AFL PLAY

AFL NINES

NATIONAL POLICY HANDBOOK



DEFINITIONS

AFL means Australian Football League (ACN 004 155 211).
Club means the club through which the Participant is registered or applying to be registered for participation in a Competition.
Competition means an AFL Nines or AFL Switch competition or participation program.
Controlling Body means the AFL, League and Club involved in the Participant's registration or participation in Australian Football.
League means the league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of the Competition in which the Participant's Club participates.
Participant means the person registered, or applying to be registered, to participate in AFL Nines or AFL Switch, including as a player, coach, volunteer or other registered participant. A Participant may be 18 years of age or older, or under 18 years of age and represented by their Parent/Guardian.
Terms of Participation means the terms of participation provided at https://play.afl/play/terms-of-participation.
School means the school through which the Participant is registered or applying to be registered for participation in a Competition.

PURPOSE

The National AFL Nines and AFL Switch Policy Handbook aims to:

1) Make it easier for schools, leagues, clubs, volunteers and other stakeholders to administer Competitions within their communities;
2) Provide framework for key organisational requirements in relation to delivery of Competitions;
3) Address appropriate standards of behaviour and prevention of discrimination and harassment in AFL Nines and AFL Switch; and
4) Encourage the games of AFL Nines and AFL Switch are played in a fair and good spirited manner.

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COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This Competition Eligibility Policy is divided into three (3) sections:

1) Age Eligibility
2) Team Eligibility
3) Scoring Eligibility

When implementing this policy, the AFL's registration and database system PlayHQ will be used as the single source of fact. This includes when someone selects their age and gender. The table below indicates how selections available in PlayHQ correspond to the references in gender in this policy. Participants can self-identify their gender.

PLAYHQ GENDER SELECTION	REFERENCE WITHIN THIS POLICY
Male	Men or trans-men
Female	Women or trans-women
Non-binary	Non-binary
Different identity	Case by case dependant on how players self-describe
Prefer not to say	Players who selected 'Prefer not to say' during registration are considered within the non-binary eligibility requirements

The AFL Gender Diversity Policy (Community Football) (as amended from time to time) is adopted as part of these Regulations and its terms are deemed terms of these Regulations.

AGE ELIGIBILITY

Youth competitions are played across two-year level groups/age groups, for example:

- Years 7-8
- Years 9-10
- Years 11-12

In order to participate in an AFL Nines Competition, the Participant must:

a. satisfy the following age requirements:
   i. in respect of an AFL Nines youth competition, be at least 12 and no older than 18 years of age as at 31 December in year of participation, and be in secondary school;
   ii. in respect of an AFL Nines adult competition, be 15 years of age or older as at competition start date in the year of participation;
   iii. participants who do not meet the above age eligibility criteria are ineligible to play AFL Nines in that respective competition;

b. for the avoidance of doubt, should a participant turn 15 years of age during a competition, they may participate from that point onwards, provided they have registered on PlayHQ and paid any applicable fees.
c. AFL Switch youth Competition: be at least 12 and no older than 18 in the year of participation, and be at secondary school;
d. AFL Switch adult Competition: Participants must turn 17 years or older as of 31 December in the year of participation;
e. Within states and territories, the community football playing age may differ. In this case, the AFL Switch minimum age will align to the respective state or territory age of participation;
f. Participants who do not meet the above age eligibility criteria are ineligible to play in that respective Competition.

TEAM ELIGIBILITY

The AFL is committed to inclusion and providing all people with an opportunity to participate in a Competition.

AFL NINES

Youth Boys, Men's Open or Men's Masters Competitions

To participate in a Youth Boys/Men's Open/Masters competition, each team must have nine (9) players who are men, trans men, or non-binary people on the field at any one time.

Youth Girls, Women's Open or Women's Masters Competitions

To participate in a Youth Girls/Women's Open/Masters competition, each team must have nine (9) players who women, trans women or non-binary people on the field at any one time.

Mixed Youth, Mixed Open or Mixed Masters Competitions

To participate in a Mixed competition, each team must have nine (9) players, which include a minimum of three (3) players on the field at any one time who are:

- men, trans men or non-binary people; and
- women, trans women, or non-binary people.

Should a team within a Mixed competition be unable to meet the above minimum requirements, the team may be permitted by the Controlling Body to play with a reduced number of players coinciding with the number of players they are short, but always ensuring a mix of players on the field.

For example, if a team only has two players who are women or non-binary, then the team would field a maximum of eight (8) players, always including women and non-binary players on the field, with all remaining players being on the interchange.

Noting that teams who cannot field five (5) players may be required to forfeit that week's match.

