
PREP TO PLAY
REDUCE INJURY & ENHANCE PERFORMANCE
A PROGRAM FOR FEMALE AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALLERS
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WHAT IS PREP-TO-PLAY?

Manuals | Posters | Videos
https://play.afl/coach/resources/prep-play

WARM UP



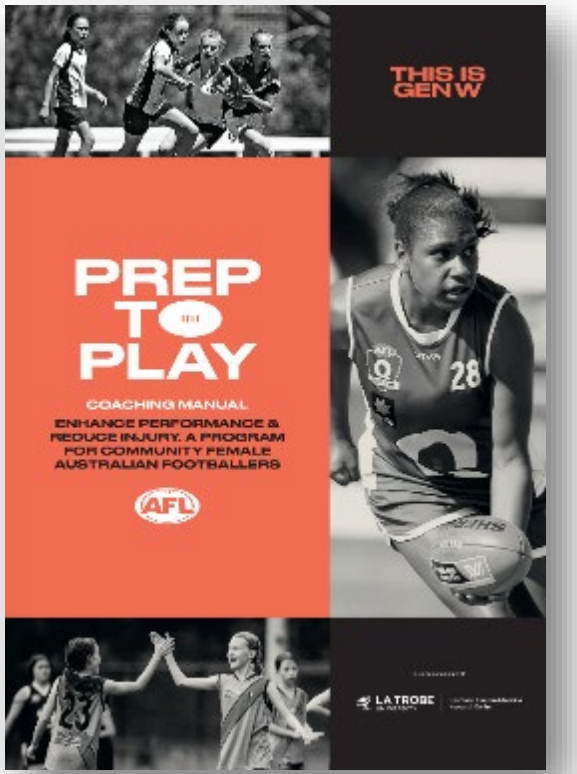
CONTACT SKILLS



STRENGTH



EDUCATION



EVERYONE HAS A ROLE

Manuals | Posters | Videos
https://play.afl/coach/resources/prep-play

- **COACHES** – DELIVER
- **TRAINERS/PARENTS –** TELL YOUR CLUB/COACH, HELP DELIVER
- **ATHLETES –**LEAD THE WARM-UP AND/OR STRENGTH
- **CLUB ADMIN –** RAISE AWARENESS, PROVIDE/EMPLOY SUPPORT, OVERSEE DELIVERY



CREATE A CULTURE

WHO IS PREP-TO-PLAY FOR?

- **All players** regardless of age, sex/gender, sport or competition-level to reduce the risk of all types of injuries by 30-60%.[4 5 6]

- Programs **effective in boys'/men's and girls'/women's sport**: Australian Football (Footy First), soccer (FIFA 11+, Perform+), rugby (Activate)

- **Only if you do it!** Better adherence to all elements of Prep-to-Play = fewer injuries[6]


Football Australia Perform+

PREP-TO-PLAY WARM UP

WHEN

- At the start of every training session and game
- Replace typical jog and static stretch

WHAT

- 10 minutes
- 8 activities
- Choose from option A, B or C - difficulty/variety

WHO

- Coaches, players, trainers, parents or health & exercise professionals



ADAPT THE LAP!

PREP-TO-PLAY CONTACT SKILLS



WHEN

- Every training session

WHAT

- 1 v 1 technique based
- Small sided games
- Educate about *duty of care*
- Can't just rely on match-simulation for exposure

WHO

- Coaches

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Share the Prep-to-Play videos with your team - key technique, cues, and introduction drills - https://play.afl/learning-resource/prep-play

PREP-TO-PLAY STRENGTH

WHEN

- Every training
- Before, during or end of training
- Replace cool down jog/stretch

WHAT

- 5 minutes
- 3 exercises
- Choose from option A, B or C - for difficulty/variety

WHO

- Coaches, players, trainers, parents or health & exercise professionals



STRENGTH OVER STRETCH!

PREP TO PLAY

WARM UP

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Sport and Exercise Medicine
Research Centre

SUMMARY WHAT IS PREP-TO-PLAY?

1. **ADAPT THE LAP!** Complete the 8 **Prep-to-Play warm up** activities every training session and game — running, agility, jumping, landing, single leg balance, and contact activities.

2. **BE CONTACT READY!** **Prep-to-Play football skills** — educate about **DUTY OF CARE** and safe technique – tackling, being tackled, ground ball, aerial .

3. **STRENGTH OVER STRETCH!** Complete the 3 **Prep-to-Play strength** activities at the end of every training, instead of stationary stretching or a cool down lap.

HOW DOES PREP-TO-PLAY FIT

WHEN	DURATION	FOCUS	WHAT	WHO
PRE-TRAINING	Up to 10 mins	Fun, Play & Exploration (no coaching!)		
QUARTER 1	10 mins	Energiser (warm up)	▶ PREP-TO-PLAY WARM UP	▶ Players or coach
QUARTER 2	10 mins	Fundamental skills (High repetition)	▶ PREP-TO-PLAY CONTACT SKILLS	▶ Coach
	10 mins	Decision making task	▶ AFL PLAY TACKLE CURICULUM	▶ Coach
QUARTER 3	15 mins	Team task	RM COACH	
QUARTER 4	10 mins	Game		
POST-TRAINING 5 mins | Connection		TOTAL DURATION 70 MINUTES	▶ PREP-TO-PLAY STRENGTH	▶ Players or coach

HOW TO USE PREP-TO-PLAY
PRACTICAL TIPS

AFL LEARN MODULE COMING SOON!



Give it a go – don't need to be a health professional, gradual bite size changes



Follow the recipe or create your own – you are the chef (coach) - just keep the core ingredients



Fit into usual training plan – not an addition

https://play.afl/coach/resources/prep-play

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Tips from coaches who use Prep-to-Play

- **Start off slowly**
- **Share the responsibility**
- **Player leadership opportunities**



with permission, Patrick Torpey, Mordialloc Braeside Junior Football Club

AFL LEARN MODULE COMING SOON!

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https://play.afl/coach/resources/prep-play

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3. Bruder AM et al. Co-creation of a sport-specific anterior cruciate ligament injury risk reduction program for women: A concept mapping approach. *J Sci Med Sport* (2020)
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8. Rolley et al. Video analysis of anterior cruciate ligament injury situations in the women's Australian football league. *Sci and Med in Football* (2022)
9. Gracias LJ et al. Development and reliability of a video analysis framework for assessing head impact and concussion mechanisms in Australian Football (2026)

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Email prep2play@latrobe.edu.au for more information about Prep-to-Play workshops and support available

Workshops are proven to improve confidence and uptake[7] and better uptake associated with fewer injuries[6]

https://play.afl/coach/resources/prep-play



Thank you to the 165 teams, 2481 players, coaches, trainers, physio students who reported data weekly in our study in 2021-2022

PREP TO PLAY

Q&A

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HAVING THE PROGRAM IS THE EASY PART

1. Lack of time
2. Fear of injury at training
3. Lack of confidence/skills/knowledge
4. Player engagement
5. Lack of space/access to ground/resources
6. Need to prioritise tactics/skills

AFL LEARN MODULE COMING SOON!



TIME SAVING TIPS

Time-saving tip!
Focus on these and remove other activities (e.g. high knees, jogging)

70-80% **Of ACL injuries occur in NON-CONTACT positions when cutting, dodging or landing on one leg**


Decelerating and changing direction ACL injury mechanism


Landing on one leg ACL injury mechanism

This is **WHY** focusses on skills specific to these common injury mechanisms;[8]

- Jumping and landing
- Deceleration
- Change of direction

TIME SAVING TIPS

Warm-up – replace long slow lap – MAX 8-10 minutes

- 2 activities are football specific - combine with high touch warm-up in pairs
- Less stretching/general running, more dynamic movement

Strength – replace cool down – MAX 5-10 minutes while doing announcements/team connection

- Option C is high bang for buck - quick 2 x 5 reps

Intersperse the activities

E.g. Plank for 30 seconds during drill set up or lunge/wheelbarrow race/jump to get a drink
E.g. Partner activities before start – balance and handball, partner push
E.g. Strength small group stations player leaders (+/- parent)– opportunity for smaller group contact drills



CONTACT DRILL TIPS

Prep-to-Play contact skills:

- Tackling (or <u>being tackled</u>) ▶ AFL PLAY TACKLE CURICULUM
- Ground balls
- Aerial contests

Considerations

- Duty of care
- Role of coach/umpire
- Coach the ball carrier
- Mouthguards
- Start simple. "CHANGE IT" (see Youth Couching Curriculum)

Most common head impact mechanisms[9]



Tackle
~70% ball carrier
~30% tackler



Ground ball



Aerial contest



Bumping

Prep-to-Play warm-up and **strength** will players the develop the physical capacity to execute these skills

PLAYER ENGAGEMENT TIPS



- **Make it fun -** player challenges / competitions
- **Warm up partner** – high touch
- **Warm-up/cool down rotating leaders**
- **Incorporate the footies**
- **Too hard/easy?** -
  - Coach manual P19
  - More reps/holds, reach/go further, get support to tailor for your group
- **Reinforce performance benefits**
  - "the why" - athleticism, recovery, football performance
- **Senior to junior role modelling**

GAME DAY TIPS

Ground access - changeroom

- Jump/hop x10 each leg, jump push x10 each leg, balance 1 min
- Bump/tackle - 10 each side
- Get the energy up
- Give purpose when waiting to get on the ground

Time (to set cones up)

- Use the goal posts and corners of the square as cones to help with change of direction activities

