

The Football Association

Guidance to County FAs and Leagues on League Fixtures and Religious Observance

As part of The Football Association's commitment to providing equal opportunities for all to participate in football, Rule B5 was amended at the 2005 AGM in order to include all religions.

Rule B5

Football and Religious Observance

- (a) A Participant cannot be compelled to play football on bona fide occasions where religious observance precludes such activity, save where the Participant:
- (i) has consented to do so on such occasions; or
 - ii) is registered as a player under written contract, which shall be taken as consent to play on such occasions unless otherwise provided for in the contract.
- (b) Annually, when planning programmes, Competitions shall define and notify agreed dates of such occasions.

Guidance

In order to support you with your fixture planning this guidance has been written to provide you with the most significant dates for religious observance together with some information on them. It is not intended that you avoid all these dates, and the list is by no means exhaustive, but you are advised to consult with your clubs as to the most relevant dates to consider for your locality as this will vary considerably.

A calendar of these dates will be provided by The FA annually. You should note that some religions work on a Lunar calendar (10/11 months) rather than the Gregorian (12 months) which means dates will vary from year to year. In addition some dates can only be confirmed by the sighting of the moon so are sometimes expressed as two or three dates and confirmed nearer the time of the festival. Some dates also have alternative spellings.

Chinese

- Yuan Tan

Christian

- Christmas Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Sunday
- Sundays unless the League is a Sunday League (membership of or participation in Sunday football shall be taken as consent to play on Sundays; except when Christmas Day be on a Sunday)

Hindu

- Diwali (or Diwali)
- Hindu New Year
- Navaratri – this is nine nights but usually finishes quite late, not ideal when playing matches
- Raksha Bandhan
- Holi – only if evening fixtures are made as Holi is celebrated in late afternoon/evenings

Jewish

- Rosh Hashanah
- Yom Kippur
- Passover
- Saturdays (Sabbath) unless the League is a Saturday League (membership of or participation in Saturday football shall be taken as consent to play on Saturdays)

Muslim

- Eid-ul-Fitr (occurs at the end of Ramadan)
- Eid-ul-Adha
- Lailat-ul-Qadr (occurs during Ramadan)
- Sikh
 - Divali (Diwali or Bandi Chhor Divas)
 - Vaisakhi (Baisakhi)
 - Birthday of Guru Nanak

Explanation of Religious Observances

Birthdya of Guru Nanak - Birthdya of founder of Sikhism. This is the holiest festival of the Sikhs which is celebrated over a three-day-period.

Christmas - Celebrates the birth of Jesus who Christians believe to be the Son of God. Christians focus on the incarnation of God becoming a man in this major festival.

Diwali (or Diwali) - (Hindu/Sikh). Festival of Lights. Celebration of good over evil. Victory of Lord Rama over demon Ravana and end of over 14 years of exile of Lord Rama. Prayers are said for Goddess Laxmi for prosperity and beginning of financial year. For Sikhs this has a special significance because the sixth Guru was released from prison on Diwali.

Eid-ul-Adha - This Muslim festival marks the end of Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca) and also commemorates the Prophet Abraham's offer to sacrifice his own son Ishmael.

Eid-ul-Fitr - This day marks the end of the month of fasting for Muslims (Ramadan). The day is marked with prayers and festivity and presents for children.

Good Friday - This day commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus.

Hindu New Year – The day following Diwali and more important than it.

Holi - Spring Festival of Colours for Hindus which symbolises the triumph of good over evil. The event celebrates the death of the evil demomess Holika who was consumed by fire while her nephew Prahlad, who was a devotee of Vishnu, survived. These days the event is signified by burning large bonfires, dancing and spraying coloured powder and water on each other.

Lailat-ul-Qadr ("Night of Power" or "Night of Destiny") marks the Muslim anniversary of the night on which the Prophet Muhammad first began receiving revelations from God, through the angel Gabriel. Lailat-ul-Qadr is one of the last odd-numbered nights of Ramadan.

Navaratri - Nine days of dance (Garba) and celebration when the Goddess Laxmi is worshipped by Hindus.

Passover – A Jewish festival recalling the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and celebrating the barley harvest. Unleavened bread is eaten with a special meal (Sedar), with food, prayers, games and song.

Rakshabandhan - Sisters the holy thread onto brothers wrists for protection. Brothers in return give sisters presents and also offers the sister protection in return.



Ramadan - The Islamic month for fasting from dawn to sunset every day, normally 30 days ending with Eid-ul-Fitr.

Rosh Hashanah - Two-day religious observance that marks the start of the Jewish New Year. It is traditionally announced by blowing a shofar, a ram's-horn trumpet. It is the first of the high holy days, or 'days of awe', and celebrates the creation of the world, the repentance of sins, and the renewal of God's relationship with the Jewish people.

Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) - Founding of Khalsa (Sikhism) order of the Guru by Guru Gobind Singh - he baptised five disciples known as the Five Beloved Ones.

Yom Kippur - Day of Atonement (Jewish). The last day of 10 days of repentance and the holiest day of the year with fasting and prayer.

Yuan Tan - New Year's Day. The most important day in the traditional Chinese calendar and marks the beginning of the first Lunar month.

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