

Your First Swindon Town Match

A Neurodivergent-Friendly Guide for Young People and Families.

Written by a neurodivergent supporter, for neurodivergent supporters, and anyone ready to join the team for their first Swindon Town match!

Welcome to the Red Army!

Going to your first football match can be exciting, but it can also feel a little worrying if you don't know what to expect.

This guide has been created to help you plan your visit, understand what happens on a matchday and know where you can go for support.

Everyone experiences football differently. There is no right or wrong way to enjoy a match.

Before we begin, here are some football words you might see or hear during a Swindon Town match and throughout this guide.

Top tip — before we begin, here are some football words you might see or hear during a Swindon Town match and throughout this guide. Game on! 

Let's Talk Football!

⚽ Football Word	★ Meaning
The NECG	The Nigel Eady County Ground
Half-time	The 15-minute break between halves
Full-time	The end of the match
Home	Played in Swindon at the NECG
Away	Played at the opposing teams stadium
Substitute	A player who comes on to replace another player
Added time	Extra minutes to make up for time that was lost during the game
Fixture	A scheduled match
Stand	A seating area in the stadium
Turnstile	The entrance gate to the stadium
COYR	“Come On You Reds”
Referee	The person who makes decisions during the game
Linesman (Assistant Referee)	Helps the referee make decisions using a flag
Offside	A player is sneaking behind the last defender before the ball is passed to them
Handball	When the ball makes contact with a player's hand/arm in a way that breaks the rules
Penalty	A free shot at goal after a foul inside the penalty area
Yellow Card	A warning from the referee for breaking the rules
Red Card	A player must leave the pitch and cannot continue playing
Free Kick	A kick awarded after a foul
Corner	Awarded when the defending team last touches the ball before it goes over their

Goal Kick	goal line Awarded when the attacking team last touches the ball before it goes over the goal line
Throw-in	Given when the ball goes over the side line
Foul	When a player breaks one of the rules
Captain	The leader of the team on the pitch

You don't need to know all the words and the rules to enjoy football.

Many supporters are still learning, and some people simply enjoy the atmosphere.

It's okay if you don't understand everything straight away.

Who are Swindon Town?

Swindon Town Football Club are a professional football club based in Swindon, Wiltshire.

Our nickname is **The Reds** because our home kit is usually red.

We play our home matches at the **Nigel Eady County Ground**.

Our mascots are **Rockin' Robin**, and **Ruby Robin** who you may see walking around the stadium before kick-off saying hello to supporters and posing for photos.

Before You Buy Your Ticket

Check the fixtures on the Swindon Town website before booking your ticket.

When looking at fixtures:

H = Home

The match is being played at The County Ground, Swindon.

A = Away

The match is being played at another team's stadium.

Most Saturday home matches kick off at 3:00pm.

Many Tuesday evening matches kick off later.

Sometimes matches scheduled for 3:00pm are moved to 12:00pm or 12:30pm if selected for television coverage. These changes can happen quite close to the match, so always check the kick-off time before you travel.

Choosing Your First Match

If this is your very first visit, try to choose a quieter fixture.

A good first match is usually:

-  A regular league game.
-  A match with fewer away supporters.
-  A fixture that is not expected to sell out.

Some matches have a much louder atmosphere, especially local rival games as they often have more supporters, louder chanting, increased police presence, longer queues and more excitement and noise.

If you are nervous, it may be best to choose a quieter match for your first visit.

Choosing Where to Sit

There are three main areas where home supporters sit.

Don Rogers Stand (I personally recommend this stand).

This is often the quietest stand and is popular with families.

Arkell's Stand

This stand has a mixture of supporters.

It can become noisy during exciting moments but is generally less intense than the Town End.

Town End

This is where many of Swindon Town's most passionate supporters sit.

In this stand you can expect a higher amount of singing, chanting, standing, celebrating loudly, and lots of energy.

This atmosphere is fantastic for many supporters but may feel overwhelming if you prefer quieter environments.

Accessible Seating

Accessible seating is available at The County Ground.

These areas provide a quieter experience and are designed to support disabled supporters.

If you think accessible seating would help you, contact the club before buying your tickets.

Sensory Support

Swindon Town FC is continuing to develop support for autistic and neurodivergent supporters.

Support includes:

A sensory room.

Sensory packs (being introduced).

Disability Liaison support.

Pre-match familiarisation visits.

If you would like extra support before your first match, contact:

Caroline Lane

Disability Liaison Officer (DLO)

Email: DLO@swindontownfc.co.uk

Caroline can help with familiarisation visits before match day, visiting the sensory room, accessible seating, and answering questions before your visit.

Top tip — If attending a match feels overwhelming, arranging a visit beforehand can help you feel much more confident. ⚽

Social Story ⚽

Swindon Town has created a Social Story called '**Suzie and Sammy Go to Swindon Town FC**'.

It explains step-by-step what happens during a matchday and what you can expect.

Although it is mainly aimed at younger supporters, many older children, teenagers and adults also find it helpful.

Junior Reds Room ⚽

The Junior Reds Room, is for younger supporters and their families.

