



PLAY



# UMPIRE4FUN PROGRAM

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

# WELCOME

Thank you for dedicating your time and energy to umpiring in the AFL Queensland Umpire4Fun program. The Umpire4Fun program was created to develop and nurture umpires at grassroots level across community clubs in Queensland, aimed at participants 12 years and above to get involved in umpiring. The program focuses on learning the fundamental skills of umpiring and developing knowledge of the game. Your contribution is highly valued by everyone in the AFL Queensland community.

This umpiring handbook is designed as a resource for you throughout the season. While it doesn't cover every aspect of umpiring, it offers simple explanations of the modified rules for junior football.

Being part of the AFLQ umpiring community is a fantastic experience. You'll make lifelong friends and be close to the action. Our Umpiring Department is here to support you every step of the way, and we thank you for your efforts.

Thank you again for making the commitment to the Umpire4Fun program. Enjoy the season and we look forward to supporting you on your Umpiring journey.

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## WHAT PARTICIPANTS LOVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM

*"Helped build my confidence with meeting new people, making decisions and being responsible. And helping junior players have fun."*

*"I loved this season because my club supported me as well as the good interactions with the game and players."*

*"I really enjoyed umpiring as I was no longer playing AFL this season."*

*"It was fun and a good way to make money."*

*"It's a good opportunity to give back to the junior program being a youth player."*

*"It helped grow my confidence and skill."*

## WHAT PARENTS LOVE ABOUT THE PROGRAM

*"As all three of my daughters play AFL, I know what a huge impact good umpires, especially female umpires can have on their games. Plus, it is great for fitness and ensures the kids understand the importance of respecting umpires and what a tough job it is."*

*"He loved the experience, and I think it helped his own footy as well."*

*"An enjoyable and worthwhile experience for her. She gained a better understanding of what the umpires need to do and the rules of the game."*

*"It was really good for his confidence and personal growth."*

Data from 2022 Umpire4Fun Participant Survey

# CONTACTS AND SUPPORT

To support the start of your journey in Umpiring there is a network of AFLQ, Club Representatives, and Umpire Coaches to help. See the Umpire4Fun website for up-to-date contact information.

## AFL Queensland Umpiring Department

- Community Umpiring Coordinator - Emma George - emma.george@afl.com.au
- Umpire Development Lead - Nicola Stevens - nicola.stevens@afl.com.au
- Community Football Engagement Lead – Ainslie Gardner – ainslie.gardner@afl.com.au

## Club Representatives

- Club Umpire Coordinator
- Match Day Mentors
- Ground Marshall

## AFL Queensland Umpire Coaches

- SEQJ Head Coach
- First Year Coaches (Brisbane)
- Junior Coach (Gold Coast)
- Junior Coach (Sunshine Coach)

# TRAINING

Active participation in training sessions is essential for every umpire. Each club is different – some clubs will run their own weekly or fortnightly sessions for their Umpire4Fun umpires, while others will rely on the AFLQ-run sessions. If your club doesn't offer umpire training for you, we recommend attending at least two to three AFLQ training nights each year to benefit from high-quality coaching, build confidence, and fully enjoy the experience. These sessions provide up-to-date insights and practical skills, covering everything from match management and effective communication with teams, coaching staff, and players, to handling paperwork and managing on-field incidents.

No matter where you are, whether in regional areas, on the Sunshine Coast, Gold Coast, Northern Rivers, or north or south of Brisbane, you will be assigned to your home club, or a host venue which

offers ongoing support and training throughout the season. Participants are invited to attend trainings at any location close to them.

Training is delivered both online and in person, and the AFLQ Umpiring Department will regularly update participants and coordinators on session schedules and locations. You can also find this on the Umpire4Fun program page.

## UMPIRE PATHWAY

There are umpiring pathway opportunities for participants to transition from Umpire4Fun into Youth and Senior competitions at their own pace in the Field, Boundary and Goal disciplines

Our dedicated AFLQ Umpire Coaching Team offers comprehensive development and pathway education for Junior Club Umpires through the Umpire4Fun program. Throughout the season, Umpire Coaches attend games to provide constructive feedback and ensure a positive match day experience.

After completing your Umpire4Fun season, you can continue your umpiring journey by officiating local club games or progressing along the umpire pathway to work junior games. You may even be selected to Goal Umpire at the SEQ Junior Finals!

## OPPORTUNITIES

There are great opportunities for Umpire4Fun participants to be involved in NAB AFL Auskick Grid Games or be selected to Goal Umpire the SEQJ Junior Finals.

### Auskick Grid Games

Clubs can be invited by the Community Umpiring Coordinator to select an Umpire4Fun participant to umpire an NAB AFL Auskick Grid Game at either a Brisbane Lions (The Gabba) or Gold Coast SUNS (People First Stadium) home game. Umpire selection requires demonstrated commitment to training and umpiring. The selected Umpires receive a ticket + 1 additional ticket for parent/guardian to attend the match.

