

HOW TO PLAY (AND WIN) AT FANTASY PREMIER LEAGUE

THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE FOR
NEWBIES & VETERANS ALIKE

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A BRIEF PRIMER ON THE FANTASY PREMIER LEAGUE

The Fantasy Premier League (FPL for short) features real-life players and their actual statistical performance or what experts perceive is their contribution to the game. Allowing fans to assemble a team of such players, the Fantasy Premier League typically opens registrations mid-July, about a month before the game begins. Once you choose to participate, the experience is pure anticipation and thrill. From choosing 15 players based on statistics and performance reports to transfers and managing a budget, the FPL is all adrenaline and fun.

The fan frenzy surrounding Fantasy Premier League attracts a lot of attention. Even non-football fans are in-the-know when a season has begun, simply because of the excitement that it creates. For the fans themselves, the FPL has much to offer. Participating in an FPL enhances your football knowledge. Play the FPL long enough and you'll be able to name the right back player for every team, not just the one you support. You'll understand whether players will get the opportunity to pick up assists or make crosses.

If you have buddies who are serious football fans, you'll want to be an active part of the FPL. There's no better reason to catch up than to discuss draws and transfers. Plus, there's nothing like bragging after a win over friends or family.

Every year, the FPL adds more teams and ‘football manager’s’. That’s hardly surprising, considering how people love the feeling of being in control. By building your FPL league, you’re given control over some of the biggest football stars in the world. From managing team affairs each week to squad planning, team and player analysis, there are many deep pleasures that the sport offers. And after you have made your pick, it’s time to watch what happens after the kick-off at the edge of your seat. Your team may crush competition or fail you miserably, and either way, it’s a crazy, exciting ride.

If you want to extract the most fun out of this experience, it’s best to absorb the rules and do your research well. Football is known to be one of the hardest sports to predict, and if you want to compete seriously, you have to know exactly what you’re doing. The best part about the FPL is that anybody could win. Veterans may have more of a hold on the game, but novices can beat them with the right strategies. That’s why we’ve put together an eBook to revisit FPL rules and understand strategies that could earn you victory. This eBook revises the basics while exploring advanced strategies that you could use to get an advantage over your competition. So, what are you waiting for? Let’s get started.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS: HOW TO PLAY FANTASY PREMIER

Free to play, the FPL attracts millions of football fans from across the world. If you have fantasised about being in control of your very own football team, then this game is for you. Every manager, like you, begins with a budget of £100m which they use to create their 15-member team. This line-up can be changed through the game, by transferring players in and out of your team. The FPL is just as exciting as the Premier League. After all, the performance of your fantasy FPL team players is based on the performance of the same players in real-time.

What is the Fantasy Football Premier League? How does it work?

What makes fantasy football so special is that it puts the sport back into the hands of the fans. Fantasy football participants get to build their own football teams and participate in leagues. In the United States it's the NFL, but over in Europe, it's Football. Irrespective of the country, fantasy football involves pitching your custom-built team against those of others.

Today, every country has its own fantasy league. Many of these leagues are organized by media houses that own the rights to broadcast them on TV. Fantasy football players also have their own private leagues. Fantasy FPL is probably the most popular among them. Each year, this league adds a whole bunch of players. At present, more than 6 million players participate in the FPL.

So, what's the purpose of the Fantasy Premier League? At the heart of it, the FPL gives fans the unique opportunity to manage actual Premier League Players. Each player has a price assigned, and managers have to use their limited budget to assemble teams of them. Once you have a team, you get to compete against the teams of millions of other players. When a player on your team scores a goal in the real Premier League, your team is awarded a point. If any player on your team is benched or injured, your team suffers that loss as well.

The FPL is particularly popular as a free alternative to betting. Unlike betting, where you have little to no control, you can stand to win by making good player choices in the FPL. However, if money is what makes it exciting for you, then FPL has a betting segment called the DFS (Daily Fantasy Sports). By laying down around £5-£10, you could stand to make millions, based on the league in which you're playing.

There are two basic ways in which the FPL can be played:

1. You can play the FPL solo, by pitching your team against all registered managers across the world.
2. Yet another option is entering Private Leagues to battle against friends, families or colleagues. You can enter into a maximum of three Private Leagues of this sort.

Creating your FPL team

To kickstart your FPL managerial career, visit the website. Once on it, you can register and create an account to get started. When logged in, you'll find an empty roster on your screen, which you can use to create your team.

So, who should you add to your FPL team? That's simple. The objective is to choose 3 forwards, 5 midfielders, 5 defenders, and 2 goalkeepers without exceeding your initial budget.

Now, why is this so complicated? Well, consider this. Expensive players consume more of your budget, forcing you to also choose cheaper players. So, the ideal team would have the best-performing mix of expensive and cheap players. However, there are ways to make this decision easier. For instance, during the game every week only 11 of your 15 players will start and play the field. And it's your decision to choose those 11 players. This creates some leeway for hiring expensive players as you can bench the cheap ones. Pay close attention to the roster and you'll see that many expensive players are forwards.

Without insights such as those above, choosing your Fantasy Premier League team is like shooting blind at the olympics. That's why we've extensively discussed team-picking strategies later in this eBook.

How to create a league

If competing against friends and family sounds fun to you, creating a private league is what you should do. Actually, setting this up is the easiest thing ever. You simply need to visit the FPL website, click on Leagues > Create and Join New Leagues > Create a League > Create a Classic League >. Once you have, it's simply a matter of choosing favourable options and inviting other participants via a code.

FPL app users are expected to follow more or less the same procedure to create their own private leagues.

The scoring system (how to win and lose points in table format)

What's exciting about the FPL is the different ways in which you can score points, through events such as goals, assists and clean sheets. Here's the best part - your captain can do double damage. Whatever your captain's score in the Premier League, it's doubled for your FPL scoreboard. But that's not all. You can also score with players in different positions in the following ways.

Action	Points scored
Playing up to 60 minutes	1
Playing more than 60 minutes	2
Each goal scored by a 6	

goalkeeper/defender	
Each goal scored by a midfielder	5
Each goal scored by a forward	4
Each assist	3
Clean sheet by a goalkeeper/defender (must play 60+ mins)	4
Clean sheet by a midfielder (must play 60+ mins)	1
Every three shots saved by a goalkeeper	1
A penalty save by a goalkeeper	5
Bonus points for the best players in a match	1-3

Is there ways in which your team can lose points? Sure.

Action	Points scored
Missing a penalty	-2
Every two goals conceded by a goalkeeper/defender	-1
Each yellow card	-1
Each red card	-3
Each own goal	-2

Using chips to boost overall score during any gameweek

There are four types of chips that FPL managers can use to boost scores.

1. *The Wildcard* - Every manager is given two wildcards, the first of which can be used prior to December 29th and the second, after. The wildcard allows you unlimited transfers during a gameweek without incurring any loss of points.

2. *The Triple Captain* - During normal gameweeks, your captain's score is worth double. However, you can deploy the Triple Captain chip during any gameweek to triple your captain's score.

3. *The Bench Boost* - Usually, benched FPL players don't contribute to your score. But the Bench Boost chip allows you to add benched player points to your overall game score during one gameweek a season.

4. *The Free Hit* - Again, this chip allows you unlimited transfers for one gameweek without taking point hits. But transfers made using this chip last only until the end of that gameweek.

What happens when players get injured or suspended?

The objective in the FPL is to have active, reliable and scoring players. So, if your player looks to be out for whatever reason, injury or suspension, it's something you have to consider to act upon. Even if your player is a sub or being rotated regularly, you may want to replace him with an alternative who will get more gameplay. Further, player form can also deteriorate through the Premier League. Ideally, it's best not to be wooed into choosing one-week-wonders and sporadic scorers.

THE ROPES OF BUDGET MANAGEMENT

When you have £100 million to spend, the pressure is on! How do you build a capable squad and get the highest ‘returns’ from your player investment? Here are some ideas.

Distribute the money evenly: Spending more or less evenly on defenders to forwards will offer you the flexibility to pick quality players in every position. With a balanced approach, you don’t have to pay a big sum on defenders at the cost of your midfielders or forwards. For example, you can bring in two for £4.5 million, and pay more for top players - this will allow you to build an overall strong team and reduce the chances of ‘I paid too much’ buyer’s regret at a later stage.

Get your midfield strategy right: A common mistake managers make is to spend too much on midfielders and create a budget deficit in other positions. By spreading out prices, you can make the most of early transfer targets, include one or more expensive players and still have a decent midfield. For instance, you can splurge £5 million on a midfielder and start with a 4-4-2 or 3-4-3 trio when your defenders have good potential in the next couple of gameweeks.

Split £9.0m between two goalkeepers: Fantasy Premier League research indicates that elite level competitors are spending less on goalkeepers than average players. The idea is to invest more in forward and midfield players to score consistently every gameweek. Spending between £8.5m

and £9.5m on goalkeepers and rotating regularly is an astute strategy. Split the amount equally between two goalkeepers - bringing in an elite goal stopper at £5.5m may not be the best move.

Balance defensive and attacking positions: Try to include defenders at every price point to swap easily for any emerging target in the early gameweeks. You can also pick a less expensive defender early on to focus more of your funds on attackers.

Big investments in two strikers up front: A back three and two strikers may not always work, but it is increasingly being used by real-world Premier League managers. Consider loosening your purse strings for the front two and bring in a cheaper striker after looking at the early fixtures. If you find a strong forward who isn't expensive, use him instead of a pricier forward to rebalance budget and quality.

Watch out for want-away players: A Premier League reality is that players speak publicly about wanting to leave their club. High-priced want-away players are a risk because they could move to a rival club and perform swimmingly well for them. It's the same for an out-of-favour player, who may easily be part of a different Premier League team and help them move up the scoreboard.

Your backline does not have to come from seven different clubs: The purpose of choosing two goalkeepers and five defenders from seven different clubs is to increase the odds of a clean sheet bonus. On the flip side, this tactic can also lower the likelihood of big scores as there's

no guarantee that all your picks will outperform opponents on the same weekend. An alternative is to pick a couple of your backline from the same team that has a good defensive record.

Note top players who have adapted to different positions: FPL players may be listed incorrectly, and herein lies an opportunity to spend more on say someone like Mo Salah who is listed as a midfielder in FPL but plays as part of Liverpool's forward line. In fact, any player used in a more forward position than what the FPL lists should be noted. In contrast, a player who has been listed as a forward during the season and previously categorized as a midfielder is best avoided.

Don't follow the crowd on big-money signings: The tendency is to prioritize big-money signings, but the possibility that they won't start strong should also be considered. In other words, avoid fixating on the handful of top players that everyone wants, rather, check if they are quick or slow starters. This way, you will end up spending big money on a deserving star player who rakes up points for you early on.

Give new signings time to settle in: Overseas signings present an exciting prospect, but they can also be duds if not employed in the right positions. To be on the safer side, give high-potential new signings some time to get comfortable before including them to your team. See how they adjust first or you could lose.

Budget players: Inevitably you will have to fill out some of your squad with ‘bargain basement’ players. The cheapest Goalkeepers and Defenders cost you 4.0m whereas Midfielders and Forwards cost you 4.5m - finding a player in these categories who plays most weeks and returns either basic to good points return can prove its weight in Gold. Keep an eye out for who has been under-priced, who has played more minutes at the end of the last season, or who has been sold / or returned from injury.

Research, research, research

Whether you’re new to FPL or a veteran, investing time in legwork will undoubtedly improve your decisions. If you truly love the game (and its virtual version), research should not feel like a chore 😊

Here’s what you want to consider:

- Players who have been regular fixtures on the pre-season circuit
- Players who have not been performing on par with their status
- Player injury doubts and news
- Which players are playing where?
- Young players who have entered the first-team squad
- Players with a shaky disciplinary record

If you have the patience for it, consider creating an Excel sheet of these details so you can refer to them as needed. Of course, if your memory muscles are exceptionally powerful and you stay on top of the latest FPL and footie news, you may be able to process these details in your mind. We also recommend downloading an Excel sheet of FPL fixtures to figure



out which players have a favourable run of games coming up - based on whether they're playing home matches or the strength of the opposition. A color-coded Excel sheet of fixtures will help you make regular changes to your team more easily and accurately.

THE BEST FORMATIONS TO USE

Popular formations

Let's start with the most common formations used by FPL managers: 3-5-2 and 3-4-3. You may have used it too because the stronger your attacking assets, the more points you can potentially win. There are instances where three attackers and seven attackers have outscored the best defenders of the season.

Here's the catch: as you invest more on the seven attacking players, you will be left with less to build a strong defence. A leaky defence will cost you points. From a budget perspective, 3-5-2 may encourage you to bring in expensive mid-fielders to bolster your attacking line. As a short-term strategy to gain points, these two formations do fine.

4-4-2 and 4-3-3

It has become increasingly difficult to maintain a clean sheet. When choosing defenders, assess if the team is capable of maintaining a clean sheet. Also note if the defender is playing in an attacking position in set pieces or during counter attacks, as this can earn you bonus points. If you can spend wisely on defenders, 4-4-2 and 4-3-3 should be under consideration. A wise pick of four defenders and six quality forwards and midfielders will help you do better in the long term. This is also a safe

strategy as you will still have six attackers to make up for any gaps in points. On the downside, bringing in top players for these formations will be an expensive proposition.

5-3-2, 5-2-3

A few FPL managers are fans of the 5-3-2. Their arguments are usually along the lines of being able to afford the most expensive attackers and the potential for quality midfielders to score a goal. Sure, strikers may not score goals consistently, but a formation with five defenders will always be stressful even for the most mentally tough manager. Maintaining a clean sheet is next to impossible with this formation. Overreliance on midfielders seldom works out - if it does, that's more points for scoring goals but a few bad moments during the 90 minutes will be pretty disastrous. Defenders often return the most consistent points over the season, so sticking with this gives you a good baseline of points. However, the lack of explosive and form players higher up the pitch can stop you from getting those big scores and moving up the rankings.

5-4-1, 4-5-1

A highly defensive formation can be a hit or a miss. There is the chance to rake up points with four or five midfielders. And those who have used these formations to capitalize on top player injuries have also successfully raked up points. Unless you have a good answer to ‘do you really need that strong a defence?’, you’re better off opting for other formations.

Ask FPL managers about their preferred formations and you’re bound to get different answers. Even though there can be no perfect formation, some are more fool-proof and less risky than others. Deciding on a formation is ultimately up to your personal preference, track record and a bit of luck.

MASTERING PLAYER PICKS: GOALKEEPER, DEFENCE, MIDFIELD AND ATTACK

Everyone wants to have the best team possible and this can be done by getting yourself all the best performing players. The only hitch is that you are on a budget and need to stick to that budget. So, what do you do? You weigh all the pros and cons and find the players for your team that not only fit in your budget but can give you your best value for money.

The four positions you need to look at are: Goalkeeper, Defence, Midfield and Attack. In this section we look at each of these positions individually and find out the best strategy pick the best player for your team. With these tips you be able to form a strong team that keeps those points coming in consistently.

Goalkeeper

Goalkeepers are one of the most important players in the team though often overlooked and picked last. However, the right goalkeeper can get you a good number of points while one that concedes goals regularly can lose you points. It is therefore important to pick the right goalkeeper for the team.

Goalkeepers come in varying price brackets with the one that belong to the top teams costing more and those that belong to teams down the line being more affordable. When picking a goalkeeper, you need to keep a few things in mind:

Clean sheets: When looking for a goalkeeper for your team you first need to look at their stats. A clean sheet is the one of the first things that is looked at for a goalkeeper. To have a clean sheet a goalkeeper needs to be in the game for a full 60 minutes at least and not concede a single goal. The more clean-sheets a player has, the better that speaks for his abilities.

Fantasy points: The next thing that is looked at when picking a goalkeeper is their fantasy football points. There are number of areas where players can score points. Players can score points for the matches they played in, the goals scored, assisting a goal, saving a penalty and so on. In the case of goalkeepers, they can win points for every three goals saved. A goalkeeper with higher points has saved more number of goals than one with fewer points.

Two is better than one: It is always better to pick two goalkeepers and rotate them on a weekly basis. You can pick one from a high pay bracket and one from a lower pay bracket or both from a mid-range pay bracket. We would advise the latter option as it improves your chances of gaining points. Having two goalkeepers is also a good strategy in case one gets injured and needs to be replaced.

Weaker teams have advantages too: If you need to choose a player from a lower price bracket because of budget constraints you might actually be at an advantage. When a goalkeeper plays with a weaker defence, he usually has to face more shots. This give the goalie a chance to make more saves and actually earn point for your team.

Defence

When choosing the defenders for the team there are some things that simply cannot be ignored. Here's what you need to look for in the defenders that you choose:

Clean sheets: With defenders it's all about the clean sheets. The more clean-sheets the stronger is your defence. Again, you need to look at your budget before going all out and getting the defenders in the top pay bracket but looking at clean sheets instead of just team wins can also help you decide if a player will earn points for your team or not. Clean sheets are shared between the team so you don't have to pick the most expensive player for your team.

