



AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL MATCH POLICY



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AFL guidelines for the conduct of Australian
Football for players aged 5-18 years

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT
Australian Government



Australian Government
Australian Sports Commission

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PART ONE INTRODUCTION

The Australian Football League (AFL) is the governing body for Australian Football and, as the “keeper of the code”, it is our responsibility to establish a framework that ensures the best possible journey for young players to progress their learning and development towards the adult version of the game.

There are more than 250 leagues across Australia that provide opportunities for players and their families to participate every year. We recognise it is largely an army of volunteers that run these leagues for the love of the game and the enjoyment it provides their kids.

It is therefore vital that providers of the game are familiar with, and adopt, the procedures contained in this policy to ensure participating boys and girls have a fun, safe and positive football experience that is suitable to their needs.

We don't want to put kids in adult environments too early and that includes large grounds, congested play, unnecessary physicality and an over-emphasis on winning when skill development is more important.

Therefore, this resource is designed to promote measures that will maximise the enjoyment and development of all players.

It is designed to introduce and retain the next generation of young players and their families.

Gillon McLachlan
AFL CEO



THE AFL JUNIOR MATCH POLICY REVIEW (2012-15)

In 2008, the Australian Football League in collaboration with State football bodies and the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) developed the Next Generation Australian Football Match Policy – For the conduct of the game for players aged 5-18 years. The policy was based on a large body of generic research into best practices for children's sport which had been accumulated at that time.

For some of the affiliated leagues and clubs across the country, the introduction of this policy in 2008 represented a significant shift in the match rules and procedures that were being delivered. By the start of the 2012 season, it was evident that a number of gaps still remained.

As a result, Deakin University was engaged to conduct targeted research across two phases looking at the impact of the presence or absence of the junior match policy and then its intended and actual impact.

Ultimately, the research closely reviewed the policy's impact on enjoyment and skill development of participants and on the attitudes and match-day behaviours of parents, coaches, officials and administrators.

The study, conducted over three years, involved:

- » **Five leagues across two states and 60 matches**
- » **Over 4000 minutes of game-time was viewed**
- » **2500 participants completed the national survey**

In addition to this, the AFL consulted directly with state affiliates, a number of major leagues and many other key stakeholders throughout the review process.

The research was one of the first internationally to begin to understand the experience of children in junior modified sport and its core findings were clear:

1. **The intent of the policy was validated by the research – it is good for the game.**
2. **Modified rules, when implemented well, achieve two clear outcomes:**
 - » **increases player involvement which positively impacts children's perceptions of competence and enjoyment**
 - » **creates a better match environment that is more aligned to the actual intent of the game.**
3. **The way modified rules are implemented by coaches and umpires impacts play and is critical to setting an appropriate environment. Coach and umpire education is critical.**
4. **Perceptions of what is important to parents in modified rules does not align with what is important to children.**
5. **A substantial education process and marketing campaign is required to underpin the document.**

So in essence, two bodies of research and a significant amount of stakeholder discussion over a number of years have shaped this document.



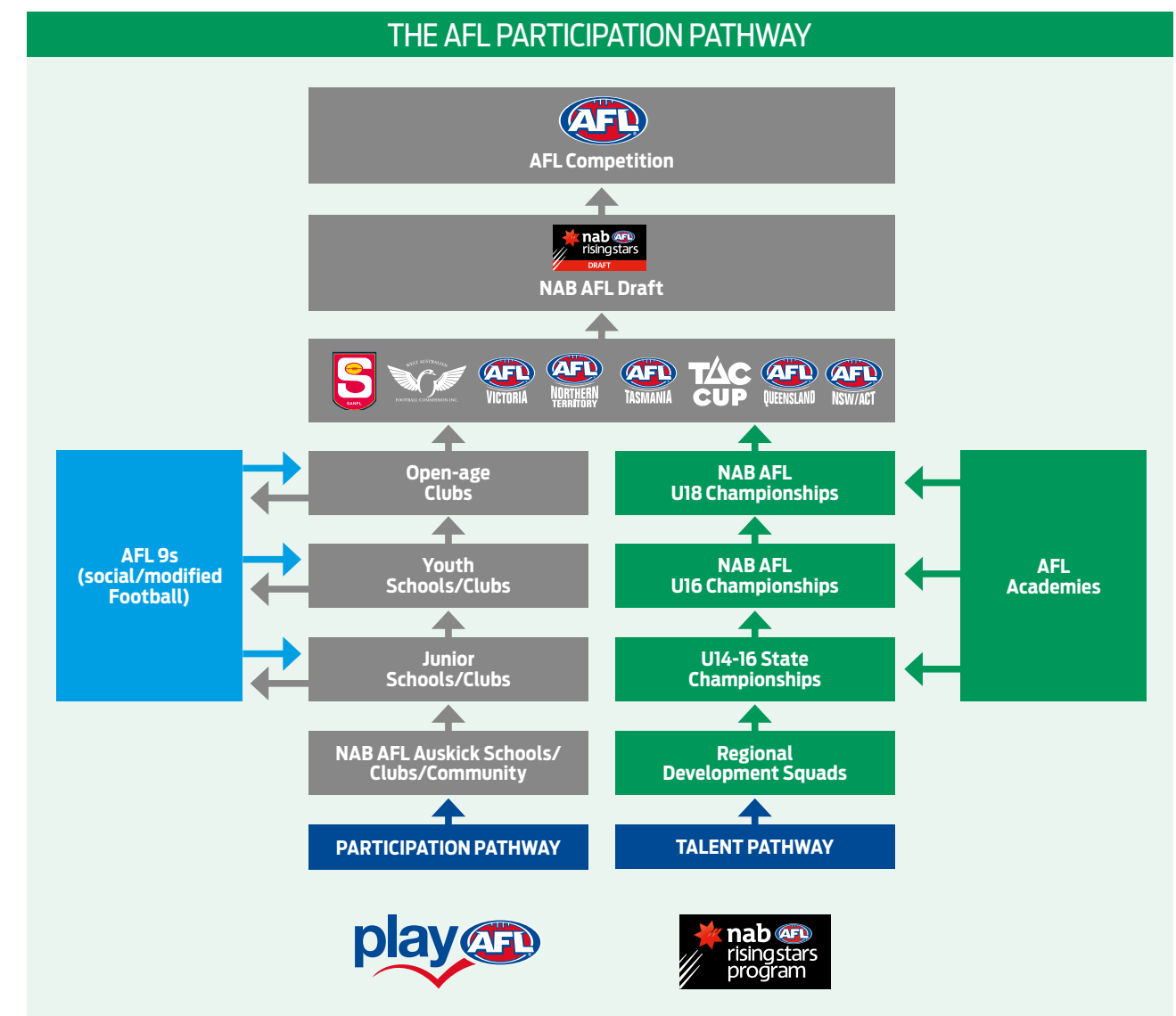
THE AFL PARTICIPATION PATHWAY

The AFL player pathway has been developed to ensure it follows these principles:

- » **Sequential** – progressions that link
- » **Developmental** – meets the needs of children
- » **Informed** – by research, practice and stakeholder engagement
- » **Inclusive** – accommodates all people in an equitable manner

This pathway is underpinned by the need for a quality environment where young players can sequentially develop their skills through activities, games, match rules and conditions fitting their stage of learning and ability.

For the purpose of this document, the Australian Football Match Policy refers to the philosophy, guidelines and requirements of conducting football for players aged 5-18 years.



FEMALE FOOTBALL

The development of the participation pathway for females is critical to the long-term growth and development of the game.

Unlike boys, girls are less likely to have progressed from AFL Auskick and junior football through to youth girls. At Women's League level, clubs are still attracting new players who have never played the game before.

Until the female pathway is fully developed, this document endorses the following participation pathway options for female participants aged five and above.

NAB AFL AUSKICK (5-8 YEARS)

1. All-girls Auskick centres and all-girls Auskick groups within a mixed gender centre.
2. Mixed gender AFL Auskick.

JUNIOR GIRLS (9-12 YEARS)

1. Girls can compete in female-only U10 and U12 competitions where available using appropriate match policy guidelines.
2. Mixed gender junior fixtures using appropriate match policy guidelines.

YOUTH GIRLS (13-18 YEARS)

1. Girls can compete in female-only 15s and 18s competitions using appropriate match policy guidelines.
2. Up to 14 years of age, girls may choose playing in a mixed-gender competition or a female-only competition. Girls can participate in mixed-gender competitions as a 14-year-old. However, unless the girl is skilled, confident and physically capable and has the consent of her coach and parents, this policy recommends that youth girls aged 13 and 14 participate in a structured youth girls competition.

If there are no youth girls competitions available at U15 or U18 level, the following applies:

- » In accordance with the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth)¹, people aged under 12 cannot be excluded on the basis of sex or gender identity from participating in a competitive sporting activity. Pursuant to section 42(1) of the Act, people of one gender aged 12 and over can be excluded from participating in competitive sporting activities in which the strength, stamina and physique of competitors is relevant.

As a result, junior clubs will exclude females who reach 14 years of age as at January 1 in the year of play from playing in any competition that is not a 'female competition'.

Definition – A female competition is a competition in which the majority of the players are female.

SENIOR WOMEN'S (17 YEARS +)

As of 2016, most women's leagues will implement a minimum age of turning 17 during the state women's league season as youth girls graduate to senior level. It is planned that by 2018 all Leagues will endorse a minimum participation age of players being 17 as of January 1 (turn 18 during the women's league season) if playing Premier Division in a state women's league.

Each state's youth girls club competitions are at different stages of development and this progressive approach will support those competitions that are still in the early phases of development. In keeping with the youth girls developmental philosophy, this progression will also allow for the talented state U18 players to be challenged where they may be dominant in the youth girls club competition and raise the level of competitiveness.

The AFL Female Football Club Guide is a resource designed to assist community clubs and leagues to set up and conduct single-gender female competitions (that is, any single-gender competition for girls from Auskick through to women's) plus assist clubs to establish and engage female teams. It should be used in partnership with Australian Football Match Policy as this caters for female participation in mixed-gender competitions where a female-only pathway is not yet available.



CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

The AFL has a Disability Action Plan and supports the notion that every child has the right to be involved in sport, especially a sport such as Australian Football. Including children with disabilities is not hard; it just requires enthusiasm and understanding.

Below are a few suggestions when working with children with disabilities:

- » Check the needs and abilities of the children;
- » Encourage the carer/parent to be involved and assist in activities and be responsible for the needs of the children;
- » Every child is unique and should be provided with the same opportunities to participate;
- » Work with what the child can do and, if you are not sure, ask them or their parents/carers;
- » Children with disabilities, like all children, will improve considerably with continual exposure to skills. If the activity is the child's first exposure to a skill, have patience and give them time to improve.
- » Introduce the child to a group;
- » A youngster with a disability must be seen as a person first – the similarities to peers should be noted, not the differences;
- » Activities can be modified to cater for all abilities. Children with a disability, like all children, may or may not require activities to be modified depending on their level of ability. Remember, when modifying activities, the integrity of the activity should be maintained;
- » Any changes should be viewed as temporary, working towards, where possible, the original activity. If one change does not work, try another;
- » Wherever possible, have the child participating in all aspects of the day's activities;
- » Provide activities where children can succeed and develop self-esteem.

Remember, all children must be encouraged to participate in all activities – People First Disability Second (Acknowledgment: Australian Sports Commission's Disability Program).

¹ The provision of section 42 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) are essentially replicated in equivalent state legislation such as section 64-66 of the Equal Opportunity Act 1995 (Vic)

PART TWO

AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL MATCH POLICY

A GUIDE TO THE JUNIOR GAME

Australian Football is our national indigenous game and one that captures the imagination of people all over the country. The development of our young players is critical to the ongoing success of the code and it is our responsibility to help young people fall in love with the game like so many before them.

The young child that joins our game through the AFL Auskick program may make it all the way to the AFL competition or, just as importantly, become the next amateur player, umpire, coach or fan of the game.

The rules and procedures for conducting modified matches at varying developmental levels are designed specifically to maximise participation, skill learning and development.

We need to ensure their journey is the best one possible and, as such, we feel three clear phases exist when beginning with AFL Auskick.

WHY DO KIDS NEED DIFFERENT RULES TO ADULTS?

Fundamentally, any person wishing to participate in our game should be able to do so in a manner which is appropriate to his or her skills, needs and aspirations.

For too long we have allowed eight-year-old kids to play on the same size field and under the same match conditions as professional players – it's simply not right.

It is essential that young players are introduced to the game through modified rules and regulations that consider their physical, psychological and emotional needs.

In other words, young players have different needs to adults.

'THIS IS OUR GAME' PHILOSOPHY

JUNIOR POLICY

1. PLAYING GROUND, ZONES, TIME AND EQUIPMENT

Kids can't kick as far, run as fast or process the same level of match information as adults – so why make them play on the same size field?

The AFL Junior Match Policy is committed to a reduced playing area, playing time and suitably modified equipment to take the emphasis away from endurance and allow for greater skill development.

With smaller grounds, the players are encouraged to concentrate because the ball is never far away.

2. USE OF ZONES

The AFL Junior Policy embraces "zones" for the younger children as an excellent teaching practice. First, the use of zones prevents ball-chasing and subsequent congestion where all players congregate around the ball. Second, it enables groupings of players of similar size and ability to play within a zone.

3. TEAM COMPOSITION & PLAYER ROTATION

Reduced numbers allow individual players to have more frequent and longer contact with the ball while play is more open, even when played on a reduced-size oval.

Children should experience playing in a variety of positions. The practice of rotating players through different positions and the interchange enables the development of a solid foundation and adds variety and interest to the matches.

4. CONTACT

Deferring the introduction of full tackling is based upon the need to provide players with the best possible conditions to learn, develop and improve their disposal skills by reducing congestion and pressure on the player in possession. All skills are eventually taught and learned, but there is an appropriate sequence for doing so.

The physiological and emotional readiness of children's bodies to resist the pressures of tackling also needs to be recognised in assessing when to introduce tackling. The "age of readiness" will vary from child to child, but generally is recognised as being around the 11-12 age group.

5. MARKING, BOUNCING & KICKING OFF THE GROUND

Awarding marks over any distance in the development phase recognises that many youngsters cannot consistently kick the ball beyond 10m.

Restricting the number of bounces prevents players running excessive distances with the ball, encourages disposal skills and enhances team play.

In a player's development years, the ability to enhance the skill of picking up the ball takes precedence over the need to kick it off the ground.

6. THE COACH ON THE GROUND

The absence of stringent competition conditions should enable the coach to provide praise, teaching and feedback when warranted or as errors immediately they occur.

7. PREMIERSHIP POINTS COMPETITIONS & AWARDS

The match environment in junior football must be one of encouragement, learning and development over a focus of "winning".

Where winning overrides such aims, and encouragement is replaced by a fear of failure, the program for children is inappropriate.

Any awards should not replace or detract from the fun and enjoyment gained by participation in the program and the learning that is an integral part of it.

8. TRAINING

The AFL recommends the following framework be adhered to when setting pre-season and regular season training programs. It has been based on advice provided from experts involved in the ongoing study of skill acquisition and training and performance principles.

Age Group	Pre-season Training	In-season Sessions	Length of Sessions	Focus
U8-11	4-6 sessions	1 per week	60 min	Fun Skill
U12-14	6-8 sessions	2 per week	75 min	Skill Team Play Minimum Fitness
U15-16	8-10 sessions	2 per week	75 min	Skill Team Play Tactical Minimum Fitness
U17-18	10-12 sessions	2 per week	75-90 min	Skill Team Play Tactical Physical Preparation
Senior	15-20 sessions	2-3 per week	90 min	Skill Team Play Tactical Physical Preparation

9. AGE POLICY

A player must be seven by the following dates in each respective state/territory:

- » January 1 (Tas)
- » April 30 (Vic, ACT, SA, NT)
- » June 30 (Qld, WA)
- » July 31 (NSW)

The AFL understands that the starting point for children along the participation pathway can differ from player to player and philosophically believes in a policy that caters for a range of individual circumstances.

Recent data shows that the birth rate has increased by more than a quarter over the past decade resulting in a growing number of children starting school aged four. The impact of this societal trend has led to school peer groups being split up due to the AFL's minimum age policies not aligning with the standard school age policy in each state/territory.

While there will be children wishing to participate in junior football that fall either side of the policy dates, we feel the core principle of maintaining school peer groups as a local retention strategy outweighs this occurrence.

Competition Age Range

Where player numbers do not permit conducting a competition in every age group, the AFL policy recommends that children participate in competitions with a two-year age span, e.g. staggered age groups 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18.

The AFL policy recognises that in regional areas and the still-evolving female football pathway, the opportunity to conduct competitions with a two-year age span is not always possible. Where leagues and clubs have trouble fielding teams, reducing player numbers is recommended (9-12 a side).

If a league has no alternative than to conduct competitions that involve players participating outside the recommended two-year age span, they must first seek approval from their state football body. In these instances, coaches should endeavor to match players by age and ability level.

Playing down an age level

Junior leagues may at their discretion grant a player permission to play down an age level where a legitimate reason exists, such as physical capacity or disability. Players seeking exemption need to provide relevant medical evidence for assessment by the controlling body. If no relevant medical evidence can be provided, the controlling body will determine the application for exemption as it sees fit on full consideration of the circumstances presented.

Playing up an age level

The AFL policy acknowledges the principle role of the parent or guardian in determining that a player should play in a higher age competition than the one determined by the player's chronological age. Players should only be permitted to play up an age level when their physical capacity and social sense enable them to compete adequately at the higher age level. The decision whether a player should play up beyond the two-year age span should be based on the advantages to be gained by the player.

Before a player participates in a competition outside the recommended two-year age span, the player's parent or guardian must sign a consent form.

10. MERCY RULE

The AFL encourages leagues, clubs and coaches once an unassailable lead is reached during a game (e.g. 60 points) to appreciate that it serves no purpose to inflict massive losses on teams. In these instances, a mercy rule should be applied that suits the local competition circumstances.



NAB AFL AUSKICK

NAB AFL AUSKICK

To participate in the AFL Auskick program, children must turn five in the calendar year that they register.

The core philosophy of the program is to ensure that Australian Football for children aged 5-12 is positioned in terms of the following qualities:

- » **Fun & Safety:** football needs to be fun for all, but especially for this age group. Research has established that a sequential developmental program for children is extremely safe, particularly when involving appropriately accredited coaches. The activity for this age group must emphasise skill development as a priority, provide challenging match programs and specify a logical transition from introductory level through to competitions at club and/or school.
- » **For children & parents:** to further ensure that the progression from one level of involvement to the next caters for a smooth transition based upon rules and procedures appropriate to the children involved. The rules and procedures are simple to follow and supported by resources and coach education. The importance of community ownership and management must not be underestimated.
- » **Managed by the community:** the environments at centres, clubs and schools are managed and controlled by the community utilising AFL-developed procedures.

In line with this philosophy, programs and competitions must be planned around what children look for to make it a positive football experience.

In their words:

- » to have fun with their friends;
- » for excitement and enjoyment;
- » to experience challenge, achievement and personal responsibility;
- » to use and improve their skills.

Taking this into account, organisations aiming to provide football for this age group need to offer:

- » a program that enables all individuals to experience personal achievement in terms of competence, enhanced self-esteem, social cooperation, maximum participation and skill development in a fun environment;
- » appropriate warm-up activities;
- » appropriate skill teaching in a sequential program;
- » appropriate skill drills and games;
- » appropriate AFL Junior Rules modified rules matches;
- » appropriately trained/ accredited coaches, umpires and officials;
- » support for learning and inexperienced umpires.

ALL-GIRLS NAB AFL AUSKICK

To better cater for female participants, regions are encouraged to either set up:

- » an All-Girls Auskick group within their centre that runs parallel to mixed gender Auskick; or
- » a standalone All-Girls Auskick centre when there is no male club operating.

To participate in the AFL Auskick program, girls must turn five in the calendar year that they register.

For further guidance and information on how to conduct All-Girls Auskick, please refer to the *Female Football Club Guide*.



UNDER 8s

PURPOSE

To provide children with a fun, safe and positive experience through a well-structured match program that considers the maturity level of their motor, cognitive, social and emotional skills.

The emphasis is on the development of fundamental movement skills (ABCs of athleticism – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed) and basic game specific skills (kicking, handballing, marking, and gathering). The match program for this age group provides an introduction of basic roles (forward, centre and back) and tactical principles of gaining possession, moving forward, disposal to a teammate.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the start of play:

- » all players, coaches and umpires should gather on the ground and shake hands;
- » the umpire and coaches should ensure players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the conduct of the game.

The spirit of the game is to give all available players a game of football. Therefore:

- » where difficulty occurs fielding full numbers, both coaches must agree to even up player numbers;
- » excess players on one team should be given to the opposition team if they are unable to field the required numbers;
- » coaches should consider modifying the numbers per side to ensure all players participate (for instance, if planning 9-a-side but only 12 players in total are available: play 6-a-side. Or if 30 players are available, simultaneously play two games of 6-a-side or one 9-a-side game with one 6-a-side game).

