

Sector Skills Scan – Football Referee

So what have literacy and numeracy skills got to do with being a Football Referee? Below is a summary of an interview with Steve Swallow, Education Project Officer with The Football Association. Aspects of the job which involve use of **literacy skills** have been highlighted in green, and those which involve **numeracy skills** have been highlighted in blue. If they involve both, **they are highlighted as red**. Apologies to all Football Referees who know that their jobs involve more, different and harder skills than those mentioned below: this is just a snapshot of the skills involved and is by no means exhaustive.

What's the context?

At a local league level, the appointment secretary allocates referees to games. The county FA appoints referees to the senior matches. A semi-pro referee is appointed directly by the Football Association. The appointments appear on the FA website and the referee has to search for their allocated matches and confirm their availability by email to the FA. The dates have to be closed a month in advance.

What training or qualifications are required?

All referees have to complete a basic referee's course, split into 5 modules. This is a practically based course of 16 hours tutor contact followed by 2 assessments – one practical and one tick box **written assessment** on the rules of the game. They then need to affiliate themselves to any professional football body at which stage they become a Level 9 training referee. They are allocated a mentor and referee their first 6 matches are under supervision and support. Full referee status is attained after **completing and submitting 6 match records of achievement**.

As a qualified football referee, they need to **understand and adhere to the Officiating National Occupational Standards at the appropriate level** and maintain up to date **First Aid qualifications**. Fitness testing is also part of the training and qualification requirements for being a football referee. The FA fitness tests for national list officials require referees to be able to run **2500 metres in 12 minutes**, and complete **2 runs of 50 metres in 7.5 seconds**. They will also need **to attend ongoing training courses** as part of their continuous professional development.

What do you do?

Referees have to have good organisational skills. They **confirm match appointments, either by phone or email**, and **note it in a diary or work schedule**. They also have to **research directions** for getting to the ground and **confirm what time they need to be there** in advance of the game. Each ground will have its own code of practice with regard to pre-match arrangements and it is the referee's

responsibility to find out what these are and work to them. This is usually done by telephone and confirmed in writing – by letter or email.

Referees carry responsibility for understanding and implementing the competition rules, which are published; the rules of each competition may differ slightly e.g. rules around nominations.

During the game, the referee keeps a full match record, including number of goals scored, both teams' players and substitutes and record them coming in and out of play. They must also note any cautions and when they were issued. The referee is the sole time-keeper for stoppages, including for injuries, substitutions and cautions. Whilst each referee will have their own method for doing this, it is common to have two watches, one which is allowed to run and one working as a stop watch.

After the game, the referee submits a report to the competition body, including details of the players who scored, final score and any cautions issued. They may be asked to score the home team on hospitality and report any breach of competition rules. This is usually requested within a structured template, or standard form. If there is no standard form provided, this report will need to be supplied by letter to the competition secretary. If players have been cautioned during a match or any incidents have occurred, additional reports will need to be submitted. Cautions reports can often be submitted by email using a standard pro-forma. If a player has been sent off, or an incident has occurred such as a team failing to control its spectators, this usually requires a more substantial report requiring free writing. A separate report is submitted for each incident.

In the case of an incident which results in a disciplinary hearing, the referee may get called to attend. The referee has a duty to attend and will need to confirm in writing that they are available. The hearing will involve appearing in front of a panel Q and A session.

One of the most demanding aspects of a referee's role is people management, and how you interact with people from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences, and promote inclusivity. It is the referee's job to inspect the pitch and decide, under a duty of care, whether it is fit for play or not. This then needs to be communicated to the club, requiring high level communication, diplomacy and negotiating skills. The referee often has to give bad, or at least unwelcome, news, dealing effectively with delicate situations in a highly charged atmosphere and maintain discipline on the pitch, communicating not just verbally but by whistle and body language. He or she must do this in a way that is perceived as unbiased and beyond influence. It is probably no coincidence that some top referees, such as Howard Webb, are former police officers. Another common former occupation is teacher.

In terms of reading requirements, referees need to keep up to date with the rules of each competition, and will receive these by post every year. They need to read and

understand the rules, and interpret these in practice. They also need to read, understand and interpret Contributory Official's Handbooks and guidance notes.

For numeracy skills, in addition to recording scores and time calculations during the match, referees will need to perform administrative tasks such as calculating and submitting a mileage claim, handling money and invoicing for their work and related expenses. The pre-match pitch inspection will include checking distances such as the position of the penalty spot and maximum and minimum field of play dimensions by estimation, using pitch markings and pacing, and similar skills are required during play for free kick distances. Referees will also need to interpret charts and tables, such as league tables, to anticipate the game and its context, for example which teams are playing for promotion or relegation.

It is also an advantage if the football referee is a team player and quickly builds relationships of trust and effective communication with other officials and linesmen or women, has fun and enjoys football!

Summary of Literacy and Numeracy Levels

The literacy skills required to perform the tasks above both competently and confidently are at a relatively high level – Level 2 – the skills you would need to achieve a GCSE grade C – A*. To undertake the numeracy skills required, a Football Referee would benefit from having numeracy skills at Level 1 as a minimum. Have a look at the Learner Route on the Move On website (www.move-on.org.uk) for skills checks, self-assessment material and whole range of self-access skills development resources.

Have a look at the **Football Referee – Skills Checklist** for more information on the sorts of literacy and numeracy skills that could be included in a tailored training course leading to a nationally recognised qualification in literacy or numeracy at Levels 1 or 2.