Fixtures: Just getting your defenders is not enough, you also need to plan for fixtures. Easy fixtures improve the chances of a clean sheet. Plan ahead for the next five games keeping the fixtures in mind when you choose the defenders for a match.

Contribution to offense: Fantasy points can be earned from assisting a goal, so when choosing your defenders find those that have earned points in this area. Look at a few wingbacks and full-backs when

selecting players for your team. With the right balance your team will have a much stronger chance at gaining points.

The penalty takers: An additional advantageous skill to look for in a defender is someone who can take set-pieces. Those that can take the penalty shots are always handy to have around and those that score goals can earn six points per goal scored.

Avoid the Yellow Card: Defenders getting yellow cards is quite common, but you need to be careful of the ones that get them too often. Yellow cards can lose you points as each card equals -1. You also run the risk of the player being banned if they collect more than five yellow cards before the year ends.

Bonus points: Clearances, blocks, and interceptions (CBI) can earn defenders bonus points. If you can't decide between two players and they both cost about the same, you might want to look at bonus points. Players that pickup bonus points more regularly will always be an asset to your squad.

Diversify: As far as possible get all your defenders from different teams. Not having two defenders from the same team helps you to split your risks and better your chances at earning points in the long run.

Midfield

Midfielders are all about traveling across the field, disrupting the other teams play, and scoring the goals. When choosing your midfielders, you

can save some of your budget to get the best of the best but there are also a few things to consider before you spend all your money.

Goals are good: One of the first things to look at when picking midfielders is how many goals they score on an average. You want the midfielders that score more goals. Every goal a midfielder scores in FPL earns you five points. Your first pick should always be midfielders who score goals.

Choose good form: When it comes to midfielders the better form an individual player is in, the better for the team. Players in lower price brackets who are in good form could also serve the team well. If you are worried about your budget, then you should use form as a deciding factor among the cheaper players.

Watch closely: When you see a midfielder in good form get him on your team as soon as possible. Chances are that if he keeps it up most other managers will have him on their teams by the end of the season. But if you were one of the first to sign him on you would have a definite advantage over the rest.

Set piece takers: Just like with defenders, if you can find players that are good at taking penalty shots, free kicks and corners, you should have them on the team. Every opportunity to earn points is a good idea when selecting players.

Avoid cheap alternatives: As mentioned earlier, when it comes to midfielders, individual form is important. If you are looking at two midfielders for a top team and one is cheaper than the other, also look at individual form. The cheaper option is only a good idea if he is as good form or better than his teammate.

Attack

The Attack or Forward position in football is one of the most important when it comes to scoring goals. The attackers are the ones who are practically in enemy territory, so to speak and you always want those who are right up there on the goal-scoring. Here's what you need to look for when choosing attackers for your team:

Prioritise your funds: You want your goals which is why the attackers are where you send the most money. While every position is important in the game, goals have the potential to earn you the maximum points so that's where the money should go. You will also most likely pick a captain from your choice of attackers and because a captain's points can be doubled when scoring, you really want the best players on your team.

Ownership: Attackers are the players that have the highest ownership. You too should consider owning a top-class player for maximum returns. Some of the biggest names in the game are the attackers or forwards and they are owned by a good percentage of managers.

Individual form: Never ignore the individual form of a player when selecting your attackers. If a player is in good form you get him on your

team, it's as simple as that. If he's been scoring goals consistently, don't pass up a chance to get him to earn points for you.

Penalty takers: Again, every opportunity to earn points should be considered. If your attackers are good at taking penalty shots, then that could be a deciding factor if you can't make up your mind between two players. **Some clubs rotate takers, and some clubs have their taker set in stone, either way keep an eye out because as of 19/20 VAR is here!**

These guidelines should help you master the art of picking players so that you have one of the strongest teams in the FPL.

10 STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFERS AND TSB STRATEGIES

You get one free transfer every gameweek. If you don't use it, it will be carried forward to the next gameweek. You get only two free transfers. If you don't transfer in and out for two consecutive gameweeks, you will have two free transfers for the third gameweek. You cannot cancel your transfers once you've confirmed them. As your decision is irreversible, you will obviously need to pay attention to how you plan transfers.

1. The one free transfer each gameweek is an opportunity to acquire in-form players, less expensive star players or swap out injured or suspended players.
2. Keep the first two gameweeks in mind when forming your opening squad so you can carry over your first transfer. Avoid extra transfers that will cost you four points. Save transfers and combine a hit with two free swaps.
3. Where it makes sense (such as when you want to update your squad), roll over your free transfer to get two transfers in the following gameweek. This will free up the cash you need to bring in a player with a hefty price tag who would have otherwise been unaffordable. Often you can become locked into a team dynamic but two transfers gives you license to change your team theme; from heavy in midfield to heavy in attack for example.

4. Leverage the one Wildcard you get to make three transfers to increase chances of at least one of those players from making a difference and making up the four point deficit. This tactic has been used successfully by FPL winners.

5. A change in managers may affect player output and costs. For example, in the 2017/2018 season, Abdoulaye Doucouré and Richarlison were top early picks at Watford. Their biggest win was against Chelsea (4-1). However, the star players' performance dropped in the wake of manager Marco Silva's departure in gameweek 24. In fact, all seven of Doucouré's goals were under Silva. Managers who placed their bets on either player in the early stages benefitted from a price rise and were dealt a blow from a loss of form in the weeks following Silva's exit. Consider these probabilities to plan transfers and manage your budget more efficiently.

6. Plan transfers proactively. For example, you can pick a player if you know his next three games are easy, and at an early stage, plan a transfer for the 4th round.

7. Don't give up on premium players. Keep them in your sights unless they're injured. There is a reason they are priced highly!

8. Leverage bench boosts when most bench players have double gameweeks. Also, for the sake of at least two points, ensure that your bench players play weekly.

9. Don't hesitate to hit the green button for a transfer on Monday if the player in question does not have mid-week games. This will help you avoid a higher price. However, be warned that anything can happen in the wonderful and torturous world of FPL and a cold or freak training injury can strike at any time! Play the price rises but do so at your own risk!

10. Go beyond the statistics. Yes, you definitely need stats, but don't take your eyes off the real action. You'll know which teams and players are doing well, which will guide every aspect of your FPL strategy.

How about players with a high TSB percentage?

Transfer strategies involve taking a look at each individual player. Here, you will encounter Teams Selected By or TSB, indicating how many FPL managers have a particular player in their team, on the My Team page or using the Statistics tab. You will likely find one or more players who have been selected by more than half of the teams.

- If things are going well for you, high TSB players can strengthen your standing. You can pick high TSB players and captain them in each round. If you want to play it safe, view every team after each round to see the players picked by other managers and use the same players.



- If you're trailing the leaders, you should not look at high TSB players but opt for differentials, who are players with a TSB value of less than 5%. Of course, don't pick only the differentials - maintain a balance of high TSB players with differentials. For example, you can pick the teammate of a high TSB player. If his team is performing well but he is not producing much output, then you can expect the lower TSB player to step in and support your team.

THE BEST TIMES TO USE YOUR CHIPS

... & how to navigate double and blank weeks.

Winning the FPL is prestigious, as it's probably the world's most popular fantasy football league. What makes the FPL fun is the element of luck and chips, which players can use to dramatically change their standings during FPL season. How you use your chips could substantially affect your final standing in the competition. So, when and how should an FPL manager decide to use chips? To understand this, let's explore what each chip does more carefully.

1. The Free Hit Chip

The ultimate fantasy wildcard of any sport would probably be to completely switch-up a team for a week. That's exactly what the Free Hit Chip allows you to do. During any gameweek during the FPL, you can use the Free Hit Chip to change all players on your team for an entire week. This change won't result in any loss of points. However, the new team you create won't exist beyond the week, after which your original team will return into existence. So, when's the best time to use this wildcard?

Some experts suggest using the Free Hit Chip in week 31 or 33. Why these two weeks in particular? It's during these two weeks that the FA Cup Quarter-final and Semi-final take place. You could seize this opportunity to place players in the Quarter-final and Semi-final on your

team. You could also use the Free Hit Chip to deal with Blank and Double gameweeks.