The umpire should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the rules of the games while preferring to award kicks to players in preference to calling for “ball-ups”;
- » understand that the spirit of AFL junior match rules for this age group is to enable all players to gather possession and that “the player in possession of the ball should be given every opportunity to kick or handball”. For this reason, restrictions are placed upon body contact (refer to Contact/Tackling);
- » attempt to involve all players as the opportunities arise, particularly when indicating which players are to receive a “free kick” upon the ball being kicked out of bounds and ensuring the effective rotation of players through the three zones of play;
- » enforce the “full possession rule” at all ball-ups (see next page).

MATCH PROGRAM

THE BALL

A synthetic size 2 football should be used.

PLAYING TIME

The playing time should be reduced to what is appropriate for the age of the players.

- » **AFL Auskick Program** – It is recommended that grid games be played for a total of 12-20 minutes with regular breaks when required.
- » **AFL Junior Fixture** – Maximum of 4 x 10-minute quarters with no time-on.

THE TEAM

- » **Six-a-side means:** 2 forwards, 2 centres, 2 backs + reserves.
- » **Nine-a-side means:** 3 forwards, 3 centres, 3 backs + reserves.
- » **Twelve-a-side means:** 4 forwards, 4 centres, 4 backs + reserves.
- » Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play at least three quarters of the match.
- » Rotate players every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions, i.e. players to change from one zone to another and interchange on to the field.
- » Equalise the teams and opponents as much as possible (match sizes, abilities).

PLAYING GROUND AND OFFICIALS

The size of the playing field should be no bigger than 80m x 60m and divided into three equal zones (thirds) identified by markers or lines on the ground.

This field is a maximum size with flexibility needed depending on the players per team, age and ability level.

A field umpire is needed. There are no boundary throw-ins (no boundary umpires), but two goal umpires are required.

ZONES

Backs are restricted to the back zone. Centres are restricted to the centre zone. Forwards are restricted to the forward zone. Rotate players to provide opportunities in several positions (as above).

TRANSITION OF BALL

When the ball is in transition from the back zone to the forward zone, it must be touched by a player in the centre zone. Failure for this to occur will see a free kick awarded to the opposition team at the point at which the ball entered the end zone.

SCORING

Only players who are positioned as forward zone players may score.

THE POSSESSION RULE

The ball is possessed by the act of controlling it by catching it, grabbing it or laying two hands on it when it is on the ground. Once the ball is possessed, all other players must back off to the side of the player in possession, so that the player may kick or handball uncontested (there is to be no blocking or standing in the pathway of the player in possession). Decide doubtful cases with ball-ups.

In relation to all ball-ups, the full possession rule applies as follows:

- » a player contesting a ball-up may not grab the ball and play on;
- » the player must knock, palm or punch the ball to a teammate or open ground, and may not play the ball again until it has either been touched by another player or hits the ground.

START OF PLAY AND RESTARTING AFTER A GOAL

When all players are inside their own zones, a ball-up is conducted between two centre players of similar height as nominated by the umpire. The umpire should nominate different pairs of players for subsequent ball-ups after goals are scored (full possession rule applies).

SCRIMMAGE AND FIELD BALL-UPS

Where a scrimmage develops, unless awarding of a free kick is possible under the spirit of the game:

- » the umpire shall stop play, send players back to their zones and nominate two opponents of approximately equal size to contest a ball-up;
- » the nominated players need not be the tallest nor the nearest;
- » full possession at the ball-up is not permitted (full possession rule applies);
- » players should be encouraged to pick up the ball and will be penalised for diving on the ball.

CONTACT/TACKLING

There is to be absolutely no contact or spoiling whatsoever except accidental and light “shoulder to shoulder” contact while running to and at the ball. Players cannot:

- » hold an opponent with their hands;
- » steal the ball or knock it out of or an opponent’s hands;
- » push, bump or barge another player (incidental contact only is permitted);
- » smother an opponent’s kick;
- » shepherd.

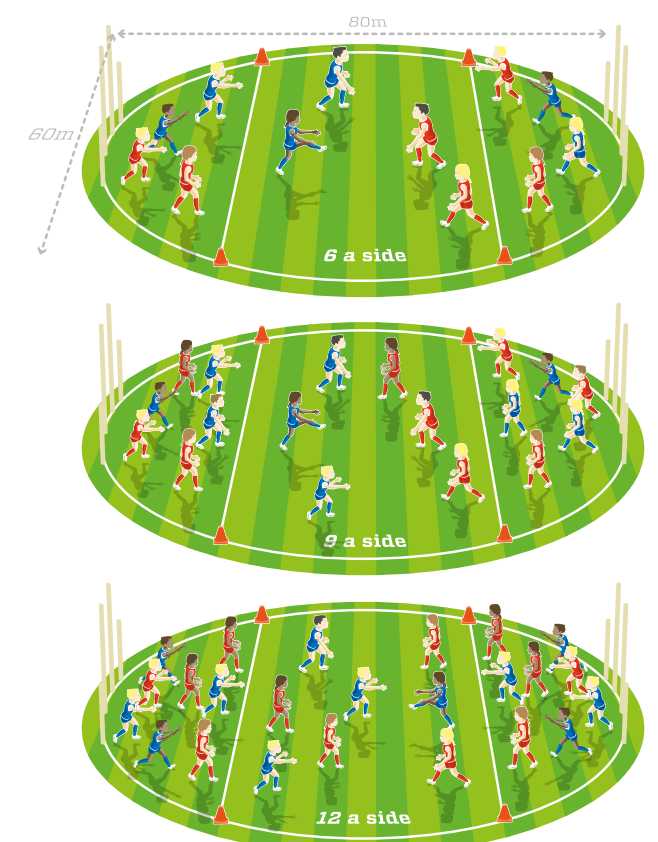
COACHES

The coach may be allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate feedback to players; they must not pressure, instruct or make comment to or about officiating umpires or decisions that they make. The coach must not pressure, instruct or make comment to the opposition team.

At the end of the game, all players and coaches should gather on the ground and shake hands. The umpire should also take this opportunity to address the players.

PREMIERSHIP POINTS

The football match program to be offered to players aged 5-8 must comply with the modified match program presented in this document with no premiership points, finals, ladders, match results (scores) or names of players published. Skill clinics and participation carnival days may be held. No representative teams should be selected.



UNDER 9s & UNDER 10s

PURPOSE

To provide children with a fun, safe and positive experience through a well-structured match program that considers the level of maturation in motor, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional skill of children in this age group.

The emphasis at this age level is the further development of basic game-specific skills (kicking, handballing, marking, gathering, evasion and checking) and learning technical and tactical concept. The match program for this age group provides further opportunities to develop game-specific skills and the tactical principles of gaining possession, pressure, utilising space and positional play.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the start of play:

- » all players, coaches and umpires should gather together on the ground and shake hands;
- » the umpire and coaches should ensure players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the conduct of the game.

The spirit of the game is to give all available players a game of football. Therefore:

- » where difficulty occurs fielding full numbers, both coaches must agree to even up player numbers;
- » excess players should be given to the opposition team if they are unable to field the required numbers;
- » coaches should consider modifying the numbers per side to ensure all players participate (for instance, if planning 12-a-side but only 18 players in total are available, play 9-a-side).

The umpire should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the rules of the games while preferring to award kicks to players in preference to calling for “ball-ups”;
- » understand that the spirit of AFL junior match rules for this age group is to enable all players to gather possession and that “the player in possession of the ball should be given every opportunity to kick or handball”;
- » attempt to involve all players as the opportunities arise, particularly when indicating which players are to receive a “free kick” upon the ball being kicked out of bounds and ensuring the effective rotation of players.

In relation to all ball-ups,

- » A player contesting a ball-up may not grab the ball and play on.

MATCH PROGRAM

THE BALL

A synthetic size 2 should be used.

PLAYING TIME

The playing time should be reduced to what is appropriate for the age of the players.

- » AFL Auskick Program – It is recommended that grid games be played for a total of 12-20 minutes with regular breaks when required.
- » AFL Junior Fixture – Maximum of 4 x 12-minute quarters with no time-on.

THE TEAM

- » **Twelve-a-side means:** 4 forwards, 4 centres, 4 backs + reserves.
- » **Fifteen-a-side means:** 5 forwards, 5 midfielders, 5 backs + reserves.
- » Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play at least half of the match.
- » Rotate players every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions, i.e. players to change from one zone to another and interchange on to the field.
- » Equalise the teams and opponents as much as possible (match sizes, abilities).

PLAYING GROUND AND OFFICIALS

The size of the playing field should be no bigger than 100m x 80m and divided into three equal zones (thirds) identified by markers or lines on the ground.

(For leagues that feel that zoning at this level is not in the best interests of the local conditions, an exemption can be sought via the state body.)

This field is a maximum size with flexibility needed depending on the players per team, age and ability level. Playing on a larger field will compromise the intent of the laws and in turn have an adverse effect on the development of players.

A field umpire is needed. There are no boundary throw-ins (no boundary umpires), but two goal umpires are required

ZONES

Backs are restricted to the back zone. Centres are restricted to the centre zone. Forwards are restricted to the forward zone. Rotate players to provide opportunities in several positions

(For leagues that feel that zoning at this level is not in the best interests of the local conditions, an exemption can be sought via the state body.)

TRANSITION OF BALL

When the ball is in transition from the back zone to the forward zone, it must be touched by a player in the centre zone. Failure for this to occur will see a free kick awarded to the opposition team at the point at which the ball entered the end zone.

SCORING

Only players who are positioned as forward zone players may score.

START OF PLAY AND RESTARTING AFTER A GOAL

When all players are in position, a ball-up is conducted between two centre players of similar height as nominated by the umpire. Alternate players for subsequent bounces.

OUT OF BOUNDS

From a kick – a free kick is awarded against the player who last kicked the ball.

If there is doubt, or if the ball came off hands or body, the umpire shall call a ball-up 5m in from the boundary. Full possession at the ball-up is not permitted.

CONTACT/TACKLING

Players can perform a modified tackle.

A player in possession of the ball may be tackled by an opponent wrapping both arms around the area below the top of the shoulders and on/above the knees. The tackle may be from either side or from behind providing the tackle from behind does not thrust forward the player with the ball (that is push the player in the back).