### SEQ Junior Finals Goal Umpiring Program

In partnership with the SEQJ Finals series, our Umpire4Fun program offers identified participants the chance to gain valuable experience in goal umpiring. Selected individuals are appointed as goal

umpires for Youth Finals games in August at venues across Brisbane, the Gold Coast, and the Sunshine Coast.

## UMPIRING TIPS

### WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES AS AN UMPIRE?

- Introduce yourself to the coaches, team managers and teams
- Flip the coin at the start of the game with the captains.
- Umpire the game.
- Make sure the players are safe and play fairly
- Pay all free kicks according to the laws of the game (only pay what you see, not what you think happened or the coach or crowd is calling. Don't be influenced).
- Finish the game and return the football to the clubhouse.

### THINGS YOU DON'T NEED TO DO

- Setting up the fields – it is the responsibility of the club to do this.
- First Aid: the club is required to have a first aid attendant available for your game. If they don't, please speak to the Ground Marshall.
- Coaching of the players – you're the umpire.
- Scoring – this is not permitted in the junior age groups.
- Time keeping – this is a club responsibility.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD BE WORKING ON

Like players who are developing their skills, as an umpire it is your responsibility to work on your game and practice the following things on a regular basis:

- A very clear understanding of the rules across all age levels.
- Be sure you are blowing your whistle loudly and sharply (and long enough) to keep the attention of the players and the coaches.
- Using a loud and clear voice when communicating your decisions to the players but do not yell.
- Jogging, running and/or sprinting throughout the match. You should not be walking.
- Displaying strong and accurate signals so the players, coaches, and spectators understand your decision.
- Making sure you stay side on to the play to give you the best vision of the play.

- Keep your eyes on the play, no running with your head down

## **UNIFORM AND APPEARANCE**

Appearance is an important part of Umpiring, and AFLQ recognises that for our umpires to gain respect in the wider football community we must present ourselves in a professional manner. Therefore, we have adopted the following uniform guidelines:

### **ON FIELD UNIFORM**

- Umpires wear their supplied Umpiring Uniform (Shirt, shorts, and cap, with any plain black or white socks).
- Shirts must always be tucked in.
- Footwear must be clean (preference to white in colour, can be boots or sandshoes).

### **MATCH DAY**

When preparing for your match it is important to think about the following:

- Make sure you are well rested (a good nights' sleep).
- Well-hydrated to ensure you are fit both physically and mentally.
- Have eaten a good dinner or breakfast to make sure you have enough energy for your match or matches.

### **UMPIRING CHECKLIST (WHAT YOU SHOULD PACK IN YOUR BAG)**

- Minimum of two (2) whistles
- Umpiring Hat
- Sunscreen
- Drink Bottle (Filled)
- Notepad & pen/pencil

## **GENERAL RULES THAT APPLY TO ALL AGE GROUPS**



## WHAT TO DO BEFORE THE START OF YOUR GAME?

Make sure you arrive at the ground 40-50 minutes before your game. This is to ensure you are prepared and have enough time to perform your duties correctly.

When you arrive, find your Club Umpire Coordinator and let them know you have arrived.

- Arrive to the venue in smart casual attire.
- Head to the umpire rooms and change into your umpiring uniform.
- Head out to the ground with the Club Umpire Coordinator, umpire mentor or Ground Marshall and meet the coaches, team managers and players.
- Collect team sheets from the manager.
- Check the player's fingernails and that they have the correct boots for the game (Long fingernails need to be cut and no metal studs).
- Look around the ground and be sure that the goals are straight, and boundary cones are in position – if not ask the Club Umpire Coordinator or Ground Marshall to adjust.
- Head back to the umpire rooms and prepare for your match.
- Have your whistle on your fingers.
- Find the Club Umpire Coordinator or Ground Marshall so they can walk you out on to the ground.
- As you walk onto the ground raise the football above your head to indicate to the timekeeper you have entered the field of play. This will also remind the players and coaches you are on the ground.
- 2 minutes before your game is due to commence, call the two captains to the centre of the field and perform the coin toss. The away team calls "heads or tails". If you do not have a coin, you can hold your whistle behind your back and ask the away team captain to pick which hand the whistle is in).
- The coins toss winner decides which direction (Goals) they would like to run/kick towards.

## HOW DO YOU START YOUR GAME?

- Check the teams are in position (in their zones) and Goal Umpires are in place.
- Raise the ball above your head and wait for the siren to sound.
- When the siren finishes sounding, blow your whistle, indicate the way you are going to exit the contest and throw the ball up for the rucks to compete. (Make sure it is high enough for them to jump up and tap the ball and for you to back out of the contest.)



- Run backwards for 3-5 meters to get a good view and out of the way of the contest. Keep an eye out for any infringements/free kicks that may need to be awarded.
- Once the ball clears the ruck area run in the direction of the ball staying approx. 5-10 meters away from the ball (this will give you the best view of the play).

## **HOW DO I GET MYSELF INTO THE RIGHT POSITIONS TO UMPIRE?**

When you are running on the field as an umpire, there are many different positions you need to be in to see any free kicks that need to be awarded, see if players are in their zones, see if the player takes a mark etc. Below are some tips to help you be in a better position to see the play.