***Blank gameweek** - When games are postponed due to weather or clashes between the EFL and FA Cups.

***Double gameweek** - When two postponed games end up happening in the same week.

2. The Bench Boost Chip

Using the Bench Boost Chip, you can get points for all of your players instead of getting points only for the 11 players in play. So, when are all or most of your 15 players likely to be in play during the Premier League? Well, that's easy. It's most likely when there's more than one match scheduled in a week or when you have players from opposing teams of the same match on your team. So, when are these situations most likely to manifest?

Many top FPL managers choose to use their Bench Boost chip in gameweek 34 or gameweek 37 when double games are scheduled. But this isn't pre-decided. Ideally, you should refer to match fixtures and make the decision.

3. The Triple Captain Chip

The Trip Captain Chip triples the points your captain earns in a game instead of doubling it as always. So, this chip should ideally be used

when your captain is likely to earn most points in a week. Conventionally, this prediction is made using player stats and performance against teams they're playing that week. So, when is the best time to use the Triple Captain Chip?

Again, your captain is most likely to score higher in a week when he's playing two games instead of one. So, a double gameweek is the best time to play your Triple Captain Chip.

4. The Wildcard Chip

The Wildcard can be played two times in a season; once in the first half and once more in the second half. It allows to make permanent, unlimited transfers on your team without taking any points hits. So, when is the best time to play the Wildcard Chip?

There's no one formula to make the most of the wildcard. The trick is to hold on to it as long as possible, using it only when your squad has too many non-starters or injuries. Each manager has to thoroughly analyze his or her own squad before deciding to use this card.

NB: The International break between GW4 and GW5 is a good place to take stock, look at the data from the first 4 weeks and pick a side to take you forward into the season.

Word of warning though, if the Club World Cup keeps its current format going forward the UCL winner will be absent for a few matches in December while they compete for the ‘biggest prize in world football’ (not) so a Wildcard could be saved until the early GWs of December in a season following a Premier League side winning the UCL.

ROOKIE MISTAKES TO AVOID

Even rookie FPL managers dream of the day when they make a magnificent move that transforms their team's performance. But the truth is that fantasy football is better approached by avoiding mistakes than attempting tricky moves. It doesn't matter whether you're a beginner or a seasoned player, you could be committing one or more of these rookie mistakes that could keep you from a brag-worthy season performance. That's why we've put together a list of mistakes for you to avoid at all costs.

1. Jumping on the popular captain bandwagon

This is a mistake more common among beginners. If your team isn't performing well, you may conceive the idea of transferring a captain who can earn you quick points. Discussion forums such as Reddit are full of speculations about various players performances and 'favourite' captains. This information represents individual opinions and can't be relied on as much as statistics. Refrain from choosing captains based on anything but statistics.

2. Getting tempted by hot favourites and performance spikes

Say there's a debut player who's performed exceptionally well in the first two matches. This doesn't mean that you should immediately

transfer him into your team. The crowd may be sold and his price may have shot-up substantially. However, following the crowd is never a good idea in the FPL. Further, when a player's price has gone up, it's usually too late to put him on your team and enjoy the benefits of it.

3. Staying loyal to your favourite clubs

As a rookie FPL manager, you are likely to mix passion for the sport and your club with participation in the FPL. Successful FPL managers never let the emotions affect team decisions. As an FPL manager, your objective should be to pick players based on their performance and not the club that they play for. While it's not entirely impossible to win with your club's players, it's not smart to ignore players just because they play for a rival club.

4. Taking unnecessary hits for too many transfers

When starting an FPL season, you may be tempted to transfer players who don't perform well early on. But this isn't always a great idea. According to records, top FPL managers maintain their hits at a minimum, by choosing their ideal FPL team to start off with. The goal is to create the ultimate FPL team and have faith in your players and bench members through the season. Ideally, transfers should be reserved for injuries and suspensions.

5. Not tracking play meticulously

One of the most important things in FPL is to choose solid starters for your squad. There's a strong correlation between time played and bonus points, so you should focus on keeping no-starters away from your team, as much as possible. You could use a tool like WhoScored to keep track of game play. The tool not only displays line-ups and formations but also minutes played for each player.

6. Ignoring double gameweeks

Double gameweeks are incredibly important, as we've stressed early on in this guide. Double gameweeks are when you can leverage chips to maximize your points. Whether it's the Free Hit chip or Triple Captain chip, you can dramatically improve your standings by capitalizing on double gameweeks. However, rookies who are unaware of double gameweeks are unlikely to keep an eye out for them on fixtures or make the most of them.

7. Not planning ahead of time

If you're familiar with the FPL, you know the value of tracking goal projections and other such stats to gauge the difficulty of upcoming games. In the FPL, predicting your team's performance is critical, because timely transfers by doing so can change the game for you. You also have to track double gameweeks at the end of the season to get

ahead and stand a any chance of winning. All of these strategies require planning in advance.

8. Jumping the gun on chips

Rookies are very likely to spend their chips early on in the game, missing out on the action of double gameweeks and struggling with blank gameweeks. Chips are what top FPL managers use to gain the extra points that give them the lead. If you spend chips too early, you'll be left with little power to change the tides of the game at a later point. That's why it's important to hang on to your chips as long as possible in a game.

9. Missing deadlines carelessly

Missing deadlines could be anything from losing the opportunity to transfer to failing to change a captain. You can avoid this mistake by creating your line-ups in advance, while the games are happening. You can also plan your transfers and captains well in advance using apps to document your choices. Ensure that you do whatever it takes to never miss an opportunity, even if it means setting multiple reminders.

10. Reacting out of displeasure at your own team's performance and making rash decisions straight away

It is very easy to care very deeply about how you do in FPL, for fear of the office talk on Monday, for your place on twitter or reddit, or just for your own self-esteem after doing some research and seeing the opposite happen. In the end, we can prepare and prepare for what happens but a lot of it is out of our control and if your team does badly on a Saturday and you start making transfers right away you may end up losing players or points who are due a haul of points.

BREAKING THE FPL SEASON DOWN INTO PARTS

Getting ahead of competition in the FPL can be tricky if you approach it as one massive game. Like most sports, the FPL is best approached in stages, so you can analyse them in-depth and craft smart game strategies. Moreover, by breaking the FPL into stages, you can gain more clarity on when to make transfers, use chips, and stay still without making any moves. What most guides won't explain to you is that the FPL has very distinct stages, each of which function very differently. And these stages can't be successfully dealt with using the same strategy. Before we explore dynamic FPL strategies, let's understand the stages that make up a typical FPL.

One FPL season has the following major stages -

1. The season start
2. The intense winter schedules
3. International breaks
4. Double game weeks
5. The season finale

Each of these stages offer their own unique problems. For instance, when the season kicks-off, it's critical to not fall into the traps of both long-term and short-term planning. If you plan too far ahead, you won't be able to respond to short-term upsets such as injuries or suspensions.

If you don't plan at least five or six gameweeks, you won't be prepared or have enough of a budget to make critical transfers.

Strategies for the season start

At the beginning of a season, you only need to worry about your starters. Build a team that can get you through the first two gameweeks, at least. Further, it's important to stay patient. You have to pick starters that you can believe in, even if their form wavers early in the game.

Strategies for the intense winter schedule

Once you have prospered through the first few game fixtures, you will have enough data to make judgements about tactics, player picks and a degree of their forms. You can use that data to plan for the intense winter schedule. One popular strategy is to use a wildcard at this point to switch-up your squad based on acquired insights. However, you can choose to delay using the wildcard at this point if you haven't been hit with any major injuries, suspensions, or doubts about your players' forms.

19/20 Tip:

This season will see the introduction of the first staggered Winter Break in FPL; with half the teams playing one weekend, and the other half the next weekend. Spreading 10 fixtures over 2 weeks gives every team 2 weeks off.

Strategies for international break

The international break is a period of no activity that's usually around 14 days long. Some FPL managers choose to use their wildcards here because they have enough time to think through strategies when no games are in play. It's also during this period that you get more insights into injured players and their recovery. You can save yourself from early transfers by waiting until the internal break to act on more solid data.

Strategies for double gameweek

As discussed earlier, double gameweeks is where you have the best chances of getting ahead with strategically applied chips. It's highly inadvisable to make transfers during this period unless you have stats that you can trust about a player's performance with certainty.

Strategies for the season finale

Using the Wildcard during the season finale is almost a norm. If your previous players aren't in play, this is where you switch-up your team to ensure that you are in a position to earn maximum points. It also makes sense to choose the player likely to score most as captain and use the Triple Captain chip during the season finale if you still have it available.

LEVERAGING DATA FOR DECISION-MAKING

One way of knowing you are selecting the team with the best chance of doing well is by looking at individual player stats. All the data you need is already out there and it's just a matter of collating all the information and drawing your conclusions based on hard facts.