- » If the player in possession of the ball is taken to the ground in the act of tackling, they will receive a free kick. If the umpire feels the player drops to the ground deliberately in order to receive a free kick, they will be penalised for holding the ball.
- » A player in possession of the ball, when held by an opponent applying the wrap-around tackle, should be given a reasonable chance to dispose of the ball by kick or by handball, or by attempting to kick or handball, otherwise a free kick shall be awarded to the tackler for holding the ball.
- » The field umpire shall conduct a ball-up when the player with the ball has the ball held to the body by an opponent, unless the player has had a reasonable time to dispose of the ball before being tackled, in which case a free kick shall be awarded to the tackler for holding the ball.
- » The field umpire shall allow play to continue if the ball is knocked accidentally out of a player's hands by an opponent.
- » A player not in possession of the ball, when held by an opponent, shall be awarded a free kick.
- » There is strictly no bumping, slinging or deliberately bringing the opposition player in possession of the ball to the ground.

Players cannot:

- » knock the ball out of an opponent's hands on purpose;
- » push the player in the side;
- » steal the ball from another player;
- » smother an opponent's kick;
- » shepherd an opponent.

COACHES

The coach may be allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate feedback to players; they must not pressure, instruct or make comment to or about officiating umpires or decisions that they make. The coach must not pressure, instruct or make comment to the opposition team.

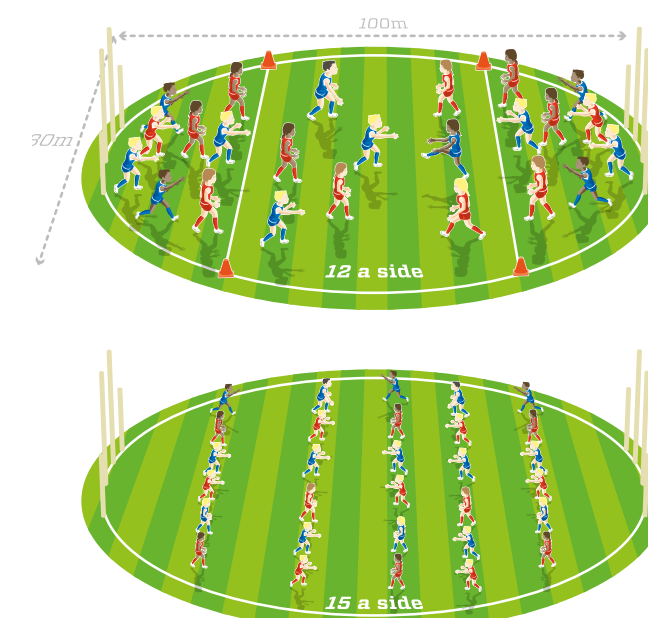
At the end of the game, all players and coaches should gather on the ground and shake hands. The umpire should also take this opportunity to address the players.

ORDER-OFF RULE

To be applied at the umpire's discretion (or the controlling body where applicable). Bad language, poor sportsmanship and disputing umpiring decisions should be actively discouraged.

THE GAME – PREMIERSHIP POINTS COMPETITIONS

The football match program to be offered to players aged 9-10 must comply with the modified match program presented in this document with no premiership points, finals, ladders, match results (no score) or names of players published. Skill clinics and participation carnival days may be held. No representative teams should be selected.



UNDER 11s & UNDER 12s

PURPOSE

To provide children with a fun, safe and positive experience through a well-structured match program that considers the level of maturation in motor, cognitive, psychosocial and emotional skill of children in this age group.

The consolidation of basic game-specific skills is still the focus at this age level rather than competition and winning, while further developing technical and tactical concepts. These concepts include position-specific and basic performance capacities – e.g. warm-up, cool-down, nutrition, hydration, recovery and goal-setting.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the start of play:

- » all players, coaches and umpires should gather on the ground and shake hands;
- » the umpire and coaches should ensure that players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the conduct of the game.

The spirit of the game is to give all available players a game of football. Therefore:

- » where difficulty occurs fielding full numbers, both coaches must agree to even up player numbers;
- » excess players should be given to the opposition team if they are unable to field the required numbers;
- » coaches should consider modifying the numbers per side to ensure all players participate (for instance, if planning 18-a-side but only 30 players in total are available, play 15-a-side).

The umpire should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the rules of the games while preferring to award kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups;
- » understand that the spirit of the AFL junior match rules for this age group is to enable all players to gather possession and that “the player in possession of the ball should be given every opportunity to kick or handball”;
- » attempt to involve all players as the opportunities arise, particularly when indicating which players are to receive a free kick upon the ball being kicked out of bounds and ensuring the effective rotation of players through the three zones of play.

MATCH PROGRAM

THE BALL

A synthetic or leather size 3 football made specifically for this age group should be used

PLAYING GROUND AND OFFICIALS

A full-size field is allowed unless the dimensions are clearly unsuitable for the number and skill level of the players involved.

In this instance, refer to the match program for 9 and 10-year-olds for guidance.

This field size is the optimum size and flexibility is often needed, in particular, smaller field sizes may be required depending on the number of players per team, age and ability level.

A field umpire is needed.

THE TEAM

- » **Fifteen-a-side means:** 5 forwards, 5 centres, 5 backs + reserves.
- » **Eighteen-a-side means:** 6 forwards, 6 midfielders, 6 backs + reserves.
- » Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play at least half of the match.
- » Equalise the teams and opponents as much as possible (match sizes, abilities).
- » Rotate players every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions.

PLAYING TIME

AFL Auskick Program – Recommended total playing time of 30 minutes.

AFL Junior Fixture – Maximum of 4 x 15-minute quarters with no time-on.

START OF PLAY AND RESTARTING AFTER A GOAL

When all players are in their positions, a ball-up is conducted between two centre players.

Only centre zone players attend centre bounces (20m clearance from all other players). The umpire is to enforce a similar 20m area for field bounces.

No more than three players from each team shall be closer to the ball-up than approximately 20m (full possession rule applies).

(Note: there is no requirement to have a centre square marked on the ground).

SCRIMMAGE AND FIELD BALL-UPS

Conducted between two players of equal size selected by the umpire. Before the throw up, the umpire should clear the area by sending players back to their positions. No more than three players from each team shall be closer to the ball-up than approximately 20m (full possession rule applies).

OUT OF BOUNDS

Where boundary umpires are available, the rules as per Australian Football can be applied. In other cases, a free kick is awarded against the player who last kicked the ball.

If there is doubt, or if the ball came off hands or body, the umpire shall call a ball-up 5m in from the boundary.

Full possession at the ball-up is not permitted (full possession rule applies).

CONTACT/TACKLING

Full tackling rules as per the laws of Australian Football can be applied.

BARGING

No barging or chopping past opponents is allowed. A free kick is awarded. Fending off, with an open hand to the body (not above the shoulders or in the back), is allowed.

DISTANCE PENALTY

A player can be awarded a 25m advancement towards their goals if, after a mark or free kick, the umpire is of the opinion that an opposing player hinders that player. This includes overstepping the mark, wasting time, using abusive language/behaviour, etc.

ORDER-OFF RULE

To be applied at the umpire's discretion (or the controlling body where applicable). Bad language, poor sportsmanship and disputing umpiring decisions should be actively discouraged.

COACHES

The coach is not allowed on the ground. Messages may be delivered by a runner. However, the runner must abide by the procedure of going directly to the player involved, delivering the message and returning directly to the coaching bench.

At the end of the game, all players and coaches should gather on the ground and shake hands. The umpire should also take this opportunity to address the players.

THE GAME – PREMIERSHIP POINTS COMPETITIONS

The football program to be offered to players needs to be delivered in a well-conducted league with appropriate development structures feeding into it. The program to be adopted might be the alternative “premiership” program.

Such a decision should be made by the relevant controlling bodies and endorsed by the state bodies. No representative teams.



YOUTH FOOTBALL

The AFL Youth Policy refers to the philosophy, guidelines and requirements for leagues, community clubs and schools responsible for delivering football to the 13-18 age groups.

The AFL Youth Policy aims to maximise the recruitment and retention of youth players (male and female) as they progress through the pathway to senior football.

Young people older than 12 identify the essence of sport as being centred around self-discovery and self-improvement, open access and fair play, providing skill acquisition and the discipline of commitment.

Young people want a safe and supportive environment, which encourages them to do their best. They do not enjoy sport when:

- » there is an over-emphasis on winning applied by parents, coaches and others;
- » they don't get enough playing time;
- » they don't have enough fun;
- » they cannot play with their friends because of imposed grading systems;
- » they are made to feel uncomfortable;
- » they are frightened of being hurt;
- » they are not as good as they want to be;
- » the coach is overly authoritarian;
- » and there is high praise for the best performers and little acknowledgment of others.

The AFL Youth Policy is based on positioning Australian Football for youth players in terms of the following qualities:

- 1. Fun, fast and skilful** – the social interaction, fast pace of the game and the opportunity to play skilfully make the game fun for players. When players are able to execute their skills successfully on the field, they experience a sense of fun and mastery. The pace of the game engages their attention, adrenaline is stimulated in close competition and success is experienced through skilful play, fulfilling team goals and coaches' instructions – all of which are shared with their peers.
- 2. Team and social interaction** – participants are drawn to the opportunity to socialise, develop and maintain friendships and operate as a team, at an age when their peer group is of the utmost importance. Football must provide an opportunity to feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.
- 3. Competition** – although players agree winning is fun, research reveals they are more concerned with the quality of the competition. The challenge for leagues, clubs and schools here is clearly to provide well-graded competitions that match the skill level of opposing teams.

All organisations aiming to provide football for youth players need to offer:

- » well-graded competitions;
- » skill teaching;
- » skill drills and games;
- » relevant team rules, team play and tactics;
- » specific match rules;
- » appropriately trained and accredited coaches, trainers, umpires and officials;
- » and ethical behavioural standards conforming to the AFL Code of Conduct for all participants.

FACTORS AFFECTING YOUTH DROP-OUT

Over the past decade, growth in sporting participation has been in recreational, non-traditional forms of sport. These sports appeal to people with busy lifestyles and a desire to keep fit without the risk of injury.

Research reveals many young people won't commit to a team sport every Saturday and two nights a week for 6-9 months of the year. For teens, study, social and part-time work pressures are increasing, together with competing entertainment opportunities such as movies, music and online games.

Community leagues and clubs responsible for youth football competitions need to be mindful of these social issues and consider strategies to reduce the youth drop-out rate. It is impossible for leagues and clubs to cater for the entire array of a young person's needs and attitudes.

However, some responses, like changing the traditional timing of games, modifying the rules and team numbers, altering the focus of coaching and offering broader life experiences are well worth trying.