Junior Reds is in the **Don Rogers Stand**.

It opens before home matches and during half-time, and is available for families.

Inside you'll find arts and crafts, Xbox and PlayStation, snacks to purchase, games, and a chance to meet other young supporters before kick-off.

It is a great place to spend some time before the match begins, especially if you would like a quieter start to your visit.

What Happens on Match-day? ⚽

Before Kick-off

Supporters begin arriving around the stadium.

You may hear music playing over the loudspeakers and see people buying food, visiting the club shop, purchasing matchday programmes or half-time draw tickets.

Outside the stadium, you'll also find the statues of Swindon Town legends **Don Rogers** and **John Trollope**, where many supporters like to stop for photos.

When you arrive, you will enter through the turnstiles where your ticket will be checked. You can then make your way to your seat.

There are specific accessible turnstiles and gates too.

Matchday Programme

Supporters can buy the official Town matchday programme before the game. Inside you'll find player interviews, club news, team line-ups, activities for children, and match statistics.

Some supporters collect every programme as a souvenir.

During the Match

The referee blows a whistle to start the game.

Supporters may:

 Cheer.

 Chant.

 Clap.

 Celebrate goals loudly.

Sometimes supporters become frustrated with the referee, the score, the opposing team, or a decision during the game. You may notice the atmosphere change and people may shout or boo. This is a normal part of football and usually doesn't mean anyone is in danger. It's one way supporters express their emotions during the game. Football means a lot to many people, and matches can bring out lots of excitement, passion and emotion.

When Swindon score a goal, many supporters will suddenly stand up, cheer, clap and sing very loudly. This excitement usually lasts for a minute or two before everyone sits back down.

You will also hear announcements over the loudspeakers before the match, during half-time and after the game.

Half-time

Half-time lasts around 15 minutes.

Many people leave their seats to buy food or drinks or visit the toilets (including accessible toilets).

Queues can become busy.

Some people stay seated during half-time and watch any half-time entertainment that may be happening.

In the Don Rogers stand, there is a room called the Junior Reds room where families can visit.

Full-time

After the final whistle, many supporters leave at the same time.

If you don't enjoy large crowds, you might find it easier to stay in your seat for a few extra minutes before leaving.

After many matches, the players, manager and coaching staff will walk around the pitch and clap the supporters.

Many supporters clap the players in return as a way of showing appreciation and respect, whatever the result.

Sometimes, if supporters are disappointed with the team's performance, they may choose not to clap. Some supporters may also shout to let the players know they were unhappy with how the team played.

You can choose whether you would like to clap along or simply watch. There is no expectation to join in.

Noise Guide

-  Walking to the stadium – Usually calm
-   Entering through turnstiles – Moderate noise
-    Warm-up before kick-off – Music and people arriving
-     Players entering the pitch – Loud cheering
-      Goals – Very loud cheering and celebrating
-    Half-time – Busy but calmer
-    Leaving after the match – Large crowds

If You Need Help

Stewards and the Disability Liaison Officer are available from when the gates open until after the final whistle.

If you need help:

- Speak to any steward.
- Visit the nearest Help Point.
- Ask fellow fans for support.
- Ask for the Disability Liaison Officer.

Everyone wants you to enjoy your visit.

Helpful Things to Bring

You may find it useful to bring:

Ear defenders, loops, or headphones.

Sunglasses or a cap in the warmer weather.

A fidget toy.

A comfort item.

A fully charged phone or device that you may use to regulate.

A flask of water (please check the club's current stadium rules before travelling).

Some songs you may hear

As the match is starting, you may hear this song-

🎵 **Take my hand, Take my whole life too, For I can't help, Falling in love with you, Swindon (said like- "su-win-dun")** 🎵

Other songs you may hear-

🎵 **Swindon till I die,**
I'm Swindon till I die,
I know I am,
I'm sure I am,
I'm Swindon till I die... 🎵

(This means they are Swindon Town fans forever)

Another classic-

🎵 **Oh when the reds,**
Oh when the red's,
Go steaming in,
Go steaming in,
Oh when the reds go steaming in,
I wanna be in that number,
Oh when the reds go steaming in... 🎵

And also-

🎵 **And it's Swindon Town,**
Swindon Town FC,
We're by far the greatest team,
The world has ever seen. 🎵

Visit the club website for:

- Match Fixtures
- My First Game
- Accessibility Information
- Social Story
- Junior Reds Info
- Booking Tickets
- The Online Club Shop

Remember...

Football is for everyone.

Whether you sing every song, clap every goal, wear ear defenders, take breaks, or just enjoy watching the match quietly...

You're just as much a Swindon Town supporter as everyone else.

There is no right or wrong way to support your team.

Enjoy supporting Swindon Town!

This guide has been created using publicly available information from Swindon Town FC together with lived experience of attending matches as a neurodivergent supporter. While every effort has been made to keep information accurate, please check the official Swindon Town FC website for the latest fixture details, accessibility information and matchday updates.



Danielle Brown-Kelly ~ SEND Advocate