Different formulae have been applied to different stats to measure how well a player has done in a season. The data can then be used in predictive analysis to find out how well a player will do in upcoming seasons under different conditions. Based on the predictions, team managers can decide which players would prove to be the biggest assets to their teams.

There are a few ways stats are analysed to evaluate player performance and each of these ways looks at different stats in the game. Some of these ways include calculating xG, xA, xGA and xCS. Each of these methods can provide insights on which players will serve a team well and which ones are not likely to suit certain fixtures.

xG

First, we need to know what exactly xG is. For starters, xG stands for Expected Goals. xG measures each goal scoring chance a player has in a game. Note it is not the actual number of goals that a player scores in a game but an analysis of every goal scoring chance the player creates for himself. xG looks at every opportunity a player had to score a goal in a game and then rates that chance on its quality.

A chance that had a higher probability of being a goal is scored higher and one that had a lower probability is scored lower. For example, an xG score of 0.5 means that there was a 50% possibility of a goal being scored from that shot. In other words, for every hundred times that scenario came into play fifty goals could be scored.

The xG scores are calculated using historical data of shots which can be obtained from the Opta's database.

The factors that help determine an xG score include:

- The distance from the goal.
- If the shot was taken on the rebound.
- The angle the shot was taken from.
- If it was a one-on-one with the keeper.

xG scores are always calculated based on historical data and are not based on individual players. Any two players who take the same shot under the same circumstances will have the same xG score for that shot.

xA

Another metric that is measured using data from games is the xA or Expected Assist. Similar to xG, the xA analyses the probability of a pass being converted into a direct assist. The location of the pass and the type of the pass are considered during the analysis. Following the same model as the xG, the xA also uses historical shot data to calculate an xA score.

Both xG and xA can be applied to individual players as well as to entire teams. Teams can be scored to understand the quality of every goal-scoring shot and the quality of every pass during a game. Another metric called xGA or expected goals against can also be applied to teams. xGA follows a similar model and calculate the quality of the team's goals scoring shots against another team.

How is xG, xA, and XGA useful?

The main purpose of the xG, xA and xGA scores are to find out how many goal scoring chances a team/player is generating and what is the quality of those shots. Especially when looking at teams the scores can be used to see which teams create and take a higher volume of good quality chances.

When applying this to creating an FPL team the scores can be used to see which players have high xG scores. However, a high xG score could mean one of two things:

That a player is a threat to the other team because he has an increased chance of scoring goals.

That a player is generating goal scoring shots but not utilising them.

In the first case the player would make an asset to the team but in the second, he wouldn't. For this reason, 'Expected' score like xG, xA, and xGA should not be used in isolation but along with other stats that include:

- The total number of shots taken
- Number of shots in the box
- Touches in the box
- The big chances

It is also important to watch a player's performance over a number of games to best assess their capabilities.

xCS

As you probably guessed by now, xCS stands for Expected Clean Sheets. This is another metric that is looked at to evaluate a player or team's performance. xCS scores are calculated using the Poisson distribution method. Stats of the average number of goals scored previously are collected for the analysis. The score gives the percentage of the likelihood of a clean sheet for a team or a player.

The data is then used to predict how many goals can be scored in future matches involving those teams or players. Bookies lines are also used to

help with the predictions. Teams or players that have a higher probability of keeping a clean sheet are favoured over those who have a lower probability. xCS scores work well when selecting goalkeepers and defenders for a team.

As with xG, xA and xGA it is always better to use the xCS score along with other stats and with actually observing how a player is in a game. It should be noted that xCS scores can often underestimate the chance of a 0-0 draw.

There are several tools and data sources available online that can help managers calculate xG, xA, xGA, and xCS. Anyone who wants to improve their chances of points earned by their FPL teams should give data analysis a good look. Stats that are produced by good data can go a long way in predicting a player or team's performance in upcoming fixtures. The stats can also help you budget for each of the positions depending on the players with the best scores.

THE BEST FPL TOOLS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

From building the best FPL team to monitoring manager rankings and choosing the right transfers, there's much that FPL tools can help you with. Over the course of years, software developers from around the world have built reliable tools that you can use to up your FPL game. If you've ever woken up sweating at night, troubled by a nightmare of taking point hits, these tools are for you.

1. [The Fantasy Premier League Team Analyzer](#)

What better way is stay on your toes than to monitor competition? This tool gives you access to the performance of FPL teams and managers for the current and previous seasons. Stats available include captain picking performance, chip analysis and transfer analysis.

2. [The Fantasy Premier League Team Planner](#)

Managing an FPL team can be hectic. This tool is an organized planner, using which you can foreplan transfers, bench, rotation strategies and more across gameweeks in the FPL. If being calm and efficient are part of your plan, make sure to use this tool.

3. [Fantasy Premier League All-time Manager World Rankings](#)

Ever wondered what the best ever FPL performance was like? This tool has a hall of fame of sorts for the best FPL managers of all time. The rankings consider both current and past FPL performances to arrive at this epic list.

4. [The Fantasy Premier League Mini-League Analyzer](#)

Nothing beats bragging to friends and family after a tough, internal fight. This tool provides insights into FPL managers within mini-leagues. So, if you plan to track your mini-league rivals through the season, this tool's stats and insights can be of help.

5. [What's My All-time FPL Manager Ranking?](#)

Been playing the FPL for years? Want to see how you stand, globally? Here's a great way to enter yourself into the history books of the FPL. This tool lets you register your team for comparison against those created by the best managers of all time.

6. [Fantasy Premier League Fixture Difficulty](#)

Your FPL team is only as good as the players on it. This tool helps you choose solid players and plan transfers by telling you which Premier League teams have their schedules sorted well in advance. The tool lets you sort based on teams to compare and plan transfers.

7. Colour Coded Fixtures on [Fantasy Football 247](#)

Each year, the Fantasy Football 247 blog releases a colour coded fixture map for each team which is created based on predicted game difficulty for all gameweeks. This information can be extremely useful when planning how to use chips in advance.

8. [Premier Injuries](#) by Ben Dinnery

FPL managers who work hard at creating the best teams sometimes lose out because of injuries and their fallouts that are difficult to track. Ben Dinnery's website and Twitter timeline offer reliable updates on injured players and their form, so you can plan transfers properly.

9. The [WhoScored database](#)

If you're playing leagues apart from the FPL as well, monitoring stats can be confusing. The WhoScored database provides in-depth match reports and comprehensive player stats so you can track your team's performance and make plans accurately.

10. The [Fantasy Premier League Captaincy Pick Analyzer](#)

Captains can earn you double and triple point scores (when your chip is used). If you want a tool that analyses your captaincy pick, use this one. It analyses which captain picks of yours were successes or failures and generates an overall score contribution report for all your captains.

11. The [Fantasy Premier League Captain Picks Suggestion Tool](#)

Not sure which Premier League player to pick as captain for the next gameweek? You could use this tool for suggestions. This tool ranks various captain options and predicts the performance of any captains that you add manually.

12. The [Fantasy Premier League Transfer Analyzer](#)

You can get interesting insights into your team performance by measuring the success and failures of previous transfers. This tool calculates overall points contributions resulting from your transfers to give you these insights.

13. The [Fantasy Premier League Transfer Concierge](#)

Want to see the stats of players so you can decide which ones to transfer? This tool analyses your current FPL picks to recommend the best transfers. You simply have to import your team to access these recommendations.

14. [Fantasy Football Scout](#)

Want ideas of Premier League players to pick for the up and coming FPL? The Fantasy Football Scout is a great resource to predict performance of potential picks through detailed stats and reports. Use this tool to plan your FPL team in advance.

15. [Fantasy Football Geek](#)

If you've failed at FPL for years and want to turn that around, you can make player picks based on this website's forecasts. The Fantasy Football Geek covers player form stats and suggests reliable players who are likely to earn you decent scores.

16. The [Fantasy Premier League Bench Recommendations](#)

Who you start or bench could transform your team's FPL performance. That's why you should conduct sufficient research before making these decisions. This tool considers your team players' stats to make starter and bench recommendations for you.

17. The [Fantasy Premier League Chip Usage Dashboard](#)

It's useful to know when the greats have planned to use their chips. This tool records and displays when the top 5000, top 1000, and top all-time Fantasy Premier League managers used their chips.