Taking into account the above-mentioned social issues and local circumstances, the *Australian Football Match Policy* recommends the following options for junior club and school youth football competitions:

- » 13-14 years: Fixtured club or school-based matches with minor modifications to the Laws of Australian Football should be played at this age group, supported by coaching that emphasises the consolidation of the basic skills and introduces technical and tactical skills, including positional skills and basic performance-enhancement techniques; or
- » A fixture of club or school-based matches complying with the AFL Youth Girls rules for this age group, supported by coaching that emphasises skill development, maximum participation and fun.

AFL YOUTH POLICY

1. PLAYER ROTATIONS & TACTICS

Once children reach youth age levels, the emphasis shifts from players rotating through all positions on the ground to them gaining a level of competency in different positions.

The difference is youth players should be left in a position on the field until they have acquired that position's basic strategies and skills. Only then should they move to a new position.

To ensure all players feel an essential part of the team, regardless of their age, size, sex, ability or the competition they are playing in, it is critical they have an equal amount of time on the field during the season.

This will keep players in the game and reduce the likelihood of them leaving to pursue other sports. It also satisfies parents' expectations that their child will be given a fair go. It is recommended coaches keep records of the weekly game-time of each player to ensure each has equal playing time.



Ethically it is the responsibility of coaches to provide the best possible teaching and learning conditions; therefore, the use of negative defensive tactics where the opposing player's sole objective is to prevent a player from gaining possession is strongly discouraged at this age level.

Tactics such as tagging and flooding are elements of the modern game, however, they are contrary to the philosophy of providing an environment that maximises the desired fairness, fun, speed, skill and competitive elements of the game at this level.

2. GRADING

Research reveals that, while youth players agree winning is fun, they are more concerned with the quality of the competition. The challenge for leagues, clubs and schools is to provide well-graded competitions that match the skill levels of opposing teams.

LEAGUES

The AFL Youth Policy recommends junior leagues implement divisional competitions where teams are graded provided team numbers permit. Leagues may choose to conduct a grading round or a series of grading matches. This will ensure all teams and players participate in a competition that matches their skills and ability.

CLUBS

In the event a club enters more than one team in the same age group competition (no divisions), the AFL Youth Policy recommends players be allocated to each team so they are evenly matched.

In the event a club enters more than one team in an age group with a number of competition divisions, it is recommended players be allocated to a team in the division that best suits their skills and ability.

Although a player's peer group and the opportunity to develop and maintain friendships are of the utmost importance, this should not override the needs of the team and club when allocating players to appropriate teams (players should be engaged in the decision-making process).

UNDER 13s & UNDER 14s

MATCH PROGRAM

PURPOSE

Learning how to train and consolidate the basic skills is the focus at this age level. Advanced technical and tactical skills start to be introduced, including decision-making in games and training, positional skills (competency in a position) and basic performance-enhancing techniques, e.g. warm-up, cool-down, nutrition, hydration, recovery, goal-setting, pre and post-match routines.

It is important for players in this age group to feel an essential part of the team to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and a connection with the community, club and team. Commitment and loyalty to the club and team and social responsibility on and off the field in line with adult standards should be engendered and acknowledged.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the start of play, all players, coaches and umpires should shake hands.

And the umpire and coaches should ensure players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the game.

The spirit and intention is to ensure all games are played in a competitive and fair manner, in an environment that:

- » permits a player whose sole objective is to contest and gain possession of the ball, to do so in a safe and fair manner;
- » rewards and acknowledges commitment and loyalty to the team, club and or school;
- » allows all players to feel an essential part of the team while enabling each individual to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and an identity within the community, their team, club or school; and
- » fosters and reinforces community values and social responsibility.

The player whose sole objective is to contest the ball must be permitted to do so. Ethically it is the responsibility of coaches to provide the best possible teaching and learning conditions; therefore, the use of negative defensive tactics where the opposing player's sole objective is to prevent a player from gaining possession is strongly discouraged at this age level.

Tactics such as tagging and flooding are elements of the modern game, however, they are contrary to the philosophy of providing an environment that maximises the desired fairness, fun, speed, skill and competitive elements of the game at this level.

Umpires should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the laws of the game, awarding free kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups;
- » understand the spirit and intention of the laws is to ensure a match is played in a fair manner and to protect players from injury. For this reason, restrictions are placed upon tackling in this age group.

At the end of the game, all players and coaches should shake hands.

LAWS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

The Laws of Australian Football apply to the 13-14 age group with the following modifications.

THE BALL

A size 4 leather or synthetic football made specifically for this age group should be used.

TACKLING

Tackling is permitted per the Laws of Australian Football, however:

- » No player shall be deliberately slung, dumped or thrown to the ground in any tackle.

ORDER-OFF RULE

To be applied at the umpire's discretion or by the competition's controlling body where applicable. Bad language, poor sportsmanship and disputing umpiring decisions should be actively discouraged.



UNDER 15s – U18s

MATCH PROGRAM

PURPOSE

As players get older (15-18 years), the emphasis at this age level is to optimise the development of players' fitness levels and their individual, positional and team skills. Higher-level competition skills should be developed and appropriate competitions provided to enhance players' learning and their chances of being identified for talent pathway programs.

It is important for players in this age group to feel an essential part of the team to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and a connection with the community, club and team. Commitment and loyalty to the club and team and social responsibility on and off the field in line with adult standards should be engendered and acknowledged.

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Before the start of play and at the end of the game, all players, coaches and umpires should shake hands. The spirit and intention is to ensure all games are played in a competitive and fair manner, in an environment that:

- » permits a player whose sole objective is to contest and gain possession of the ball to do so in a safe and fair manner;
- » rewards and acknowledges commitment and loyalty to the team, club and school;
- » allows all players to feel an essential part of their team, while enabling each individual to develop self-efficacy, self-worth and an identity within their community, team, club and school; and
- » engenders and reinforces community values and social responsibility.

The player whose sole objective is to contest the ball must be permitted to do so. Ethically, it is the responsibility of coaches to provide the best possible teaching and learning conditions.

Therefore, the use of negative defensive tactics, where the opposing player's sole objective is to prevent a player from gaining possession, is strongly discouraged at this age level.

It could be argued tactics such as tagging and flooding are elements of the modern game, however, they are detrimental to the philosophy of providing an environment that maximises the desired fairness, fun, speed, skill and competitive elements of the game.

The umpire should at all times:

- » endeavour to apply the rules of the games while awarding free kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups; and
- » understand the spirit and intention of the laws is to ensure that a match is played in a fair manner and to protect players from injury.

LAWS OF AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

The Laws of Australian Football apply to all matches played in the 15-18 age group.

ORDER-OFF RULE

To be applied at the umpire's discretion, or by the competition's controlling body where applicable.

Bad language, poor sportsmanship and disputing umpiring decisions should be actively discouraged.



YOUTH GIRLS

SPIRIT OF THE GAME

Participants should understand that every female competition is delivered with the 'spirit of the game' in mind. That means that regardless of their role, every participant will:

- » understand the female developmental phases in the football journey of players, umpires and coaches. The focus should not be on 'win at all costs' but on learning the game and executing skills to the best of one's ability. Learning to win and lose is part of developing as a footballer but should not be the primary focus;
- » provide a fun, fair and safe environment for all girls;
- » maximise the enjoyment and development of young female players;
- » ensure that the values inherent in 'the spirit of the game' which include but are not limited to fairness, sportsmanship, respect and teamwork are developed, encouraged and celebrated.

Uphold and actively promote the rules, Laws of Australian Football, codes of conduct and any policies developed around the girls competition. That means not accepting poor behavior that undermines a fun and safe environment for all.

PLAYING GROUND, ZONES, TIME AND EQUIPMENT

Most young girls do not have the strength or power capacity to kick as far, run as fast or process the same level of match information as women or boys. Therefore they should not be forced to play on the same size field as adults or boys.

The Youth Girls philosophy is committed to a reduced playing area, playing time and suitably modified equipment (such as a smaller football) to better suit the smaller hands of young players and to build the players' endurance and allow for greater skill development.

Where smaller team numbers (such as 9 or 12 a-side) and grounds are reduced in size, the players are encouraged to concentrate because the ball is never far away.

TEAM COMPOSITION

Reduced numbers allow individual players to have more frequent and longer contact with the ball while play is more open, even when played on a reduced size oval.

Smaller numbers also allows for greater ease when recruiting team numbers where clubs are fielding a new girls team for the first time.

ROTATION OF PLAYERS

Young players should experience playing in a variety of positions. The practice of rotating players through different positions and the interchange enables the development of a solid foundation and adds variety and interest to the matches.

CONTACT

Deferring the introduction of full tackling is based upon the need to provide players with the best possible conditions to learn, develop and improve their disposal skills by reducing congestion and pressure on the player in possession. All skills are eventually taught and learned, but there is an appropriate sequence for doing so.

The physiological and emotional readiness of young girls bodies to resist the pressures of tackling also needs to be recognised in assessing when to introduce full 'wrap and drop' tackling.

If the composition of teams opposing each other has a variety of experience levels (i.e. a player who has travelled the mixed gender pathway versus a player who is new to the game at youth girls) then the ability to give or receive a full tackle safely at under 14s, for example, will be compromised.

Girls new to the game but keen to be first to the ball often have not yet learned how to protect themselves when faced with picking the ball up from below their knees and an opponent running at them to do the same.

For these reasons some alternatives are provided in this guide to allow skills to develop while providing the highest consideration to player welfare.

BOUNCING

To prevent one player dominating play, the number of bounces they can make is restricted. This also dissuades players from running excessive distances with the ball, encourages disposal skills and enhances team play.

KICKING OFF THE GROUND

In a player's development years, the ability to enhance the skill of picking the ball up takes precedence over the need to kick it off the ground. This provides players the opportunity to learn to confidently put their head over the ball to pick it up off the ground.

KICKING PENALTIES

As there are few young girls who can regularly kick over 50m, the 50m penalty as per the Laws of Australian Football is too much of a consequence to impose. Therefore, in keeping with the majority of young players' kicking development, the 25m penalty will be imposed where the Laws of Australian Football impose a 50m penalty.

GAME TACTICS

While tactics such as tagging and flooding are elements of the AFL competition, they are contrary to providing an environment that maximises the fairness, speed and skilled execution of Australian Football. Nor do these tactics encourage clean disposals, one-on-one competition or other desired aspects of learning the game.

PREMIERSHIP POINTS COMPETITIONS

The match environment in youth girls football must be one of encouragement, learning and development over a focus of "winning".

Striving for excellence in team work and personal skill development should be the primary focus rather than the outcome of the competition.

