



# Active Insight: Evidence in Action

## Tip #290



## Small-Sided Games That Work

### Overview

Small-sided games in Years 3–6 support students to apply movement skills and strategies in dynamic contexts. Increased involvement improves decision-making, repetition, and understanding. This approach enhances engagement, builds confidence, and supports wellbeing through inclusive, active participation in structured and meaningful physical activity environments. Frequent opportunities to interact, communicate, and respond to game situations also help students strengthen tactical awareness and apply learning more effectively during play.

### Key Teaching Ideas

Use smaller teams and adapted spaces to maximise involvement and repetition. Focus on decision-making through questioning. Adjust conditions to suit learning goals. Encourage inclusive participation, supporting students to build confidence and apply skills effectively in dynamic game contexts. Provide varied challenges and supportive feedback to help students refine strategies, stay engaged, and experience success through active participation and teamwork.

### Practical Application

- Use 3v3 or 4v4 games to maximise engagement and involvement
- Set up multiple small fields to increase participation opportunities consistently
- Rotate teams regularly maintaining activity levels and inclusive participation outcomes
- Use conditioned games to emphasise specific skills and learning goals
- Design skill-focused games supporting repetition and understanding development effectively

### Next Steps

Apply The [Game Sense](#) Model to maximise learning. Small-sided games improve engagement, decision-making, and skill development through active and inclusive play.

*The Game Sense model is informed by Teaching Games for Understanding (Bunker & Thorpe, 1982), the Game Sense approach (Light, 2013), and contemporary skill acquisition research including ecological dynamics (Davids & Renshaw).*

