

The National League System

Inter-Step Play Off Matches – Steps 4 & 5



1. Participation

Please refer to Regulation 5.2 of the National League System Regulations.

2. Sequence of Matches - Venues

Subject to a full quota of Clubs qualifying to participate, each one-off Inter-League Play Off Match will comprise of a team finishing in third or fourth bottom at Step 4 against a team finishing in second at Step 5. The winning Club will be allocated at Step 4 for the following season and the losing side at Step 5 for the following season.

The intended 'pairing' of Clubs will be on the premise of geographical grouping, with the exact grouping being decided once the Clubs eligible for the Inter-Step Play-Offs is known. Once geographically grouped, the Club at Step 4 with the highest Points Per Game will be paired with Club with the lowest Points Per Game at Step 5 to create a tie. This method will then be applied on a sliding scale with all other Clubs in the geographical group. 2021-22 season note: owing to the large number of reprieves required due to existing vacancies accumulated over the past 3 seasons, (at the time of writing) there will only be six Inter-Step Play-Off ties. The Committee or Sub-Committee reserves the right to pair the competing Clubs at its sole discretion.

Should a reprieve be required at Step 4 then the team at Step 5 with the highest Points Per Game average will also be automatically promoted to Step 4¹. Should there not be 16 eligible Clubs who finish second at Step 5, the Club with the highest Points Per Game average at Step 4 will be reprieved.

The Matches will be played to a conclusion as one-off games and should the scores finish level at the end of normal time then 15 minutes each way extra time will be played. Should the scores still be level at the end of extra time then the winners will be decided by the taking of kicks from the penalty mark.

3. Dates of Games

As agreed by the Alliance and Leagues Committees each season. 2021-22 season note: fixtures will be played on Saturday 30th April 2022 with a 3pm kick-off. However, if both competing Clubs agree, fixtures can be played on Friday 29th April or Sunday 1st May 2022.

It is intended that Clubs are notified of the fixtures on Sunday 24th April 2022.

Should a Club that has qualified to play at home not be able to host the game at their normal home ground on the scheduled date and kick-off time then the game will be played on the ground of their opponents. Should neither Club be able to host the fixture, a venue will be selected at the discretion of the Committee, with any costs associated to this being shared equally by the two Clubs.

¹ See example at Appendix A

4. Financial Arrangements

All Play-Off games will be played under the terms associated to Step 3 & 4 Play Offs with the net gate and any income generated by the broadcast of the match being distributed on the ratio of 37.5% to each of the two Clubs and the balance of 12.5% payable to each League. The Step 4 Club must pay the Step 5 Club any monies due on the day of the fixture, unless other arrangements are agreed between the two Clubs.

The combined 25% that will be due to the two Leagues is to be paid via BACS to The Association in the first instance. The Committee will meet after the Inter-Step Play-Off Matches to discuss any losses that any given tie(s) make and discuss whether or not it is feasible to contribute in order to make the tie(s) break-even. If any such losses were able to be covered, these would be settled from the League 'pot' before any remaining League monies were split amongst the relevant Leagues.

Irrelevant of whether a tie makes a profit or a loss, Any expenses claimed for the match must be agreed with the Committee and the relevant receipts must be entered via email to NLS@TheFA.com, along with a profit/loss sheet.

All matches are arranged by the Committee and are not treated as "Home" matches of the Club on whose ground the match is played. All complimentary tickets will be issued by or at the direction of the League who must be consulted on all arrangements including the allocation of Directors Box tickets. Whilst not designated as "Home" matches, the Club hosting the fixture must ensure that the Match Officials are paid. Details of the Match Official fees/expenses will be distributed once the fixtures are confirmed.

5. Trophies

As per League Rule 19 No trophies or medals will be provided by the Association.

6. COVID-19 and variance of these conditions

The Committee(s) will endeavour to adhere to the protocols set out above, however, particularly in relation to matters which are beyond the Committees' control, all rights are reserved by the Committee(s) to amend this document and/or the format of Inter-Step Play-Offs as deemed appropriate from time-to-time.

7. Other Matters

Any matters arising not covered above should be referred to the relevant League Secretary who will refer to The FA's Alliance or Leagues Committee (as appropriate).

The FA Alliance & Leagues Committee's

14 July 2021

(Updated: 18 March 2022)

Appendix A:

Working example of reprieves and further automatic promotion from Step 5

Example:

1	In this example, the Step 4 starting point is 153 Clubs but requires 160 to be at capacity
2	The bottom two Clubs in each Step 4 division (16 Clubs) are relegated to Step 5
3	The Champion Club in each Step 5 division (16 Clubs) are promoted to Step 4
4	As the number of Clubs in point 2 and point 3 are equal, the sub-total of Clubs remains at 153
5	7 reprieves are required, so the 7 (out of 8) 4th from bottom Clubs at Step 4 with the highest PPG do not have to take part in Inter-Step Play-Offs
6	This leaves 9 eligible Step 4 Clubs for the Play-Offs and 16 eligible 2nd placed Clubs at Step 5
7	As a result of point 6, the Clubs finishing in 2nd position at Step 5 are ranked on PPG with the 7 highest being automatically promoted (taking Step 4 to 160 Clubs)
8	The 9 remaining Step 4 Clubs and 9 remaining Step 5 Clubs are placed into geographical groupings and paired by PPG as per the Play-Off Criteria
9	The total number of Clubs at Step 4 remains at 160 as per point 7, as either the Step 4 Club wins and remains at Step 4 or loses and is replaced by a Step 5 Club.