AWARDS

Any awards should not replace or detract from the fun and enjoyment gained by participation in the program and the learning that is an integral part of it.



RULES & REGULATIONS

MIXED				BOYS ONLY			GIRLS ONLY			
	Under 8	Under 9 & 10	Under 11 & 12	Under 13 & 14	Under 15 & 16	Under 17 & 18	Under 10	Under 12	Under 15	Under 18
PHASE	Introductory	Development	Competition	Competition	Competition	Competition	Introductory	Development	Competition	Competition
REGULATIONS										
Ground size	80m x 60m	100m x 80m	Standard	Standard	Standard	Standard	80m x 60m	100m x 80m	Standard	Standard
Zones	√	√	X	X	X	X	√	√	X	X
No. of players on ground	6-12-a-side	9/12-a-side	12/15-a-side	18-a-side	18-a-side	18-a-side	6-12-a-side	6-12-a-side	15-18-a-side	18-a-side
Ball type	Syn only	Syn only	Syn/Leather	Leather	Leather	Leather	Syn only	Syn only	Syn/Leather	Leather
Ball size	2	2	3	4	full size	full size	2	3	4	4
Quarter duration (mins)	10	12	15	15	20	22	10	12	15	17
Break length 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 time	3-6-3	3-6-3	3-10-5	3-10-5	3-10-5	3-10-5	3-6-3	3-6-3	3-10-5	3-10-5
Scoring	No scores, ladders or finals permitted	No scores, ladders or finals permitted	√	√	√	√	No scores, ladders or finals permitted	√	√	√
Results	No recording of best players or goalkickers	No recording of best players or goalkickers	No recording of best players or goalkickers	√	√	√	No recording of best players or goalkickers	No recording of best players or goalkickers	√	√
LAWS										
Tackling	No tackling	Modified	√	√	√	√	No tackling	Modified	√	√
Bumping	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Stealing the ball	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Barging	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Smothering	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Fending off	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Shepherding	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Bouncing the ball	1 max		Unlimited				1 max		Unlimited	
Kicking off the ground	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Ball-ups	Nominated players		√	√	√	√	Nominated players		√	√
Throw-ins	X	X	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
Marking	Any distance, reasonable attempt	Any distance, shows control	10m, direct catch	√	15m	15m	Any distance, reasonable attempt	Any distance, reasonable attempt	Any distance, shows control	10m, direct catch
Distance penalty	25m	25m	25m	25m	25m	50m	0	10m	25m	25m
Deliberate out of bounds	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
Deliberately rushed behind	X	X	X	X	X	√	X	X	X	X
UMPIRES & COACHES										
No. of field umpires	Club (2)		Association (1)		2	2	Club (2)		Association (1)	
Boundary umpires	X	X	√	√	√	√	X	X	√	√
Coaches	On-field	Optional	Sideline	Sideline	Sideline	Sideline	On-field	Optional	Sideline	Sideline

PART THREE UMPIRING

AFL UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PHILOSOPHY OF UMPIRING AFL JUNIOR MATCHES

When umpiring children in this age group, it is important to understand the six most important things are:

1. To nurture in children a respect for officials;
2. To develop basic skills and playing skills of each individual player;
3. To assist the moulding of character;
4. To build self-esteem through positive feedback;
5. To developing sportsmanship;
6. To educate and seek to modify behaviour that is inappropriate.

THE UMPIRE AS COACH

An AFL junior umpire is more of an on-field coach than an umpire and needs to have:

- » a thorough knowledge of the skills of the game, particularly their teaching points so they can provide encouragement and feedback to the players during the game;
- » a good knowledge of the rules of the game as applied to each particular age group so they can provide clear explanations to players are provided when decisions are made.

POSITIONING

Because of the size of the oval and the distances kicked by children of these age groups, positioning should not be a problem.

The umpire should be close enough (side-on to each contest is the best position) to talk to the players and not have to yell too loudly.

Some players will be unsure of even which way to kick or that they need to move back after taking a mark. The umpire needs to reassure such children and give them time and guidance in learning what to do. In some cases, children will need to be guided into position (e.g. on the mark) or clear directions given as to what to do next.

PSYCHOLOGY: REWARD VERSUS PUNISHMENT

Children, when rewarded for appropriate behaviour, are far more likely to try to repeat such behaviour.

It has been shown that this powerful method of controlling, modifying and developing behaviour is most effective when the reward is given immediately after the performance of the particular behaviour.

The umpire is in a position to give immediate rewards in two ways:

- » By word of mouth ("terrific", "well done", "good pass", etc. If need be, and if time permits, by explaining what was good about it. Such praise should always be given for efforts to dispose of the ball with the non-preferred foot/hand.

- » By awarding a free kick, or even granting a mark. Such decisions can be based upon the situation (courage, effort, determination or simply because the child had not had prior opportunities to participate fully), not necessarily by strict interpretation of the rules.

THE OUTCOME IS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE

AFL UMPIRE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

AFL Junior Umpires – The minimum age a child should umpire a match is 14. In addition, they should be supported where possible by a mentor who has completed the AFL's Umpiring Mentor Program.

AIM

The aim of the AFL Umpire Development Program is to provide a supportive and quality environment within which umpires and their mentors and coaches can help them develop their skills and enjoy their officiating experience.

The AFL has a number of education and recognition programs to support this aim. At the junior level, two key programs are offered to assist in the development of umpires. They are:

1. The AFL's Basic Umpire Course.
2. The AFL Umpire Mentor Program or "Green Shirt" Program.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAMS

THE AFL BASIC UMPIRE COURSE

The Basic Umpires' Course is a training program designed to teach the basics of becoming an umpire and is intended as an introduction to the umpiring development pathway.

It is designed to be used by all entry level umpires, irrespective of age, gender or background in the game. This includes parents, coaches and other club volunteers and is also offered to schools and junior clubs.

An Auskick style pack and training DVD is provided to participants.

THE AFL UMPIRE MENTOR PROGRAM OR "GREEN SHIRT" PROGRAM

The AFL Umpire Mentor Program is an umpire education and development program that aims to use experienced umpires to mentor new and inexperienced ones. The key elements of the program include:

- » the developing umpire wears a green shirt to highlight their learner status;
- » like the players, young officials need support, understanding and guidance to acquire and improve new skills;
- » both the new umpire and mentor receive a resource pack and training program and at the end of the season, the AFL conducts an event in each state to recognise their participation in the program.



PART FOUR

COACHING PATHWAYS

AFL COACHING DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The Australian Football League recognises that at all levels of Australian Football, the coach has significantly more influence upon players than any other person. This is why all coaches need to be accredited to the appropriate level.

The coach's role is to arrange the best possible teaching and learning conditions in training and at matches for the children participating. We also know that coaches are the primary reason why players either stay or leave football – there is nothing more directly linked to drop-out than having an abusive or angry, bad-tempered, inadequately trained coach.

Training in coaching and communication techniques with primary and youth-aged children is critical for a number of reasons:

- » coaches influence the forming and development of personalities in their care;
- » the primary years are the “golden years” of the development of fundamental motor skills and of skill learning specific to sport. Not only is this the most rapid learning phase of young lives in this regard, but also a failure to develop such skills pre-youth is a major factor influencing teenage drop-out in sport.

LEARNING IS AN ACTIVE PROCESS

Learning is an active process linked to the development of young people. There are:

- » identifiable phases to learning physical skills;
- » learning processes change over time as young people gain experience;
- » Strategies for helping young people learn include letting them:
 - » watch, listen and then experiment for themselves;
 - » try the activity first and then refine the skills with the help of feedback;
 - » watch other young people.

How young people like to learn differs with the particular skill, their experience and the way they learn best.

LEARNING IS DEVELOPMENTAL

Learning changes as young people grow and mature with:

- » physical changes in their size and strength;
- » social, emotional and psychological development;
- » their experience as they progress from beginner to intermediate to advanced levels of skill.

With experience, young people adapt to changing circumstances with greater speed and ease. Key characteristics of more experienced players include the ability to:

- » identify and sift relevant cues in the playing environment quickly and accurately;
 - » decide what information is relevant to their performance.
- Learning is multi-dimensional. People typically learn more than one thing at a time. In the process of building sport skills, young people are also learning:
- » what is expected of them as a player;
 - » how to work with friends and teammates;
 - » the skills they are best at.

This highlights the complexity of gaining skills and how the broader social aspects of life also affect young people as they learn sports.

AIMS OF QUALITY COACHING

Coaches aim to pass on to young people a sound understanding of the:

- » skills, tactics, strategies and rules;
- » etiquette and behaviour standards.

The aim of this is to help players build an ability to make decisions independently and to participate within the ethos of the sport.

Coaches aid learning outcomes best by being flexible and not overly directive. They need to plan:

- » what they will instruct;
- » how they will instruct;
- » how they will structure tasks.

COACHING COURSES – TRAINING

The development of Australian Football, particularly at grassroots and club football level, depends primarily on the environment in which the game is organised and played.

The following are key elements in establishing a first-class environment for the recruitment and retention of participants in Australian Football:

- » how football clubs and facilities are managed by club personnel;
- » how football activities and games are presented and managed by coaches;
- » how games are umpired; and
- » how players are supported by trainers and sports medicine personnel.

The AFL, through its Game Development Department, develops, implements and conducts training programs for the development of coaches, umpires, trainers and other medical support personnel and is developing new programs for club management. These programs are generally conducted through the AFL's state and territory affiliates. In line with Australian Sports Commission education programs and sport industry vocational programs, the AFL's accreditation programs for coaches, umpires and trainers are competency-based.

MANDATORY ACCREDITATION

All state and territory football bodies have a Mandatory Accreditation Policy. Coaches MUST complete an approved AFL Coaching Course if they are coaching children. There are no second chances; children need to be appropriately coached through these formative years.

AFL JUNIORS ONLINE COURSE

The coaching of children at AFL Auskick Centres is the most important aspect of the program. Failure to develop coordination and basic skills is the single greatest factor in preventing children from continuing to participate in their chosen sport, or sport generally.

- » Introductory 3-4-hour course.
- » Conducted through practical, “hands-on” involvement of participants under the guidance of trained personnel.
- » Designed for parents/helpers who, regardless of their football background, would like to assist in running activities.
- » Outlines the conduct of a ‘typical’ AFL Auskick session and how it fits into a season-long program.
- » Introduces appropriate warm-up activities.
- » Demonstrates the skills of Australian Football.
- » Shows, through practical involvement, how to teach these skills to children.
- » Demonstrates a variety of skill games and activities.
- » Introduces the principles of conducting and umpiring modified football games.
- » Offers credits to AFL Auskick Level One Certificate.