THE DO'S AND DON'TS OF FANTASY FOOTBALL

Since everything is fair play in the FPL, making decisions can be difficult. You can pick any player as long as you can afford him. You can swap players almost anytime (provided you are okay with taking the hit), and you have weapons in the form of 'chips' to launch your team ahead of competition. So, how do you make good use of all these advantages? That's tricky. That's why we've listed a bunch of do's and don'ts to make your decisions easier.

FPL Do's

- Jump on the bandwagon when a player is on fire - Every year, certain players exceed expert expectations and score begin to score incredibly well. While it's not advisable to blindly transfer in such players, you should do it if you have good reason to believe that he's in form.
- Have an initial team full of starters - As a rookie, you may be sceptical about choosing too many starters, but there's no fault with this strategy. Start off with a team of starters.
- Build a team with talent from different clubs - Don't ignore ace players and good player picks simply because you are loyal to your club.
- Draft your team early - If you don't select your players early, the top-scoring forwards may be taken. But you can always beat others

in your league by signing midfielders who score well to counter that disadvantage.

- Conduct research about injuries and suspensions - It's critical to know if your players will get game time. After all, the time your players spend on the field and your scores are directly related.
- Make a player watchlist if you're in a big league - If you're playing in a big league, you need to keep an eye out for high-scoring midfielders and strikers who can earn you points. You can even focus on stars of small clubs if others are unavailable.

FPL Dont's

- Don't transfer players out on a knee-jerk reaction - Assuming that you've started out with the best possible players, don't transfer one out as soon as he doesn't perform. Wait for a while before deciding to swap a starter player.
- Avoid suffering necessary hits - Frequent transfers could earn you a seriously damaging -4. Consider if your player can make up for lost points in the following week before deciding to get him out.
- Don't use your Triple Captain Chip too early on - If you save your Triple Captain Chip for a Double gameweek, you're more likely to get more out of the chip.
- Avoid focusing too much on one club - Since the FPL has no limit of how many players you can pick from a club, you may want to have five Chelsea or Man United players on your team. However, this may spell doom for your FPL performance if the team isn't in form.



- Don't obsess over goalkeepers - In the best of matches the top goalkeepers earn FPL managers negligible points. So if you want to win, don't waste unnecessary time focusing on goalkeepers. Focus instead on other position players when making your picks.
- Try not to pick defensive midfielders - Since goal scoring and player time on field are the major ways to score in the FPL, defensive midfielders are less valuable than most other players. So, avoid choosing them unless you have good reason.

GET INSPIRATION FROM THE BEST FPL MANAGERS

What better way to get ahead in the FPL than learn from the masters? From what we've explored in this eBook, you can see that learning how to play the FPL is easy. But successfully playing the game can be tough. You have too much freedom in hand, creating so many possibilities of how a game can turn out. How can you validate any strategy that you may come up with? One way to do that is by using Fantasy Premier League tools which we discussed earlier in this eBook.

Yet another way of doing it is by studying how the masters of the sport manage their teams. But the sheer volumes of stats and data available makes it tough for rookies to follow the best FPL managers. That's why we have dedicated a section to how and what you can learn from these managers.

Here's how to look at the best FPL managers and get actionable insights during an FPL season.

Finding the best FPL managers

It's easy to identify top performing FPL managers because there are tools designed just for the purpose. We have discussed some of these tools in the FPL tools section of this eBook, but you can find them on the [Premier Fantasy Tools](#) website if required. Some FPL tools focus on helping you find the most consistently performing managers, whom you can follow for advice that works out in the long-term.

What to pay attention to when learning from top FPL managers

Once you have identified top FPL managers, what should learn from them? Well, your main objective should be understanding how they make decisions. What drives them to choose certain players, transfer them, or bench them? How do top FPL managers decide the right time to make these moves? You can refer to manager data and teams on FPL tools and make alterations to your team accordingly. However, note that you can't rely on this strategy in the start of a season because the tools won't have any data for you to use. Another detail to pay attention to is when a top FPL manager has chosen to use his or her wildcard. Wildcards are critical in game play and choosing yours wisely can make your FPL career as a manager.

Here are a few other interesting facts about the top FPL managers that can help you make important FPL decisions.

- Top FPL managers are very sensitive to price rises and drops of players, making transfer decisions based on them. The core strategy of most top FPL managers is to build the overall value of their FPL teams. You can monitor price changes on various live FPL price changing websites.
- Top FPL managers typically have at least 5 highly owned players on their team. This means that they are good at picking crowd favourites who are in form and performing beyond expectations. Only 1 or 2 differential players exist on these managers' team that

they can move to forwards. They follow this highly owned strategy to prevent a large drop in rankings.

- Most of the top FPL managers stick to the favourites for captain choices. They don't go rogue or bet on new players as far as possible. Many times, the captains of their teams are usually those on the top of audience polls. But the split or differential factor arises when a choice has to be made between two favourite players or poll winners.
- A good number of the top FPL managers are extremely careful to not suffer any hits. In fact, the top 1000-2000 positions are usually occupied by those managers who avoid all hits.
- Many top FPL managers pay premium for attacking defenders. It's one of the main expenditures where their extra cash is consumed. If you have the budget for attacking defenders, choose them over defensive defenders.
- Most top FPL managers maximize double gameweeks to increase points. This can be done by identifying players on teams likely to play twice during a double gameweek.
- Many top FPL managers choose late Saturdays, early Sundays or Wednesdays for their transfer. Their strategy is to act before most other FPL managers in the game to gain an early advantage. It's usually by Wednesday nights that you have updates on player injuries for the larger clubs. So you also know and can act on the upcoming weekend fixtures.
- Most top FPL managers steer clear of expensive goalkeepers and defenders early on in the season and even towards the end. Top ranking FPL managers usually spend their budgets on attacking

forwards and don't focus on goalkeepers at all as they don't typically contribute towards a score.

- Many top FPL managers focus on balancing transfer related hits early on in the season so they don't suffer the hits and lose ranks later on in the season. This is done by building team value switching players in the start of the season and until the intense winter segment.

The most valuable lessons that you can learn from the best, however, is to never ignore the basics. The best FPL managers don't make rookie mistakes, such as the ones we have discussed early on in this eBook. The best FPL managers do their research and plan in advance. They monitor player performance, injuries, and suspensions and act only on good reason. They don't rely on knee-jerk decisions and know exactly what they're doing when they transfer players or play their chips. All top FPL managers are weary of hits and play mostly conservative players. They are, in short, great at avoiding bad decisions and mistakes in the FPL.

While you can follow the best FPL managers for game play advice, you have to make decisions of your own to be taken seriously in the game. Choosing the first 7 or 8 players may be easy, because most top FPL managers make the conservative choices, but it's the differentials that will affect your ranking. Choose your differentials smartly and make the most of them by using Triple Captain and Wildcard chips during the right moments in your game play. That's what can turn you from an ordinary FPL player to an exceptional one.

CHECK YOUR TEAM EVERY WEEK

When was the last time you formed a team and forget all about it? The FPL managers who lose interest and give up are mostly those who don't make it a point to update their team and end up losing points. The other issue with not checking in on your team is poor decisions, which may make you look like you need to brush up on your Fantasy Premier League knowledge. It's not a nice look when you're competing against many of your friends, cousins and colleagues.

In a previous chapter, we mentioned how an Excel spreadsheet of all fixtures can help you prepare for the games ahead more easily. Committed managers make it a point to stay on top of upcoming games and prepare their teams. As there are many variables at play, an early assessment always works in your favour and increases your chances of winning. If you're a newcomer to FPL, bringing this discipline to your managerial arsenal will help you in the long-term. With information about which player is injured or suspended, who you can transfer in or out, and who is in form, you can predict which players are most likely to gain points in a given week.

How you want to go about it is up to you. You can use post-it notes, set a reminder on your phone, have your friends remind you, or make a mental note to check your team at a certain time each week. If you're on Twitter, start following handles dedicated to FPL - you can get

details, injury updates and tips in one place. Also consider supplementing this information with opinions and tips on FPL blogs, virtually all of which will provide hints and recommendations for each gameweek.

Sure, FPL is mostly about having fun, but it is also a matter of strategy and skill for serious footie fans. Setting aside a little bit of time to do your due diligence will only help you apply your strategic skills to the fullest.

EXAMPLE SEASON STRATEGY

Fantasy football may be a simple game, but it's challenging to master. If you want to rank in the top 5k of the participating managers in the world, you'll find that 'winging it' won't work. You need to have a smart plan in place, that can beat the odds of having experienced and consistent players pitch their teams against you. However, the internet is full of potential strategies that you could apply to boost your rankings in the world. The question is, which strategy should you choose? Which expert should you believe? Many experts who have shared their gameplay make claims of having used it to rank within the top 5k or 10k.

