

AFL Junior Match Program

5-8 years

6-a-side to 9-a-side: As part of the NAB AFL Auskick program or in club and school competitions (under-8 only)

Purpose

To provide the children in this age group 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 (the ABCs of athleticism – Agility, Balance, Coordination and Speed) and basic game 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, passing 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; and
- › the umpire and coaches should ensure that players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in 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 side numbers 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 2 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 awarding kicks to players in preference to calling for ball-ups;
- › understand the spirit of AFL Junior match rules for this age group is to enable all players to gather possession and to give **the player in possession of the ball 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 player is to receive a free kick after the ball has been kicked out of bounds and by

ensuring the effective rotation of players through the 3 zones of play; and

- › enforce the **full possession rule** at all ball-ups (see below).

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 been touched by another player or hit the ground.

The game – premiership points competitions

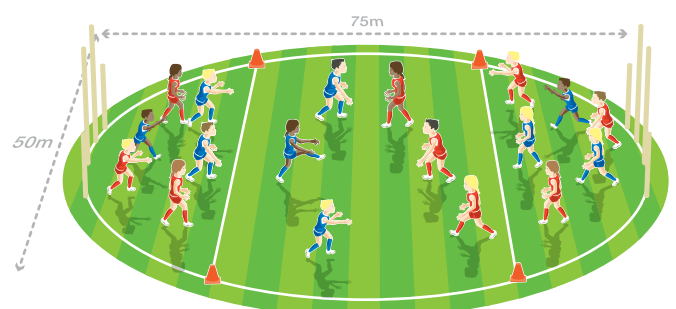
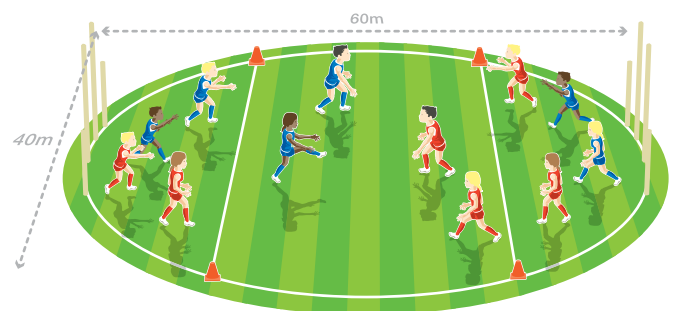
The football match program to be offered to players 5-8 years of age must comply with the modified match program presented in this document with no premiership points, no finals, no ladders, no match results (scores) and no names of players published. Skill clinics and participation carnival days may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

Playing ground and officials

The size of the playing field is reduced to:

- › 60m x 40m for 6-a-side matches; and
- › 75m x 50m for 9-a-side matches.

The field is divided into 3 equal zones (thirds) which should be identified by markers or lines on the ground.





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

A field umpire and 2 goal umpires are required, but there are no boundary throw-ins so no boundary umpires are needed.

The ball

A synthetic size one football should be used.

The team

6-a-side means: 2 forwards, 2 centres, 2 backs. Reserves: 2 recommended: rotate one zone off each quarter.

9-a-side means: 3 forwards, 3 centres, 3 backs. Reserves: 3 recommended: rotate one zone off each quarter.

Interchanges 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 –

interchange to backs, backs to centres, centres to forwards, forwards to interchange – at the end of each period, after each goal or when instructed to do so by their coach.

Ensure the teams and opponents are as equal as possible (match sizes, abilities).

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 the ball

When the ball is in transition from the back zone to the forward zone, it must be touched by a player in the mid zone. Failing this, a free kick will be awarded to the opposition team at the point where 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 controlling it, catching it, grabbing it, or laying 2 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 he or she can kick or handball uncontested (no blocking or standing in the path of the player in possession is permitted). Decide doubtful cases with ball-ups.

Playing time

AFL Auskick program – recommended total playing time of 12 minutes.

AFL Junior fixture – maximum of 4 x 10-minute quarters with no time-on.

Start of play and restarting after a goal

When all players are inside their own zones, a ball-up is conducted between 2 centre-zone players of similar height 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, if a free kick is not possible under the spirit of the game:

- > the umpire shall stop play, send players back to their zones and nominate 2 opponents of about 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); and
- > players should be encouraged to pick the ball-up and will be penalised for diving on it.

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 a body, the umpire shall call a ball-up 5 metres in from the boundary. 'Full possession' at the ball-up is not permitted (full possession rule applies).

Contact/tackling

No contact or spoiling is permitted unless it is accidental and light shoulder-to-shoulder contact made while running to and at the ball. Players cannot:

- > hold an opponent with their hands;
- > knock the ball out of an opponent's hands;
- > push an opponent in the side;
- > steal the ball from another player;
- > deliberately bump another player (only incidental contact is permitted); and
- > smother an opponent's kick.

Shepherding

A player is not permitted to push, shoulder or block an opponent not in possession of the ball.

Barging

No barging, fending off or chopping past opponents is allowed. A free kick shall be awarded to the nearest opponent.

Mark and playing on

A mark is awarded – regardless of the distance the ball has travelled – to any player who catches the ball, or makes a reasonable attempt to catch the ball, from a kick. Endeavour should be encouraged (e.g. getting hands to the ball can be paid a mark). Set the mark after the mark is awarded. No playing on is allowed.

Bouncing the ball

Bouncing is optional, but no more than one bounce is permitted. The player must then dispose of it by hand or foot and may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by another player.

Distance run

While a player in possession of the ball is moving, the player must bounce the ball within 5 metres, irrespective of whether he or she is running in a straight line or otherwise. As above, only one bounce is allowed then the player must dispose of the ball.

Kicking off the ground

Not permitted unless accidental.

Distance penalty

Not applicable to this age group. Umpiring and coaching processes to be used.

Acts such as overstepping the mark, wasting time, using abusive language or behaviour are matters that should be addressed by the coach or umpire on the ground.

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.

Coaches

The coach is allowed on the ground during play for the sole purpose of providing immediate feedback to players; he or she 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.