LEVEL ONE – AFL JUNIOR CERTIFICATE

- » The AFL's minimum coaching accreditation for coaching children aged 5-12 in AFL Auskick centres and community clubs is conducted over approximately 14 hours.
- » Conducted through practical, “hands-on” involvement of participants under the guidance of trained personnel and expert presenters
- » Designed for parents/helpers who want to assume a coaching role, organise activities, teach the skills of the game, and conduct modified games. It has a specific orientation towards issues surrounding the participation and practices appropriate to the development and enjoyment of players in this age range.
- » Topics include:
 - » Role of the coach.
 - » Planning and Organisation of the Training Session.
 - » Teaching the Basic Skills of Australian Football.
 - » Skill Games and Modified Games/Forming a Basic Team Plan.
 - » Growth and Development/Safety Issues/Legal Issues
- » Candidates will be assessed practically either in course time or “on the job” or both.
- » Excellent AFL Coaching Manuals and further presenters' notes are provided as part of the course.
- » Coaches are required to agree to the AFL Coaches Code of Conduct as part of gaining their accreditation.
- » As accredited coaches, successful candidates receive an “AFL Level 1 (AFL Auskick) Coaching Certificate” and are entered on the national coaches' database.
- » Teachers' Level 1 AFL Auskick Course takes into account recognition of prior learning (RPL) policy and is an abbreviated course.



PART FIVE

PROVIDING A QUALITY ENVIRONMENT

We want to maximise participation in the game. This can be best achieved by providing non-discriminatory and inclusive practices when delivering junior football in an environment where all children, regardless of their capability, cultural background, social or geographic situation, gender or sexuality, can sequentially develop their skills through appropriate activities, games and match rules.

This resource is designed to support such an environment by outlining what is recommended as appropriate conduct of the game at junior levels.

MEMBER PROTECTION POLICY

The AFL has a Member Protection Policy that focuses on the relevant legislation to ensure the safety, health and welfare of young people and volunteers who participate in and deliver junior football competitions.

This policy does not cover the legislation applying to the administration of junior sport (e.g. tax law, corporations law, stamp duty).

The law related to the welfare of junior participants emphasises the serious obligations for anybody taking responsibility for providing junior participants with activities and/or care.

It is the duty of care of people taking responsibility for providing junior football competitions to:

- » be aware of the underlying legal issues relevant to the provision of sport;
- » put appropriate safeguards in place.

This protects both volunteers and participants. It is also in line with having a best practice organisation.

This policy covers the following areas and can be found via aflcommunity.com.au.

CODES OF CONDUCT

The AFL encourages all leagues, clubs and stakeholders involved in the game to adopt the following Codes of Conduct:

PARENTS/SPECTATORS

- » Remember that children play sport for their enjoyment, not yours.
- » Encourage children to participate, do not force participation upon them.
- » Focus on the child's efforts and self esteem rather than whether they win or lose.
- » Encourage children to always participate according to the rules.
- » Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or for the team losing a game.
- » Remember that children learn best by example – applaud the efforts of all players in both teams.

- » Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse for sporting activities.
- » Show appreciation of volunteer coaches, officials and administrators – without whom your child could not participate.
- » Respect umpires' decisions and teach children to do likewise.
- » Remember that smoking and the consumption of alcohol are unacceptable at junior sport.

ADMINISTRATION/OFFICIALS

- » Ensure equal participation for all: provide equal opportunities for all regardless of ability, size, shape, sex, age, disability or ethnic origin.
- » Suitability of program: ensure that the rules, equipment, length of games and training schedules take into consideration age, ability and maturity level of the participants.
- » Ensure adequate supervision: adequate supervision must be provided by qualified and competent coaches and officials capable of developing appropriate sports behaviour and skill technique.
- » Stress enjoyment: remember that children participate for enjoyment. Play down the importance of rewards.
- » Arrange adult education: develop improved standards of coaching and officiating with an emphasis on appropriate behaviour and skill technique.
- » Promote fair play: ensure that parents, coaches, officials, sponsors, physicians and participants understand their responsibilities regarding fair play.
- » Modify to suit various levels: modify rules and regulations to match the skill level of participants and their needs.
- » Promote respect for opponents: condemn unsporting behaviour.
- » Maximise enjoyment: publicly encourage rule changes which will reinforce the principle of participation for fun and enjoyment.
- » Keep up to date: make a personal commitment to keep informed of sound principles of administering recommended football programs for junior players.

PLAYERS

- » Play by the rules: they are for the good of all.
- » Never argue with an official: if you disagree, discuss the matter with your coach or teacher after the game.
- » Control your temper: verbal abuse or racial or religious vilification of other players or provoking an opponent or the other team is never appropriate.
- » Be a good sport: applaud all good play by your team, opponent or the other team.
- » Treat all players fairly: treat all players as you would like to be treated. Do not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of another player.
- » Co-operate willingly: co-operate with your coach, teammates and opponents. Without them, there would be no game.
- » Play for fun: Play for the 'fun of it' and not just to please parents and coaches.

COACHES CODE OF CONDUCT

- » I understand that as an integral component of my accreditation, I must maintain a standard of behaviour and conduct in the best interests of the game and the players/staff in my care. In representing myself in an honest manner, and without bringing the coaching profession or the Game into disrepute, I will endeavour to uphold the following to the best of my ability:
- » I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of all individuals within the context of my involvement in Australian Football, including refraining from any discriminatory practices on the basis of race, religion, ethnic background, or special ability/disability.
- » I will abide by and teach the AFL Laws of the Game and the Rules of my Club and League/Association.
- » I will be reasonable in the demands I make on the time commitments of the players in my care, having due consideration for their health and well-being.
- » I will refrain from any form of personal abuse or unnecessary physical contact with the players in my care.
- » I will have due consideration for varying maturity and ability levels of my players when designing practice schedules, practice activities and involvement in competition.
- » I will avoid overplaying the talented players, aiming to maximise participation and enjoyment for all players regardless of ability. Where I am responsible for players in the 5-12 year old age group, I will ensure that all players gain equal playing time.
- » I will stress and monitor safety always.
- » In recognising the significance of injury and sickness, I will seek and follow the physician's advice concerning the return of injured or ill players to training.

- » I will endeavour to keep informed with regard to sound principles of coaching and skill development, and to factors relating to the welfare of my players.
- » I will at all times display and teach appropriate sporting behaviour, ensuring that players understand and practise fair play.
- » I will display and foster respect for umpires, opponents, coaches, administrators, other officials, parents and spectators.
- » I will ensure that players are involved in a positive environment where skill learning and development as priorities are not overshadowed by a desire to win.
- » I reject the use of performance-enhancing substances in sport and will abide by the guidelines set forth in the AFL DRUG POLICY.

Note: This "Coaches Code of Conduct" is to be signed and conformed to as part of the accreditation requirements of the AFL. Coaches should be aware that, in addition to this Code, they may be obliged to sign a further Code of Conduct/Ethics with their Club and/or League.

KEEPING JUNIOR FOOTBALL SAFE

Research has shown that junior football is very safe. The incidence of injury in junior football is very low and serious injury is extremely rare. To maintain this position, leagues and clubs should prepare adequately to deal with injuries or medical problems should they occur.

Risk management procedures include the provision of first aid support, safety equipment and having policies in place for environmental and medical issues. These improve the safety of junior players.

DEALING WITH EMERGENCIES

Planning what to do when an emergency occurs is an essential part of risk management. Junior Leagues must be conversant with procedures and able to deal with emergencies so young people are well cared for.

Junior Leagues should ensure a person with current first aid qualifications is available at all junior games and seek medical opinion when:

- » the health of a participant is questionable;
- » recovery from illness/injury is uncertain;
- » a participant is injured during training/competition.

When medical advice cannot be obtained, the junior league and or club should not allow the young person to participate.

A first aid kit must be available at training and competition venues. Sport specific rescue equipment should also be accessible. Emergencies should be formally reported and discussed and changes made to procedures if needed.

FIRST AID OFFICER

For the safety of all junior players, the following minimum levels of accreditation for the provision of first aid and trainer services will apply:

- » AFL Auskick/AFL Junior (5-12 years) – Basic First Aid Course.
- » Community Youth (13-14 years) – Sports First Aid Course/Basic First Aid Course.
- » Community Youth (15-18 years) – Level 1 Trainer/Basic Trainers Course (must include current emergency first aid qualification).

MEDICAL CONDITIONS

SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS

Some medical conditions may create concern for coaches and parents. Generally, active sports participation is of benefit to many people with medical conditions. However, a medical certificate should be provided if there is potential for the condition interfering with participation or playing football could adversely influence the condition.

Some conditions may require coaches to be informed if specific medical assistance could be necessary. Common conditions such as asthma, epilepsy and diabetes require an emergency management plan to be provided. Players with heart problems or loss of one of a paired organ system (e.g. eye, kidney, testicle) need a specific medical clearance to play.

CONCUSSION

Concussion occurs when, after a blow to the head, there is brain injury with some immediate disturbance of brain function. Any player showing the signs or symptoms of concussion should be removed from the field immediately and referred to a medical practitioner.

A player who has suffered concussion with or without loss of consciousness should not participate in any match or training session until he/she is fully recovered and has been cleared by a thorough medical examination. Junior clubs must sight a medical clearance before allowing a player who has sustained a concussion to resume playing.

PREGNANCY POLICY

Consistent with the obligations arising under the National Vilification & Discrimination Policy, members must not discriminate against, vilify or harass pregnant women. Rather, pregnant women must be treated with dignity and respect and any unreasonable barriers to participation by them in Australian Football should be removed.

While many sporting activities are safe for pregnant women, there may be particular risks that apply to some women during pregnancy. Those risks will depend on the nature of the sporting activity and the particular pregnant woman's circumstances. Pregnant women should be aware that their own health and wellbeing, and that of their unborn children, should be of utmost importance in their decision-making about the way they participate in Australian Football.

It is recommended that pregnant women wanting to participate in Australian Football consult with their medical advisers, make themselves aware of the facts about pregnancy in sport, and ensure that they make informed decisions about participation. Further information about playing sport while pregnant can be obtained from activeaustralia.org/women.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Playing football, as with all team sports, involves players living and training in close contact with others. While this increases the risk of contracting common illnesses such as respiratory infections, skin infections or gastro-enteritis, simple measures can reduce the chances of transmission of these infections.