That's why we have put together a sample season strategy that you can use to understand how it works and form your own. Here's an example of a season strategy created by an FPL manager with 10 years' experience that consistently ranks well.

How to create your team structure

Before you choose players, you have to consider their price structures. When selecting his team, this FPL expert ensures that he can acquire any player in the game within two transfers. This allows you to bring in form players when needed, even if you have to incur a hit of -4.

This expert chooses players who cost in the following ranges.

- Two rotating goalkeepers who cost around 4.5.
- 1 or 2 premium defenders (attacking defenders) who cost around 5.5 - 6.5.
- 2 expensive midfielders who cost 9+ and players of lower price points for the remaining three slots
- 1 or 2 premium strikers along with one more from a lower range
- Bench players with the lowest price points for the first part of the season

As the season progresses, you can switch players easily because this team structure is well balanced. Kicks-off with the 3-4-3 formation, so you can own a budget midfielder and striker. So, if a transfer is necessary, you can use these instead of sacrificing more expensive options.

How to select players for your team

Before choosing players for your team, focus on creating a shortlist based on player statistics and predicted performance. Once you have, sort them by fixture difficulty and pay attention to players who you think have been under-priced. Finally, sort your list by price points and choose players of different price points based on their value. You can choose players using the following criteria.

1. Fixtures - Remember that you aren't choosing a team for the entire season. You should ideally pick players with easier fixtures, so they can score well and give you a headstart in the season. You can always transfer played out at a later point based on the progress of the premier league.

2. Captains - Choose captains who are reliable and known heavy scorers. You want captains who can contribute in double digits in the first 4-6 gameweeks. Captains are usually expensive, so gauge which one you can afford using the above structure.

3. Nailed on - Note that you get points for how long your players stay on the field. So it's best to choose nailed on players over those who are likely to get rotated during the season. Once a season begins, you will want to save transfers for injuries and form, so you don't want to waste them on non-starters.

4. Rotation - You can make the most of your low price players by choosing those that rotate well according to the fixtures. Choose low price players in pairs so you have at least one that's on field with the potential to earn you points.

5. Key men and assets - Focus on players well known to be assets in the FPL. Avoid choosing too many newbies. Also consider the main men in different clubs. They're likely to be mid-priced and good for your points.

How to maximize the value of captaincy

There's an unavoidable risk associated with captaincy because it's worth a lot of points. However, you can play safe by picking proven assets and those who rank on [Fantasy Football Scout](#) polls. If you want to choose a differential captain to make a substantial climb in rankings, wait until the last second and look at the polls for reference before making a choice.

How to optimize transfers for the best results

Transfers are invaluable assets in the FPL with one free transfer available each week and each additional transfer costing a heavy 4 points. You can get a headstart on transfers by creating a watchlist that you can refer to in advance when planning your transfer for the week. The challenge is sticking to your watchlist as a deadline approaches because unplanned and unresearched decisions can cost you dearly.

Here is a list of criteria that you can use to make good transfers.

1. Every transfer should ideally last for at least 5 gameweeks. Any lesser would not be worth sacrificing the free transfer.
2. Ensure that you consider a player's fixtures before initiating a transfer. Focus on acquiring players with easier fixtures over those with tough ones.
3. The transfer prospect should be in form and have good performance statistics.

4. The player you intend to transfer should ideally also have a good FPL history with proof of being an asset to top managers.

While it's impossible to satisfy all of these criteria, you should aim to get players who meet most of them. When transferring a player, avoid all short-term benefits. Don't transfer a player based on sporadic performances that are unlikely to be consistent.

If you don't use your free transfer, it gets credited to your next gameweek. Ideally, don't transfer a player unless it's absolutely necessary. You can save your transfers for weeks that matter, that is towards the end of the season or during double gameweeks.

Increasing team value through an FPL season

During the FPL a player's value is dynamic. Price changes are affected by transfers of a player and can be tracked on this [FPL website](#) after it is updated around 2:30 to 3:00 am GMT.

It's incredibly important to own team members who aren't falling in price value. If you have a low value team, you won't have the means to purchase members from rival teams later in the season. As a rule, you can try and transfer all players lower than 0.3 in value. Typically, players who are injured or suspended end up having this value.

This doesn't mean, however, that you shouldn't purchase players low in value. You can buy players who are likely to increase in value by getting to them when they are 0.1 or 0.2.

Understanding player ownership

It's also important to have highly owned players on your team. For instance, if a certain player is owned by 75% of the top 5k FPL managers, you need to have him on your team. If this specific player ends up being captained a lot and plays well, you will notice a major drop in rankings if you don't have him on your team. You can ensure this doesn't happen by monitoring player ownership by following the [FPL Discovery blog](#).

But the question you should be asking is when to transfer a player based on player ownership. This requires some thinking on your part. For instance, if a good player is owned by 10% of the top 10k due to poor form but has 2-3 favourable fixtures coming up, you may want to take a risk and acquire this player for yourself. He could rise in value when you have him during the favourable fixtures.

Using wildcards and chips

We won't delve into wildcards and chips in depth in this section as they have already been explained previously.

Your objective should be to hold on to wildcards and chips as long as you can, using them only when you have too many major injuries or

suspensions. One strategy is to play your first wildcard during the second international break, so you can manage your start-of-season team based on the information you have from the first 7 or 8 fixtures.

Then play the second wildcard a week or two before playing the Bench Boost chip. This allows you to make the most of an upcoming Double gameweek, at which point, you can then play the bench boost will maximum impact.

When managing an FPL team, it's critical not let fear and impatience rule your decisions, which can ultimately have a major effect on your rankings.

BONUS: FPLBRAVEHEARTS STRATEGY GUIDE

In this bonus section FPLBET team member, Norman (@FPLbraveheart) who is ranked as one of the top 200 FPL managers of all time shares his approach on how to win at FPL!

Norman is hosting the 2019/20 FPLBET Podcast - be sure to follow us on [Twitter](#) for this weekly.

Back to the guide, stay tuned as Norman explains how he sets up his team and how he picks players. As well as a wealth of general strategy advice, you'll get the inside scoop on transfers, captains and chip usage.

Over to Norman...

Introduction

There are many ways to play Fantasy Premier League. Some people will be more aggressive in their approach, while others will be more conservative. I've been playing this game for well over ten years and I'm firmly in the latter category.

That is not to say that I don't, on occasion, make moves that may seem punty. For example, last season I bought Xeridan Shaqiri before his scoring run. The season before last I made a similar move with Josh King.

My mini league rivals were convinced that it was mere luck that I brought them in at the right time. It wasn't. It was researching their underlying stats, in particular their shots taken inside the box and expected goals.

Setting up a team

How do I set up my team?

Gameweek 5, the time of writing, is perhaps too late in the season for information on how to set up a team to be useful to managers as many may already have used their first wildcard. However, when I am setting up my team I do so in a way to maximise flexibility. It is highly unlikely that managers will select the optimum squad when setting up their team initially or when wildcarding. We have to accept that. The key is to build in flexibility to your teams so that you can transfer in the early performers quickly (either by making a downgrade or sideways move).

My philosophy is: **adapt to thrive**.

To do this, I make sure I sign a premium player, a mid-price player (or two) and a bargain player for each position. The premium player can always be downgraded to an excellent mid-price option that is looking like he is on good form. For example, at the start of the 2018/19, many may have went for Kevin De Bruyne or Christian Eriksen. The former suffered an injury while the latter had poor returns. There was a plethora of excellent options in the 6-7m price bracket and so some may have went for Pedro, etc.

What do I look for in a player?

A lot of managers in the FPL Community will reference “underlying stats”. Each manager will differ in what they consider an important statistic. For me, as I mentioned, I like to look at shots taken per game, shots taken from inside the box per game and expected goals and assists (ideally from the last four GWs). I try not to place as much emphasis on goals actually scored as that does not always tell the whole story. A goalkeeping error may mask a poor shot which ought not have been a goal.

For the last season, I have prepared a spreadsheet setting out the aggregate expected FPL points from expected goals (xG), assists (xA) and clean sheets (xCS). As a shameless plug, [you can access the spreadsheet, which I update weekly, using this link.](#)

In every player I consider signing, I look for three things:

- is he nailed?
- does he have favourable upcoming fixtures?
- does he have a good chance of goals, assists or clean sheets?

The first two ought to be self-explanatory. The third question can be answered by looking at xG, xA and xCS. Using this data, I am able to piece together a list of players who I will be considering bringing into my team should the opportunity arise.

