, catering, or other third-party services.

12. Record keeping and communications

- The SYFA retains approved Host Permit applications and records them on the Permit Tracker.
- Member leagues/associations should retain copies of permits and approvals for at least the period required by Rule 33 for competition details and any longer period directed by the SYFA, their own rules, insurance requirements or records policy.
- Hosts should retain participation evidence and the post-event return securely and only for as long as required.
- Emails to the SYFA should use a clear subject such as “SYFA Permit Request” and include the club/team name, age group, registration ID, opposition, date, venue and the approval being requested. Incomplete electronic communications may be judged incompetent under Rule 15.

13. Frequently asked questions

Does one host permit cover several age groups?

Yes, where they are part of the same event and all age groups, formats, dates and venues are fully declared. Separate events or later blocks require separate approval.

Can a children’s football transition event award trophies?

No. A children's football transition event remains non-competitive. As with any festival for age groups Under 12 and below

- Participation medals or awards may be presented to every player taking part.
- Individual Fair Play, Respect, or similar awards recognising positive behaviour, sportsmanship, or attitude may also be presented.
- There must not be any trophies or medals awarded to winners, runners-up, or teams based on footballing performance.
- There must be no league tables, points, knockout stages, finals, or any other format that determines a winning team or overall champion.

The purpose of a transition event is to support players moving to the next playing format—not to introduce competition before it is permitted under the Scottish FA Player Journey.

Can an unregistered or trial player take part?

No. Players must be properly registered and active for the participating team. A registered player cannot play as a trialist for another SYFA member team.

Do we need approval for a school, selection or showcase match?

Yes, unless it is already part of an approved programme. The team must explain who is organising the activity and the governing status of the opposition so that the correct route can be identified. Note that teams invited to participate in half-time exhibitions by senior professional clubs do not require a permit.

Do we need a permit for an event hosted by a Scottish FA or professional club?

An invitation from a Scottish FA member does not by itself remove an SYFA team’s duty to obtain approval under Rules 125-128. The team should apply through its league/association and provide the host’s approval details.

Can we apply before the team is registered for the new season?

No. A team must be affiliated and active for the relevant season before it can apply or play. A team moving from children's to youth football must apply through the league or association in which it will be registered for the relevant season.

Does the host's first aider cover every team?

Not automatically. Each team remains responsible for complying with Rule 22.2. Event-wide medical provision is additional unless the permitted fixture-cover exception in the Rules is properly agreed and recorded.

Are permits issued retrospectively?

No. The activity must not proceed unless all required written approvals have been granted beforehand.

Can an unregistered player participate in a festival or tournament?

If a player is not currently registered to a Club, the team must register the player on Comet as a Trialist and be ACTIVE in the team catalogue. Players cannot simply appear at an event and participate.

Who deals with non-football complaints about an event?

Contractual or commercial complaints are normally matters between the parties. The SYFA may nevertheless consider credible concerns about safeguarding, financial integrity, organisation or previous conduct when exercising its football regulatory functions or deciding future permit applications.

14. Quick decision guide

Question	Action
Is the activity already an approved league, regional or SYFA fixture/programme?	Yes - no separate permit, unless the organiser's rules say otherwise. No - continue.
Is it a festival or tournament hosted by an SYFA member?	Host applies for an SYFA Host Permit; each SYFA participating team obtains a Participation Permit.
Is it a one-off friendly between SYFA teams?	Follow each relevant league/association procedure. Cross-league teams each obtain their own written approval.
Is the opposition not under SYFA jurisdiction, or is the match outside Scotland?	Obtain league/association support and apply to the SYFA using the appropriate non-SYFA or international route.
Is the match between different age groups?	Add the younger team assessment and parental/carer consent confirmation.
Have all written approvals been granted?	Only then may the football activity proceed.

Appendix A - Relevant SYFA Rules

The following is a working extract from the SYFA Supplementary & Playing Rules 2025-2026. The published Rules remain authoritative.

Rule 125

All clubs, teams, leagues, associations and players under the jurisdiction of the SYFA shall not be permitted to stage or play in any match or competition other than those approved by the SYFA.

Rule 126

All matches must be sanctioned by SYFA or a member region, league or association.

Rule 127

Friendly match permits must adhere to the appropriate league procedure.

Rule 128

Teams must obtain permits to participate in festivals, tournaments and friendly matches. Applications to host or play in a tournament/festival are available on the SYFA website. Costs to host and participate are to be set annually by the SYFA Board.

Rule 129

Any club, team, league, association, player or club representative taking part in an unapproved match or tournament may be debarred from taking part in football under the jurisdiction of the SYFA until dealt with by the relevant committee.

Rule 130

No club, team, league, association, player or club representative shall be permitted to take part in, or be involved in, any match or competition which is not authorised by the Scottish Football Association.

Appendix B - Application checklists

Host application

- ☐ Current application form
- ☐ League/association support
- ☐ Full event rules
- ☐ No Alcohol to be provided, permitted or sold at the event
- ☐ Age groups, dates, venues and formats
- ☐ Safeguarding and first-aid arrangements
- ☐ Discipline and post-event reporting process
- ☐ Other governing-body approvals
- ☐ Fee/payment evidence
- ☐ Contact details and registration IDs

Participation or friendly application

- ☐ Team affiliated for relevant season
- ☐ Players and officials active on COMET
- ☐ Event listed on Permit Tracker (festival/tournament)
- ☐ Correct application route used
- ☐ Both leagues approve cross-league friendly
- ☐ Age-group assessment/consent where required
- ☐ Opposition governing body identified
- ☐ Date, venue, format and contacts supplied
- ☐ Written approval received before play

Document approval

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Head of Operations	Olivia McMahon	OM	24/09/2026
SYFA Chairperson	Scott Robertson	Robertson	22/09/26

Source documents reviewed: Permit Guidance Note v3; Permit Guidance Feedback; SYFA Supplementary & Playing Rules 2025-2026.