Avoidance of sharing drink bottles, washing hands regularly, avoid spitting and a generally clean environment in change rooms is recommended. Specific rules apply to players with acute bleeding during a game. They should be removed from the ground immediately and the bleeding controlled. They may require medical attention. All open wounds should be covered before returning to play. All clothing contaminated with blood should be removed and washed. These measures reduce the risk of transmission of blood-borne viruses.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

BOUNDARY LINE

In order to prevent injuries to players, officials and spectators, the distance between the boundary line and oval fencing should be a minimum of 3m.

GOALPOST PADDING

In order to prevent injuries to players, officials and spectators, all fixed goal and behind posts must be padded as follows:

- » a minimum of 35 millimetres thick foam padding, covered in canvas or painted;
- » a minimum height of 2.5m from the bottom of each goal and behind post;
- » a suitable width to allow the padding to be fixed around each goal and behind post;
- » the padding must be securely attached around each goal and behind post.

MOUTH GUARDS

It is recommended that all children participating in any form of the game should wear an appropriately fitted mouth guard.

PROTECTIVE HEAD GEAR (HELMETS)

There is no strong evidence to suggest protective head gear is necessary in junior football. In the event that protective head gear (helmet) is required due to a disability or medical condition, a medical certificate should be provided that states that the protective head gear will provide adequate protection.

SPECTACLES

Junior footballers who wish to wear spectacles during matches and training sessions should wear spectacles with PLASTIC FRAMES and PLASTIC LENSES. A band must also hold the spectacles on securely. This will minimise the risk of injury to the player, teammates and opposition players.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS

In managing risk, consideration must be given to environmental factors and their impact on participants. Sometimes extreme weather conditions (e.g. heat, cold, rain or wind) make it best to postpone training and/or competition. Different regions of Australia vary in the weather conditions they consider extreme, due to their acclimatisation to the local environment. The player's health must always be considered when scheduling of junior matches. Junior leagues and schools when scheduling junior matches should carefully consider the following environmental conditions.

HEAT

Vigorous exercise in sport places some people at risk of heat illness. Even in cool weather, heat illness may occur in people exercising at high intensity for more than about 45 minutes. The risk of heat illness is obviously greater in hot and humid weather because:

- » during high intensity exercise in hot weather, people may not be able to produce enough perspiration for adequate cooling;
- » high humidity may prevent adequate evaporation of sweat.

Children perspire less and get less evaporative cooling than adults. In warm and hot weather, they have greater difficulty in getting rid of heat; they look flushed and feel hotter and more stressed than adults. Overweight children are particularly disadvantaged exercising in warm weather. Children should always be allowed to exercise at their preferred intensity, they should never be urged to exercise harder or compelled to play strenuous sport in warm weather. If children appear distressed or complain of feeling unwell, they should stop the activity.

In high temperatures and humid conditions, junior leagues and schools should consider postponing to a cooler part of the day or cancelling scheduled matches. It is recommended that junior football providers follow the Sports Medicine Australia guidelines available on their website sma.org.au.

COLD

In extremely cold temperatures, junior leagues and schools should consider postponing or cancelling scheduled matches. The AFL recommends that junior leagues and schools apply common sense guidelines to climatic conditions that exist within their respective regions. Sport Medicine Australia (SMA) has state and territory branches and should be consulted when developing appropriate local policies to manage environmental conditions.

FLUID BALANCE

Substantial amounts of water are lost through perspiration when exercising vigorously in the heat, hence fluid balance is important at any time but needs more attention in some weather conditions. Junior participants do not instinctively drink enough to replace fluid lost during activity. Junior participants must be reminded to drink before, during and after training and competition.

- » Water is the most appropriate drink for re-hydration. However, diluted cordial or sports drinks may be supplied. Flavoured drinks may be more palatable to children who have consistently poor drinking habits during exercise.
- » Players should be encouraged to have their own drink bottles. This ensures that each player has access to an adequate level of replacement fluids and reduces the risk of contamination and passing on of viruses.
- » Where cups and a large container are supplied, cups should not be dipped into the container. Used cups should be washed or disposed of after use.
- » Cups should not be shared.

SUN PROTECTION

Junior leagues and clubs have a responsibility to protect junior participants, to the greatest extent practical, from the dangers of sun exposure. Junior participants should be encouraged to protect themselves against sun exposure by applying a 30+ sunscreen in warm weather.

Junior leagues and clubs should also maximise the provision of shaded areas at venues and events and/or erect artificial shade.

Sports Medicine Australia has developed a policy related to preventing heat illness in sport. These general safety guidelines, which are specific to geographical locations, are available on the SMA website at sma.org.au.

LIGHTNING

The AFL has produced a lightning policy for adoption by junior leagues and clubs. The policy provides a step-by-step process to assist volunteers when making the difficult decision to postpone matches and or remove participants from the playing surface. The full policy can be found at aflcommunity.com.au.

PART SIX

FURTHER RESOURCES

USEFUL WEBSITES

Australian Football League afl.com.au

AFL Community Football aflcommunity.com.au

STATE AND TERRITORY AFFILIATES

AFL NSW/ACT aflnswact.com.au

AFL Northern Territory aflnt.com.au

AFL Queensland aflq.com.au

AFL Tasmania afltas.com.au

AFL Victoria aflvic.com.au

South Australian National Football League sanfl.com.au

West Australian Football Commission wafootball.com.au

Australasian Legal Information Institute austlii.edu.au

Australian Sports Commission ausport.gov.au

Australian Sports Commission – Junior Sport
ausport.gov.au/participating/schools_and_juniors/juniors/resources

Child Wise and ECPAT childwise.net

Commission for Children and Young People and

Child Guardian childcomm.qld.gov.au

Commissioner for Children Tasmania childcomm.tas.gov.au

Department for Families and Communities South Australia

familiesandcommunities.sa.gov.au

Department of Sport and Recreation Western Australia

dsr.wa.gov.au

Disability Sport unit – Australian Sports Commission

ausport.gov.au/dsu/index.asp

National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse

and Neglect napcan.org.au

National Institute of Family Studies

– National Child Protection Clearing House aifs.gov.au/nch/

New South Wales Commission for Children and

Young People kids.nsw.gov.au/check

New South Wales Department of Sport and Recreation,

Child Protection and Employment Screening dsr.nsw.gov.au

Northern Territory Department of Local Government,

Housing and Sport nt.gov.au/dlghs/

Office for Recreation and Sport, South Australia recsport.sa.gov.au

Play by the rules playbytherules.net.au

Scale plus Law Resource, Attorney General's Department

scaleplus.law.gov.au

School Sport Australia schoolsport.edu.au

Sport and Recreation Queensland srq.qld.gov.au

Sport and Recreation Tasmania development.tas.gov.au/sportrec/

Sports Medicine Australia sma.org.au

RESEARCH

The *Junior Football Match Guide* is based on the Australian Sports Commission's (ASC) Junior Sport Framework (JSF). The ASC developed the JSF to assist sports in making informed decisions about establishing fun, safe and friendly junior sport environments and experiences for children and young people.

It was imperative the JSF be informed by contemporary research. To this end, the ASC commissioned a set of briefing papers. The papers have been prepared by nationally and internationally recognised authorities who have provided input in their areas of expertise.

Each paper takes a significant issue that is relevant across the majority of Australian sports and draws upon research from studies conducted with children through to young adults, and on recreational through to elite participation. The papers bring to light the importance of providing a sporting experience that is positive and rewarding for children and young people. Safety, enjoyment, inclusion, understanding, support and learning are pivotal to building the foundations for lifelong sporting engagement.

The rules and procedures contained in the *Junior Football Match Guide* have been refined through continual research and evaluation over many years. The JSF briefing papers have provided invaluable contemporary research to support the policy's development.

The ASC has recently published the briefing papers in the form of a booklet called *Junior Sport Matters*, which is available for sale through the ASC's publications unit ausport.gov.au/about/publications/corporate_documents.

AUSTRALIAN SPORTS COMMISSION – JUNIOR SPORTS FRAMEWORK BRIEFING PAPERS

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Junior sport models representing best practice nationally and internationally

David Kirk

Leeds Metropolitan University, UK

Wolf-Dietrich

Brettschneider Paderborn University, Germany

Chris Auld

Griffith University, Australia

The functions of sport delivery systems at national, state and local levels in Australia

Chris Auld

Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and

Sport Management

Griffith University, Australia

Legislation related to safe and appropriate junior sport delivery

Steve Bennett

Blake Dawson Waldron, Lawyers, Brisbane

Preparation of personnel responsible for junior sport delivery

Chris Auld

Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and

Sport Management

Griffith University, Australia

Coaching and officiating for junior sport participants

Jean Côté

School of Kinesiology and Health Studies

Queen's University, Canada

Wade Gilbert

Kinesiology Department

California State University, USA

Health and welfare of junior sport participants

Sue Hooper, Stewart Trost and Murray Phillips

School of Human Movement Studies, The University of Queensland, Australia

Physical activity pedagogy for junior sport

Doone Macdonald

School of Human Movement Studies,

The University of Queensland, Australia

Jean Côté

School of Kinesiology & Health Sciences,

Queen's University, Canada

David Kirk

Dean, Carnegie Faculty of Sport and Education,

Leeds Metropolitan University, UK

Opportunities and pathways for beginners to elite to ensure optimum and lifelong involvement in sport

Jean Côté

School of Kinesiology and Health Studies

Queen's University, Canada

Growth and maturation in junior athletes

Don Bailey

School of Human Movement Studies, The University of Queensland, Australia

College of Physical Education, University of

Saskatchewan, Canada

Trends in sport and physical activity participation in Australian children and youth

Stewart Trost

Department of Kinesiology and Community Health Institute

Kansas State University, USA

Historical, cultural and social perspectives of junior sport

Murray Phillips, Doone Macdonald & Stephanie Hanrahan

School of Human Movement Studies

The University of Queensland, Australia

AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL LEAGUE – RESEARCH

Report to the Australian Football League "Analysis of the research and literature into the methods of successfully identifying and developing talent in sport from a global perspective"

Research report prepared by John Turnbull

The quality of the philosophy and practice of AFL Auskick: the perceptions of children, parents and coordinators

Research report prepared by

Dr Christopher Hickey & Dr Lindsay Fitzclarence

Deakin Centre for Education and Change

Australian Football League youth participation

Research report prepared by

Hans Westerbeek & Aaron Smith

Centre for Change Management – Bowater School

of Management & Marketing: Faculty of Business

& Law, Deakin University

Examining the AFL Junior Match Policy for Recruitment and Retention

Research report prepared by

Associate Professor Pam Phillips & Kylie Wehner Deakin University





AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL MATCH POLICY