AFL SWITCH

Youth Boys, Men's Open or Men's Masters Competitions

To participate in a Youth Boys/Men's Open/Masters Competition, each team must have seven (7) players who are men, trans men, or non-binary people on the field at any one time.

Youth Girls, Women's Open or Women's Masters Competitions

To participate in a Youth Girls/Women's Open/Masters Competition, each team must have seven (7) players who are women, trans women or non-binary people on the field at any one time.

Mixed Youth, Mixed Open or Mixed Masters Competitions

To participate in a mixed Competition, each team must have seven (7) players, which include a minimum of three (3) players on the field at any one time who are:

- men, trans men or non-binary people; and
- women, trans women, or non-binary people.

Should a team within a mixed Competition be unable to meet the above minimum requirements, the team may be permitted by the Controlling Body to play with a reduced number of players coinciding with the number of players they are short but always ensuring a mix of players on the field.

For example, if a team only has two players who are women or non-binary, then the team would field a maximum of six (6) players, always including women and non-binary players on the field, with all remaining players being on the interchange.

Noting that teams who cannot field five (5) players may required to forfeit that week's match.

SCORING ELIGIBILITY

Non-Mixed Competitions – AFL Nines only

For all competitions excluding Mixed competitions, scoring is as follows:

- Behind – one (1) point
- Goal – six (6) points

Mixed Competitions – AFL Nines only

In AFL Nines mixed Competitions, scoring is the same as the above with the addition of a Super Goal:

- Behind – one (1) point
- Goal – six (6) points

- Super Goal – nine (9) points (awarded for goals kicked by women and trans women players)

A 9-point super goal will be recorded for women and trans women players.

For the avoidance of doubt, goals kicked by non-binary players are recorded as six (6) points.

Please note that in some Mixed competitions, scoring rule may differ locally. For example, a competition may choose not include the nine (9) point Super Goal rule and instead award six (6) points for all goals. If you are unsure of the rules in your competition, please contact your local Competition Manager.



COMPETITION FORFEIT POLICY

This Competition Forfeit Policy, as updated from time to time and unless otherwise stated, capitalised terms in this policy have the meaning given to them in the AFL Nines and AFL Switch Terms of Participation, available here.

POLICY OBJECTIVE

Competitions rely on team commitment to ensure a fair and enjoyable experience for all participants.

This Competition Forfeit Policy provides guidance for the Controlling Body in the event a team within a Competition forfeits. The following policy applies to any team that forfeits a scheduled match within an AFL Nines or AFL Switch Competition.

FORFEIT NOTIFICATION AND FINANCIAL PENALTIES

Teams must notify the Controlling Body as early as possible if they are unable to field a team to compete in a scheduled match.

A forfeit communicated to the Controlling Body at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled matched will be classified as an **"Early Forfeit"**. Early Forfeits will avoid financial penalties.

A forfeit within 24 hours of a scheduled match will be classified as a **"Late Forfeit"**. Late Forfeits may result in financial and non-financial penalties.

Further details of the different forfeit types and penalties is set out in the table in Section 3 below. Financial penalties will be determined with respect to the costs incurred for venue hire and officiator fees. Financial penalties must be paid prior to the offending team's next scheduled match. If a forfeit payment is outstanding, the Competition Manager may, at their discretion:

a) cancel the offending team's next scheduled match; or
b) allow the offending team's next scheduled match to proceed but withhold competition points from the offending team.

FORFEIT PENALTIES

The table below provides details of the forfeit penalties for Competitions.

FORFEIT TYPE	PENALTY
Early Forfeit (24+ hrs)	Loss recorded (0 points). No financial penalty.
Late Forfeit (<24 hrs)	Loss recorded (0 points). Up to $50 fee may apply Written warning issued.
No-show Forfeit (no notice)	Loss recorded (0 points). Up to $75 fee may apply. Written warning issued.
Repeat Foreit	Upon three (3) forfeits, regardless of forfeit type the offending team may be removed from the competition without refund.

POSSIBLE SCENARIOS WHERE FORFEITS MAY OCCUR

The match official may also determine a Late Forfeit has occurred for the following reasons:

a) a team is unable to field the minimum number of Participants as set out in the Team Eligibility section of this handbook;
b) a team in a mixed division is unable to field the minimum number of players required (three (3) of the same gender), whereby playing with the reduced number of players now totals less than the minimum of five (5) required.

For the avoidance of doubt, competitions or divisions that have a scheduled BYE round are not eligible for refunds.

YOUR OPPONENT FORFEITS

If a match is forfeited against your team (i.e. your opponent cancels):

- a win is recorded (full points – 4 points);
- the Controlling Body may schedule a friendly game where possible;
- as per our refund policy, no refund is provided unless multiple forfeits prevent your team from playing a fair portion of the season (Less than 75% of the scheduled competition games, excluding BYE rounds).

