

Introduction

The AFL Junior Policy refers to the philosophy, guidelines and requirements of conducting football for children aged 5-12 years with the aim of recruiting parents and children to Australian Football through the delivery of quality programs. The AFL Junior Policy is broadly underpinned by 2 components:

1. The NAB AFL Auskick program



The key introductory program for boys, girls and parents consisting of 8-12 weekly sessions conducted for 60-75 minutes. The AFL Auskick program has been segmented to include appropriate activities for children aged 5-8 years (AFL Auskick Rookie) and 9-12 years (AFL Auskick Pro). Children progress through a sequential program of warm-up games, skill activities, skill games and matches utilising appropriate modified rules. Small-sided matches between groups within the centre are a vital part of NAB AFL Auskick, occasional social matches (gala days) against other centres are appropriate and where possible should be played at half-time of senior matches.

2. AFL Junior

The rules and procedures for conducting modified matches at varying developmental levels, particularly for boys and girls aged 8-12, are designed specifically to maximise participation, skill acquisition and development. The AFL Junior rules are a feature of the NAB AFL Auskick program but importantly are also recommended for adoption by primary schools, community leagues and clubs that are responsible for delivering football to this age group.

The core philosophy of the NAB AFL Auskick and AFL Junior program is consistent to ensure Australian Football for children aged 5-12 has the following qualities:

- › **Fun and 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 and provide challenging match programs and a logical transition from introductory level through to competitions at clubs and schools.
- › **For children and parents:** to further ensure the progression from one level of involvement to the next is smooth and based on 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 as outlined in this policy.

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;
- › to experience excitement and enjoyment;
- › to experience challenge, achievement, and personal responsibility; and
- › 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, building 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 (modified-rules) matches;
- › appropriately trained and accredited coaches, umpires and officials; and
- › support for learning and inexperienced umpires.