For players who are priced between 4.0m and 7.0m, I ask a further question: does this player represent value? It is all well and good building a team full of some of the big guns and then the rest of your team is fodder. Balance is key. In my view, there is no greater feeling in FPL than identifying a value player who is about to hit a run. The value tab in my xFPL spreadsheet has been very helpful for me to identify those players.

Transfers

How do I manage my transfers?

I'm a conservative player and so I try to avoid hits unless necessary. To profit from a hit immediately, you need the players you are bringing in to bag two returns more than the players you are ditching. My exception is injured or suspended players or where a long term plan could be scuppered by waiting to make a transfer without a deduction.

To use an example of patience paying off immediately, I wanted to transfer Ings and Kane in for Firmino and King in GW4. However, I had doubts over whether the former pair would score more than two returns than the latter. I also had doubts over Ings' fitness due to a blister so decided to wait a week. From being patient, I earned +3 points and I had two transfers going into the international break - something very valuable!

One of my mantras when it comes to transfers is: **if in doubt, do nothing!**

A two-week transfer is more flexible, plus you will have more knowledge at your disposal. Any missed price rises should be considered an investment in flexibility and knowledge.

When deciding transfers, having prepared a watch list as discussed above, I ask the question: *in three weeks' time, what would I like my team to be?* I'm then in a position to make it happen. Fantasy Football Fix's Assistant Manager is an invaluable resource here as it lets me see expected points for my proposed transfers. Subject to any necessary downgrades, I can prioritise my transfers by expected points. Three weeks is a good period to look at as you are less susceptible to a change of plans (e.g., a Richarlison sending off). In that time, you are able to change a quarter of your starting eleven!

I like to keep a watch list of players I find attractive (as FPL options!). I try to keep on top of fixture swings to identify players who have decent underlying stats and are due an easier run of fixtures. It may be overkill but I like to have a watch list which comprises:

- 3 defenders (one premium, one mid-price and one bargain);
- 3 midfielders (one premium, one mid-price and one bargain);
and
- 3 forwards (one premium, one mid-price and one bargain).

By building a watch list of players, and having it noted on Fantasy Football Fix, I can keep up to date with the potential price rises of the players I'm considering signing.

I don't like to keep a big watch list as it makes it more difficult, on Friday evening or Saturday morning, to make my transfer decision. I'm often quite busy and so like making my watch list decisions early in the week and sitting on my team until nearer the deadline.

If, for example, my premium striker is ruled out through injury, I can bring in the player I have earmarked as the premium striker on my watch list. You'll notice that I also don't have any goalkeepers on my watch list. I very rarely transfer my goalkeepers. If one is needed, or I have no other improvements to make, I can do a bit of research that week to find out who has the best clean sheet probability in the upcoming weeks.

Captaincy

Who to captain?

One of my biggest weaknesses in FPL is an over-reliance on home captaincy picks. This is completely understandable as, typically, players perform better at home than away.

I never captain goalkeepers, defenders or any player who is a rotation risk that week. I always have a preference towards the premium players. They are premium for a reason and, if you are going to pay a hefty price tag for them, you ought to feel comfortable giving that player the

armband. This season I have rotated the captaincy between my two most expensive players in Mohammed Salah and Sergio Aguero. Both players have returned at least one goal or assist when I've given them the armband so my bias seems to be working this season. At the time of writing, the player at home (or at home with the easiest fixture) has returned the highest number of points. Long may that trend continue!

Using the 2017/2018 season as a benchmark, let's see how the usual captaincy suspects would fare:

Player	Team	Home (goals pg)	Away (goals pg)
Aguero	Man City	1.0	0.6
Kane	Tottenham	0.8	0.8
Lukaku	Man United	0.6	0.4
Salah	Liverpool	1.0	0.8

As you can see, almost all of the players perform better at home than they would do away from home. Home captaincy bias isn't necessarily a terrible weakness to have.

However, the difficulty comes if you were trying to decide between Salah (away) and Lukaku (home) one week. This is where you may need to set aside your home bias and go for the more prolific player despite the fact that he is away from home. I started last season poorly because I was captaining Kane almost every week he was at home. It meant missing out on a number of excellent Salah and Aguero returns. My

fortunes turned when I stopped captaining Kane at home by default and started considering my captaincy more carefully. I started captaining Salah away from home and against other top six teams. I was low down in the rankings and needed to be more aggressive as a way of catapulting up the rankings. At Christmas, I was languishing around 1.8m. By the end of the season I had managed to bag myself a far more respectable overall rank.

I always have two or three captaincy options in my team. Right now, for example, I have Aguero and Salah (soon I will add either Lukaku or Kane to the list). I decide my captaincy based on form, fixture and risk. The bigger the reward, the more I am willing to risk. It was for that reason that I kept faith with Aguero v Huddersfield despite articles tipping him for some rotation that week. My reward was a captain's hat trick. However, if that fixture was at home to Everton, for example, I would not have considered the risk to be worth it and would have given Salah the armband instead. **If in doubt, go with easiest home fixture but always remember fortune favours the brave!**

Chips

How to play chips?

As a conservative player, I always save my chips for the doubles! This is a tried and tested approach which has won my cash mini leagues every season we've had chips!

Last season there was a lot of talk about playing the free hit chip in a blank week for a lot of teams. I subscribed to that idea at the start of the season, however, as we got closer to the blank week, I realised I was in a decent position to have a full team using only free transfers in the preceding four weeks. I crunched the numbers and worked out how I could maximise the number of players with fixtures over the blanks and doubles. This is my advice: *no plan should be set in stone with the doubles, always think: how can I maximise the number of games my players will play between now and the end of season?*

Having worked that out, I decided: (i) to plan for the big blank using my free transfers in the four or so weeks leading up to it; (ii) to use my free hit in the smaller of the two double gameweeks at the end of the season; and (iii) to pair my wildcard and my bench boost to maximise my players in the biggest double gameweek at the end of the season. This meant that I had the following games for my players when using my chips:

- GW34 (small double) - 21 games - Free Hit used
- GW35 (blank week) - 11 games
- GW36 (normal week) - 11 games - Wildcard used
- GW37 (bigger double) - 29 games - Bench boost used

This was a different approach to the majority of the FPL online community. However, it worked for me and helped my climb into the top 1% in what was a frustrating season.

For triple captaincy, I agree that it is best used in a double gameweek. A player will have a greater chance of scoring a number of goals in 180 minutes than 90. In the last two seasons, Aguero and Kane have been in teams which have had a double around GW27. This turned out to be the smallest double and so was a good opportunity to use triple captaincy, even if the use of that chip didn't turn out as successfully as we might have wanted. A similar opportunity should arise this year and hopefully it falls to one of the in-form premium players. An Aguero or Salah double, when the majority of the other teams have only one match, would be excellent news so fingers crossed for that.

My advice for using chips would be:

- Free hit - consider your free transfers and use this chip when it can help you maximise your total number of players playing in the small double and blanks;
- Bench boost - use in the big double and closely linked to your second wildcard;
- Triple captain - in the smallest double gameweek for a premium/in-form player.

Wildcards

When to use the first wildcard?

There are a lot of managers in FPL who like to wildcard early. Some think there is merit in this as it lets you jump on the early form players

and build up some value. However, early bandwagons may not have staying power - looking at you Aaron Mooy in 17/18!

I like to hold my first wildcard as long as possible. I think of it as a bit of insurance in case my team succumbs to an injury crisis or horrible turn of form. Without your wildcard, you'll be scrambling and taking points hits to chip out the deadwood.

My wildcard strategy is also linked to my season goal - winning my cash mini league.

I hold on to my wildcard until I am the last competitor with theirs left. This means I can wildcard and tailor my squad to capitalise on my rivals' weaknesses. If they have a big player who they cannot afford without ripping apart their team, then I get that player.

Often this means coming strong during the Christmas period and having a sizable lead by March (by which time I have moved my focus on to the top 10k players in FPL).

When to use the second wildcard?

For me, this is the easiest chip decision. I will only ever use my second wildcard in the week preceding the big double in which I intend on using my Bench Boost.

If you wildcarded around three weeks before you planned on Bench Boosting, a lot can happen in that time. Form can be lost, injuries suffered, and suspensions earned. To minimise the risk of having your



Bench Boost plans ruined, it makes sense to me to use your second wildcard in as close proximity to your Bench Boost as is possible. For any newbies, please note you cannot use a wildcard and another chip in the same week!

From All of Us on The FPLBET Team

Good Luck

&

May Your Arrows be Green!!

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