TEAM CAPTAIN RESPONSIBILITIES

<u>The person assigned as a Team Captain of a forfeiting team is responsible to the Controlling Body for:</u>

- communicating forfeits in a timely manner;
- communicating forfeits with own team members; and
- completing any payment of penalties prior to the following week's match.

CONTROLLING BODY RESPONSIBILITIES

<u>The Controlling Body, or representative of the Controlling Body, is responsible for:</u>

a) communicating with affected teams as soon as a forfeit is confirmed;
b) contacting other teams within the competition to arrange a friendly or fill-in match for the opposing team who is affected by the forfeit;
c) recording any forfeit information within competition records;
d) communicating any penalties, including fees in writing to the forfeiting Team Captain;
e) initiating refunds where applicable.

REFUND PROCESS

The refund policy in relation to forfeited matches is as follows:

a) refunds are determined by the Controlling Body in accordance with the AFL Nines and AFL Switch Terms of Participation and this policy;
b) no refunds are provided for matches where a team has forfeited;
c) no refunds will be issued to a team that is removed or withdraws as a result of Repeated Forfeits;
d) if a match is forfeited against your team (i.e. your opponent cancels) and the Controlling Body is unable to find a further 'friendly' match and this results in your team participating in less than 75% of the scheduled competition games, you may be eligible for a pro-rata refund (excluding BYE rounds),;
e) if a team is eligible for a refund, it will be processed through the PlayHQ refund system and returned as follows to:
    i) the Team Captain who registered the team; or
    ii) individual players, if the competition required players to make individual payments, using their original payment method;
f) if the Controlling Body deem that a team is eligible for a refund, it is up to the Team Captain to contact the Controlling Body to initiate the refund process;
g) In considering a refund request, the AFL's Customer Service Team will obtain relevant details via the Controlling Body, Competition Manager and/or Competition State Lead before proceeding; and
h) refunds do not include any fees previously paid to PlayHQ upon registration of the team.

Further information regarding the refund process can be obtained by contacting our customer service team at clubhelp@afl.com.au

EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES & DISCRETION

The Controlling Body has discretion in waiving any and all fees associated with forfeit penalties, including where a forfeit occurs due to unforeseen or unavoidable circumstances (e.g. emergencies, weather, facility issues).

CONTROLLING BODY FORFEIT PROCESS

FORFEITS	ACTION	METHOD
First	Within 24 hours • Penalty recorded in line with penalty table • Payment request executed by Controlling Body via PlayHQ for amount displayed in penalty table • Penalty communicated to respective Team Captain	Phone and Email

	Outside 24 hours ● No team penalty recorded	
Second	Within 24 hours ● Penalty recorded in line with penalty table ● Payment request executed by Controlling Body via PlayHQ for amount displayed in penalty table ● Penalty communicated to respective Team Captain, including three forfeits may mean removal from competition	Phone and Email
	Outside 24 hours ● No team penalty recorded ● Communication with respective Team Captain, including three forfeits may mean removal from competition	Phone and Email
Third	Within 24 hours ● Controlling Body to review the reasons behind all three forfeits and make decision on if penalty should be recorded in line with penalty table ● Communication with respective Team Captain	Phone and Email
	Outside 24 hours ● Controlling Body to review the reasons behind all three forfeits and make decision on if penalty should be recorded in line with penalty table ● Communication with respective Team Captain	Phone and Email

COMPETITION DISCIPLINARY POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This Competition Disciplinary Policy establishes the process for applying penalties by an umpire and the Controlling Body for offences arising in AFL Nines or AFL Switch, including issuing yellow and red cards and identifying reportable offences.

CRUDE LANGUAGE AND PLAYER CONTACT

AFL Nines

CONDUCT	OFFENCE NO.	UMPIRE ACTION
For crude language or incidental contact with an opposition player NOTE: An umpire may apply a 15m penalty in cases of a subsequent incident by a team (i.e. a different player) NOTE: For serious verbal abuse, (e.g. highly abusive, offensive or threatening language) a yellow or red card may be issued immediately.	1st	Free kick + verbal warning
	2nd	Free kick + 15m penalty
	3rd	Free kick + yellow card

AFL Switch

AFL Switch is governed by the responsible play rule. Please see AFL Switch Rules at play.afl/switch. For the avoidance of doubt, all Category 2 and 3 offences listed in the penalty table below sit within the reckless section of the responsible play rule.

YELLOW CARDS

- A player that receives a yellow card 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 yellow carded player may be replaced by a substitute.
- The 5 minutes is to be tracked by the Competition Manager (if present), the relevant Team Captain, or the Umpire.

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 immediately issued to a player.
- The red 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.