- Always try to be 5-10 meters away from the play and the person with the ball. As you work in higher age groups this distance will increase to 20 metres.
- The best place to see the contest is to make sure you are side on to the play 5-10 meters away.
- Always move from side to side (this is called 'sheep-dogging') when the ball is in a pack. Keep moving until the ball is kicked or hand passed or if it is trapped, blow your whistle, run in (calling "my ball") and do a ball up.
- When the ball has been kicked and is about to be marked, watch the player not the ball to see if there is a free kick that needs to be awarded.
- When there is a mark, set the mark, bring the player having the kick onto the line and direction of kick, back out in the direction of the kick (45° angle).
- If having a shot for goal, stand behind the player on the mark. Bring the player having the kick onto the line and direction of goals and back out at 90°. Position yourself to have a good view of the ball to see if it passes through for a behind or goal to be able to give the goal umpire the correct all clear signal.
- Run! You need to make sure you are running into position. NO WALKING. We need to be moving swiftly and working around the ground.

## **WHAT TO DO IF A GOAL HAS BEEN SCORED?**

When a player has kicked a goal for their team, you signal to the goal umpires by lifting your two hands in front of your face and call to the goal umpire: "all clear, goal".

- Ask the players or the goal umpire to collect the ball and bring it back to you.
- Jog back to the middle of the field and check the players are in their zones.
- If they are in their zones and the rucks are ready, throw the ball up again and back out 5

meters from the contest like you did at the beginning of the game/quarter.

## **WHAT TO DO IF A BEHIND IS SCORED?**

When a player has kicked a point for their team, you signal to the goal umpire by raising one hand in front of your face and call to the goal umpire “all clear, one point”.

- The defending team will collect the ball.
- The defending team player will kick the ball back into play from between the goals. If they kick from the wrong spot, blow your whistle and call them back to between the goals to have their kick.
- Make sure the players give the kicker enough room (protected zone) to have a good kick.

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A PLAYER GOES OUT OF THEIR ZONE?**

- If a player exits their zone to go towards the football, let them know they need to return to their zone.
- If it happens on multiple occasions or if the player doesn't listen, you can pay a free kick.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE IS AN INJURED PLAYER ON THE FIELD?**

- If the injured player is in the same zone as the ball, play will stop.
- Blow your whistle, raise one hand above your head and call out to the coach or first aid to treat the player.
- If the injured player is NOT in the same zone as the football, then play will continue until the ball is kicked into the zone where the injured player is, unless it looks like a serious injury that requires immediate attention (e.g., head injury, broken bone).

## **HOW DO I END THE QUARTER?**

- When the siren sounds for the end of the quarter, blow your whistle and raise both of your hands above your head.
- This signals to players, officials, and spectators that the quarter has ended.
- If a player has taken a mark prior to the siren sounding and they are within kicking distance of the goals, they are permitted to have their kick at goal.
- If the siren sounds and the mark is taken after the siren, then you stop the player from kicking or playing on.

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF PLAYERS ARE BEHAVING BADLY ON THE FIELD?**

If you have players that are continually not listening to you, giving away a major free kick, speaking badly or rudely to you, you have a few options you can use to help.

- Award a free kick against the player.
- Award a distance penalty against the player for their behaviour of 15-metres.
- Speak with the players' coach with the aid of the Ground Marshall at the end of the quarter and explain to them the situation so they can speak with their player.
- Speak with the Ground Marshall – they can then speak with the coach of the team for you.
- Send the player off the field for the rest of the quarter (under extreme circumstance only).

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU HAVE A COACH BEHAVING BADLY?**

If you have a coach behaving badly, you have several options. We encourage you to use some or all these examples.

- Before approaching the coach, you can speak to the Ground Marshall and ask them to deal with the coach.
- Speak with your Club Umpire Coordinator and tell them what has occurred and allow them to speak with the coach.
- If you feel confident, approach the coach, and ask them to control their behaviour.
- You can pay a free kick against the coach. If you choose to pay a free kick against the coach, blow your whistle, signal with one hand by bringing your fingers to your thumb (the talking signal), motioning that the free kick is for abuse
- If you award a free kick against the coach, blow your whistle and hand the football to the nearest opposition player, set the mark, and allow the game to recommence.
- If the behaviour continues, please report it to the Ground Marshall and Club Umpire Coordinator again.

## **AFL INTEGRITY PORTAL**

The Integrity portal allows you to make a report to the Australian Football League (AFL) relating to any allegations that may contravene the AFL's Rules and Policies.

This includes but is not limited to complaints relating to vilification, discrimination, wagering, illicit substances, concerns involving children or minors, grooming, sexual or physical assault, along with security or risk related concerns identified at our AFL partner stadiums.

Here, you have the option to:

- Make an online report (anonymously if preferred).
- Be directed to further information on Safeguarding Children and Young People and/or Respect and Responsibility.

Access the portal here: [AFL Integrity portal](#)