



WHY DO KIDS NEED DIFFERENT RULES TO ADULTS?

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

For too long young kids have been allowed to play on the same size field and under the same match conditions as senior players – it is 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.



The AFL Junior Football Match Guide aims to provide key stakeholders (such as coaches, players, umpires & parents) with appropriate practical information about rules, conduct and management to help them provide an environment where young players can participate and develop their skills through activities, games, rules & conditions commensurate with their stage of learning and ability.

Deakin University conducted a study through season 2014/15 on games with and without the modified rules after filming and analysing hundreds of junior games the key findings were

- When modified rules are used, an individual player can experience (on average) up to 7 more involvements in a game compared to games in which no modified rules are used. It was shown players had on average 14 game involvements with modified rules whilst those without had an average of 7
- When modified rules are used, the number of involvements increases significantly across a season (from start to end of season). Those in modified rules can have up to 50% more involvements than their counterparts in games where no modified rules are used.
- Players time spent in positions changed dramatically with modified rules, giving all players an opportunity across the ground
- There is a relationship between player involvement and psychosocial factors including perceived competence and perceived enjoyment.
- Coaches on ground allow immediate feedback to players and to ability to give players a greater understanding of the game

THIS IS OUR GAME

'THIS IS OUR GAME' PHILOSOPHY

PLAYING GROUND, ZONES, TIME AND EQUIPMENT

Kids cannot 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 'This is Our Game' philosophy 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 more engaged because the ball is never far away.

USE OF ZONES

The junior football match program embraces "zones" for the younger children as an excellent teaching practice. Firstly, the use of zones prevents ball-chasing and subsequent congestion where all players congregate around the ball. Secondly, it enables groupings of players of similar size and ability to play within a zone.

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.

ROTATION OF PLAYERS

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.

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, in an appropriate sequence for doing so.

The physiological and emotional readiness of children's bodies to withstand 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 years age group.

MARKING

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

BOUNCING

Restricting the number of bounces prevents players 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.

THE COACH ON THE GROUND

The absence of stringent competition conditions should enable the coach to provide praise, teaching and feedback when required.

PREMIERSHIP POINTS COMPETITIONS

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

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

AWARDS

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.

Participation in our game in safe and enjoyable AFL Auskick and junior club environments can significantly contribute to the development and social wellbeing of young people.

Australian Football must be the best experience possible if we are going to continue to attract and retain children in the game.

Rules & Regulations	U9/U10	U11/U12	Junior Girls	U14	Youth Girls	U16
Players (min-max)	15	18	15	18	18	18
Maximum ground size / use of zones	100 x 80 3 zones of 5 players	150 x 100 No Zones	100 x 80 3 zones of 5 players	Full Size	Full Size	Full Size
Match length	4 x 12 min	4 x 15	4 x 12 min	4 x 15	4 x 15	4 x 18
Breaks	3 min; 7 min; 5 min	3 min; 7 min; 5 min	3 min; 7 min; 5 min	3 min; 10 min; 5 min	3 min; 10 min; 5 min	5 min; 10 min; 5 min
Competition details	Scoring permitted No ladders or finals permitted. No recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. No representative teams	Scoring permitted No ladders or finals permitted. No recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. No representative teams	Scoring permitted No ladders or finals permitted. No recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. No representative teams	Scoring, ladders & finals permitted. Recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. Representative teams permitted.	Scoring, ladders & finals permitted. Recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. Representative teams permitted.	Scoring, ladders & finals permitted. Recording of best players and goal kickers permitted. Representative teams permitted.
Contact	Modified tackle / no bump. Players cannot bump / push an opponent, knock/steal the ball out of their hands or smother an opponent's kick.	Tackling is permitted as per the Laws of Australian Football. (no sling tackle permitted)	Modified tackle / no bump. Players cannot bump / push an opponent, knock/steal the ball out of their hands or smother an opponent's kick.	Tackling is permitted as per the Laws of Australian Football. (no sling tackle permitted)	Tackling is permitted as per the Laws of Australian Football. (no sling tackle permitted)	Tackling is permitted as per the Laws of Australian Football. (no sling tackle permitted)
Ball size	Under 9's - Synthetic size 2 Under 10's - Synthetic size 3	Synthetic size 3	Synthetic size 2	Leather size 4 (Divisions 1 - 4) Synthetic size 4 (Divisions 5 +)	Leather size 4	Leather size 5 (full size)
Umpiring	2 field, 2 goal (one each per club)	2 field, 2 goal (one each per club)	2 field, 2 goal (one each per club)	2 field (Appointed), 2 goal (club)	2 field (Appointed), 2 goal (club)	2 field (Appointed), 2 goal (club), 2 boundary (club) (Div 1 & 2 only)
Coaching position	Under 9's - On-field Under 10's - On-field	Sideline	On-field	Sideline	Sideline	Sideline
Bounces	1 bounce	Unlimited	1 bounce	Unlimited bounces	Unlimited bounces	Unlimited bounces
Marking	A mark is awarded irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled to any player who catches it or shows control	A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another player's kick that has travelled at least 10 metres.	A mark is awarded irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled to any player who catches it or shows control	A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another player's kick that has travelled at least 15 metres.	A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another player's kick that has travelled at least 15 metres.	A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another player's kick that has travelled at least 15 metres.
Out of Bounds	From a kick, a free is awarded against the player who last kicked the ball. From hands, or if there is doubt, the umpire shall call a ball-up 10m in from the boundary	The umpire will call a ball-up 10m in from the boundary	From a kick, a free is awarded against the player who last kicked the ball. From hands, or if there is doubt, the umpire shall call a ball-up 10m in from the boundary	Boundary throw-in for divisions 1 & 2 only All other divisions the umpire will call a ball-up 10m in from the boundary	Boundary throw in	Boundary throw in
Kick off the ground	Not permitted unless accidental	Not permitted unless accidental	Not permitted unless accidental	Permitted	Not permitted unless accidental	Permitted
Stealing, smothering, shepherding, barging	No stealing, smothering, shepherding or barging	Permitted as per Laws of the Game	No stealing, smothering, shepherding or barging	Permitted as per Laws of the Game	Permitted as per Laws of the Game	Permitted as per Laws of the Game
Penalties	10m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.	25m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.	10m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.	50m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.	40m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.	50m penalty can be applied at the umpire's discretion if they feel a player has been hindered in any way. Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion.