AFL PLAY



# AFL NINES

# RULES & REGULATIONS

## YOUTH COMPETITIONS

Please note that match rules may differ slightly by state/territory or competition. It is recommended for all players to contact their local competition of choice ahead of participation to understand any nuances or differences.

AFL PLAY

# AFL NINES

## DEFINITIONS

| RULE | EXPLANATION |
|---|---|
| **AGE ELIGIBILITY** | To participate in an Youth AFL Nines competition, players must turn 12 – 18 as of 31 December in the year of participation and be at secondary school. Players older than 18 are not permitted to play in a Youth Competition.<br>Competitions are played across two-year level groups/age groups, for example:<br>· Years 7-8<br>· Years 9-10<br>· Years 11-12 |
| **TURNOVER (CHECK LOCAL RULES)** | Turnover refers to when the ball touches the ground as a result of:<br>· A dropped handball or fumbled possession<br>· When the ball goes out of bounds<br>For the avoidance of doubt, it is not a turnover if the ball is kicked and a mark is dropped or misses a target and hits the ground.<br>When a Turnover is called, play should resume from the spot where the Umpire made the call. The opposition player in closest proximity to the turnover is awarded possession. |
| **FREE KICK** | A 'Free Kick' is awarded to a player when an opponent commits an infringement.<br>Free Kicks takes place from where the offending player last disposed of the ball, unless a downfield call has been made by the Umpire.<br>The Umpire instead of awarding a Free Kick, may allow play to continue by calling "Advantage, Play On" in the case that the individual player in possession of the ball initiates the advantage. |
| **TOUCH/TAG** | Touch/Tag is defined as touching a player in possession of the ball with one or two hands.<br>All touch/tags must be on the player in possession of the ball, and above the knees and below the shoulders otherwise a Free Kick will be paid for low or high contact.<br>Players may only touch/tag another player when they return to semi standing/standing position.<br>If a tag is deemed to be too aggressive by the Umpire, a warning or Free Kick may be given to that player. |
| **MARK** | A 'Mark' is awarded when a player, in the Umpire's opinion, cleanly catches or controls the ball after it has been kicked by another player, regardless of how far it has travelled.<br>It is not a Mark if the ball touches the ground or is touched by another player between the kick and the catch. |

## COMPETITION STRUCTURE

| RULE | EXPLANATION |
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| **PLAYING FIELD & ZONES** | 100m x 50m maximum field size. Fields may be modified due to space restrictions.<br>Zones are set as a maximum of 30m / 40m / 30m.<br>Kicking/handballing over the middle zone without being touched by a player on either team is prohibited and will result in a Free Kick to the opposite team from where the player originally disposed of the ball. |

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| **MATCH TIMINGS** | 2 x 20-minute halves with no time on. 5-minute half time breaks.<br>Match time may be modified to suit local circumstances. |
| **FOOTBALL** | Youth Divisions – Size 3 or 4: synthetic or soft touch football<br>A leather football should not be used under any circumstance. |
| **MERCY RULE (CHECK LOCAL RULES)** | Matches are capped at 60 points for a winning margin. |

# MATCH RULES

| RULE | EXPLANATION |
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| **START OF PLAY** | Choice of goal/end will be decided via the Umpire tossing the coin/choosing which hand the whistle is in.<br>The game will begin with a ball up/ruck contest in the middle of the field. |
| **RUCK CONTESTS/BALL UPS** | Players must stand toe to toe/side on in the ruck contest, similar to a basketball jump.<br>The two competing players in the ball up must try to tap the ball backwards and must not:<br>· Run up, use a knee or make contact with the opposing player<br>· Grab or take possession of the ball until it has been touched by one of the centre players not involved in the ball up<br>The centre players not involved in the ball up must stand on the defensive side of their ruckman, at least two metres away. |
| **GAINING POSSESSION** | Players may gain possession of the ball by:<br>· Receiving the ball from a turnover<br>· Winning the ball in dispute<br>· Taking a mark via a kick or receiving via a handball<br>· Intercepting the ball in general play<br>· Receiving a Free Kick |
| **KEEPING POSSESSION/ BOUNCING** | A player may stay in possession of the ball for a maximum distance of 30m, including one bounce after 15m unless:<br>· The player is touched with one/two hands (touch); or,<br>· The player is directed to dispose of the football by the Umpire.<br>Players in possession of the ball must dispose of the ball where possible via handball or via a kick. Throwing or a second bounce will result in a Free Kick to the opposing team. |
| **DISPOSSESSING A PLAYER IN POSSESSION (TAG/TOUCH)** | To dispossess a player, opponents may tag/touch the player with the football. Refer to Tag/Touch definition for more information.<br>**No Prior Opportunity**<br>When a player in possession is tagged/touched and is deemed to have 'no prior opportunity', the Umpire will count three seconds out loud in quick succession.<br>If the player does not dispose of the ball within the allocated time, a 'Holding the Ball' Free Kick will be paid. **The opposition player who made the tag is the player who takes the Free Kick.**<br>Indicators of no prior opportunity<br>· Player gains possession and is tagged almost immediately<br>· There is no clear opportunity to dispose of the ball via handball of kick as deemed by the Umpire<br>Common game scenarios where no prior opportunity may exist:<br>· Within a congested area<br>· Ruck contests/ball ups<br>· Stationary player receiving a handball and tagged immediately<br>· Picking up a ground ball and upon rising to standing position is tagged immediately |

**Prior Opportunity**

When a player in possession is deemed to have had 'prior opportunity' to dispose of the ball is tagged/touched, the Umpire will award a 'Holding the Ball' Free Kick. There is no three second countdown for players who are deemed to have had prior opportunity.

Indicators of prior opportunity?

- Player gains possession with no pressure or opponent in proximity
- Player has played on with the ball from a Mark, Turnover or Free Kick
- Player attempts to evade an opponent
- Player actively takes the game on by taking multiple steps in any direction

## MARKING / THE MARK

When a player is awarded a Mark or Free Kick an opposing player must stand at the position on the playing surface where the Mark or Free Kick was awarded – this is known as "the Mark".

No opposition player (except for the player on the mark) may be closer than 5 metres away in any direction.

The player in the 'Drop Zone' of the football, also known as front position, has every opportunity to mark the ball. Where possible, the Umpire will call "Drop Zone (Team name/ colour)" to let players know who has priority to take the Mark.

Once a Mark has been taken, the marking player will have a reasonable opportunity to dispose of the ball or play on. If they delay, the Umpire will place a five-second count for play to resume.

Players may attempt to intercept the ball in flight; however, they must not make contact with an opposing player, including running into, or backing into a stationary player. The stationary player whose team is called as part of the Drop Zone is protected at all times.

## CONTACT

Players collectively share responsibility for reducing contact during match play. A Turn Over will be awarded against a player who is adjudged by the Umpire to cause intentional or accidental contact. For the avoidance of doubt, players cannot:

- Hold an opponent with their hands
- Knock or steal the ball from an opponent's hands
- Make contact with a player in any scenario, other than hands when side by side in a marking contest (when attempting to catch the ball)
- Back into or jump carelessly into a marking contest without regard for other players
- Push or bump a player in the side, front or back
- Barge, fend off or shepherd opponents
- Tag a player in possession repeatedly or with aggression
- Block a player from picking up a stationary ball (if applicable)

If any of the above occurs in game, a Free Kick will be paid against the offending team.

If the Umpire cannot determine which player initiated contact, the Umpire will call either 'play on' or a ball-up, depending on the severity of the contact. **Where a player is deemed to have been impeded or infringed upon, that player must take the Free Kick**

## SPOILING/ SMOTHERING/ KICKING OFF THE GROUND

Players cannot:

- Spoil the football (knock or punch the ball out from an opposing team member going for a mark)
- Smother an opponent's kick by trying to block the kicking motion at the point of impact
- Smother an opponent's handball by trying to block the handballing motion at the point of impact
- Kick the ball off the ground

For the avoidance of doubt, touching the ball from a kick when standing on The Mark or on the goal line is not considered a smother.

## OUT OF BOUNDS

When the ball goes out of bounds (ball completely over the line) by hand or foot, a Free Kick is paid against the team who was deemed to last touch it. The nearest opponent shall kick the ball back into play.

If there is any doubt as to which team last touched the ball before it went out of bounds, the Umpire shall call a ball-up five metres in from the boundary line.

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| **SCORING** | Only forward position players may kick for goal, and must kick (ball to leave the foot) from inside the Forward zone. A Free Kick will be paid from the position of last disposal if:<br>· A player other than a forward scores within the forward zone<br>· A player disposes of the ball and scores from on or outside of the forward zone line<br>For the avoidance of doubt, any score resulting from the above will be disallowed.<br>Players are unable to score from a turnover. Players may score from a Free Kick.<br>Six (6) points for a goal. In some mixed competitions nine (9) points may be awarded for a girl's goal (if applicable to that competition). One (1) point behind for all competitions.<br>A score is recorded if the ball touches the ground and bounces through, provided it is kicked by a designated Forward player, within the forward zone and has not been touched between contacting the ground and passing through the goals.<br>The field Umpire will be the sole judge of whether the kick for goal was successful. |
| **FORWARD PLAYERS** | Forward players must identify by wearing a wristband that will be provided by the Competition Coordinator or Umpires before the match begins. |
| **LADDERS, PREMIERSHIP POINTS AND DRAWN MATCHES** | **REGULAR FIXTURES**<br>During regular fixtures, the following premiership points are awarded:<br>· Winning team – 4 points<br>· Losing team – 0 points<br>· Drawn fixture – 2 points to each team<br>If there are two teams on the same overall premiership winning points, the team with the highest percentage, then winning margin will continue into finals.<br>**FINALS FIXTURES**<br>For finals fixturing, if a match is drawn, the winner will be calculated by a golden point rule.<br>If at the final siren both teams remain tied, the ball shall be returned to the middle of the ground to be thrown up by the Umpire and play will continue until the next score. At that point the siren will sound and the team that scored first will be determined the winner. |

# TEAMS

| RULE | EXPLANATION |
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| **REGISTRATION** | All players must be registered before Teams enter the field of play.<br>Should all players not be registered the Competition Coordinator/Umpire may not start the game until it is confirmed that all players are registered. |
| **MINIMUM/MAXIMUM PLAYERS** | Nines (9) players on field, with a maximum of six (6) interchangeable players.<br>The minimum number of players allowed on the field from one team is five (5). Teams with less than nine (9) players are encouraged to talk with other teams about fill-in players.<br>Should a team be playing with less than the maximum number of players on field, that team must ensure there are three (3) players in the centre zone. If this occurs, players may wear a forward wristband ensuring three (3) players who are eligible to score. |
| **MIXED DIVISIONS** | In mixed divisions, each team must have at least three girls or three players of the same gender, and these players must always be on the field during play.<br>If a team cannot meet this requirement, they must play with fewer players to reflect the shortfall.<br>For example: If a team has 8 boys and only 2 girls, they should play with 8 players - 2 girls and 6 boys on the field at any time. All others form the interchange. Refer to the Competition Eligibility policy for further information at play.afl/nines. |

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| **ON FIELD POSITIONS & START OF PLAY** | Teams must have three forwards, three centres and three defenders and all players must start within their respective zones at the beginning of each half and when a goal is scored.<br>It is expected that teams rotate players throughout positions to ensure competitive fairness.<br>Once the game is in progress, players can move freely between zones. |
| **INTERCHANGE** | Unlimited interchanges available and it is expected that all players will rotate to ensure everyone plays at least 50% of game time, excluding injury players (if applicable).<br>Interchanges may occur at any time and players must completely exit the field of play before the playing subbing on steps foot onto the field of play. All interchanges are officiated via the honesty system. |
| **ATTIRE / UNIFORM** | Teams must identify with the same uniform (t shirt, singlet, guernsey etc). If this is not possible, the Competition Coordinator may have bibs available to avoid any clashes.<br>Players may wear hats that do not comprise of hard plastic or metal. Competition Coordinators or Umpires may ask players to remove them if this is not clear upon sighting. |
| **BOOTS/JEWELLERY/ PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT** | A player shall not wear during a match any form of jewellery, including watches.<br>Players must wear enclosed shoes whilst participating in matches. Boots with metal studs are not allowed.<br>A field Umpire may inspect a player's boots or hands or any protective equipment that a player intends to wear or use during the match. |
| **TEAM OFFICIALS** | Coaches, runner/water carriers are not allowed. |

# DISCIPLINARY

| RULE | EXPLANATION |
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| **GAME DAY ENVIRONMENT** | All players agree to the AFL Nines Code of Behaviour and associated disciplinary policy upon registration. Should action be required, Umpires and Competition Coordinators will be guided by this policy. |
| **FIFTEEN METRE PENALTY** | A fifteen-metre penalty may be awarded when a player:<br>· Oversteps the 'Mark'<br>· Engages in time wasting<br>· Uses abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language or behaviour towards or in relation to an Umpire<br>· Enters the protected 5 metre area around a player who has been awarded a Mark or Free Kick.<br>· Has not returned the football directly and on the full to the player awarded the Free Kick or Mark<br>Engages in any other conduct for which a Free Kick would originally be awarded. |
| **COMMON CONDUCT** | For crude language or incidental contact with an opposition player:<br>· Offence one: Free kick and verbal warning<br>· Offence two: Free kick and 15m penalty<br>· Offence three: Free kick and yellow card<br>An Umpire may apply a 15m penalty in cases of a subsequent incident by a team (i.e. a different player). For serious verbal abuse, (e.g. highly abusive, offensive or threatening language) a yellow or red card may be issued immediately. |

## YELLOW/RED CARDS

**Yellow Cards**

- The carded player must immediately leave the field and cannot return to the field for 5 minutes of playing time (i.e. does not include any break time).
- The Team Captain will be advised of the send-off, and the carded player may be replaced by a substitute.
- The 5 minutes is to be tracked by the Competition Coordinators (if present), the relevant Team Manager, or the Umpire.

## YELLOW/RED CARDS

**Red Cards**

- Two yellow cards issued to a player in one match will result in a red card being issued to the player
- A Category 2 or Category 3 offence will result in a red card being issued to a player
- The carded player must immediately leave the field and cannot return to the field for the remainder of the match
- The Team Captain will be advised of the send-off, and the carded player cannot be replaced by a substitute

A player may be reported for a low-level offense and not receive a red card. Refer AFL Nines Disciplinary policy for further information found at play.afl/nines.

## REPORTS, SET PENALTIES & CODE OF BEHAVIOUR BREACHES

A player who receives a red card, will also be reported for the offence(s) by the Umpire or Competition Coordinator (if present).

A reported player will incur an automatic one match suspension from participation in the next AFL Nines match.

Any reportable offence will be referred to the Controlling Body by the Umpire or Competition Coordinator (if present) by completing and submitting an Notice of Report – AFL Nines form.

Further information on the AFL Nines Disciplinary process can be found at play.afl/nines or by talking to the Competition Coordinator.

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