REPORTABLE OFFENCES

- A player who receives a red card, will also be reported for the offence(s) by the umpire or Competition Manager (if present). A player may also be reported and not receive a red card.
- A reported player will incur an automatic one match suspension from participation in the next Competition match.
- Any reportable offence will be referred to the Controlling Body by the Umpire or Competition Manager (if present) by completing and submitting an Notice of Report – AFL Nines and AFL Switch form.
- On receipt of a *Notice of Report* the Controlling Body is to assess the matter in accordance with "Controlling Body Assessment".
- On review of the Notice of Report the Controlling Body may extend the automatic one match suspension to two or more matches having regard to the Penalty Table below and other relevant matters (see Controlling Body Assessment).
- A suspension applies only to AFL Nines or AFL Switch. It does not carry into a Community Football competition, or vice versa.
- If the suspension is for a period that extends beyond the current Competition, the remainder of the suspension will apply to any future Competition for which the person registers.

COMPLAINTS

- In addition to reports made by Umpires or Competition Managers, a Team Captain may submit a written complaint regarding an alleged serious breach of the AFL Nines or AFL Switch Code of Behaviour.
- The Controlling Body may, at its absolute discretion, determine whether the complaint warrants investigation, taking into account:
    - the seriousness of the allegation;
    - whether the conduct was personally witnessed by the complainant or other identifiable persons;
    - the availability of supporting information or evidence; and
    - whether the matter is more appropriately dealt with informally.
- The Controlling Body is not required to investigate every complaint received and may dismiss complaints that are frivolous, vexatious, lacking substance, or otherwise unsuitable for formal disciplinary action.
- Complaints should only be put forward by the team captain and must be lodged with the Controlling Body within 24 hours of the match where the complaint originated from.
- Team Captains may only submit complaints relating to category 2 or 3 breaches of within the penalty table.

COMPETITION EXCLUSION

- The Controlling Body may determine to apply a Competition exclusion to a reported person for a Category 3 offence or where the person commits a second reportable offence during the competition.
- Where a Competition exclusion is applied, a person cannot participate:

    - in any form for the remainder of the competition; and
    - in any other Competition for a three (3) month period commencing from the date of the incident.
- Where a decision is made by a Controlling Body to apply a Competition exclusion to a person, that person is to be notified of this in writing by the Controlling Body or the AFL State Nines or Switch Lead as applicable
- A decision to apply a Competition exclusion to a person is final and not subject of any appeal right other than provided by law.

PENALTY TABLE

OFFENCE TYPE	OFFENCE
Category 1 Offences • Yellow Card • Second offence – Red card & auto 1 match suspension	Disputing a decision of an Umpire
	Using abusive, insulting or obscene language towards or in relation to another person (low level)
	Engaging in careless rough conduct (e.g. accidental bump)
	Use of an obscene gesture
	Attempting to trip another person
	Carelessly making contact with an Umpire
	Engaging in time wasting
Category 2 Offences • Red Card & auto 1 match suspension • Indicative 'extended' suspension of an additional 1 or more matches • May have a Competition exclusion applied for a 2nd reportable offence	Instigating or engaging in a melee
	Pulling the hair of another person
	Wrestling another person
	Striking, kicking or kneeing another person
	Attempting to strike, kick or knee another person
	Engaging in intentional rough conduct (e.g. intentional bump, push, tackle, charge)
	Using abusive, insulting or obscene language toward another person (medium or high level)
	Using abusive, insulting or obscene language towards or in relation to an Umpire
	Intentionally tripping another person whether by hand, arm, foot or leg
	Making unreasonable or unnecessary contact to the face or eye region of another person
	Making unreasonable or Unnecessary Contact with an Injured Player

	Unreasonable or unnecessary contact with an Umpire
	Failing to leave the Playing Surface when directed to do so by an Umpire
Category 3 Offences • Red Card & auto 1 match suspension • Indicative 'extended' suspension of an additional 2 or more matches • May have a Competition exclusion applied	Eye-Gouging another person
	Head-butting or making intentional contact to another person using the head
	Stomping on another person
	Intentionally making contact with, or striking, an Umpire
	Attempting to Strike an Umpire
	Spitting on or at an Umpire or another person
	Behaving in threatening manner towards or in relation to an Umpire or another person
	Any other act of serious misconduct

CONTROLLING BODY ASSESSMENT

The sanctions referred to in the Penalty Table are indicative only. In assessing an offence and determining a sanction, the Controlling Body may:

- consider any relevant matters including the nature of the reported person's conduct, the extent and location of contact made to another person and the impact on the other person including any injury sustained;
- seek additional information from any person involved in the match and that person is required to cooperate and comply with any such request; and refer to Appendix 1 of the National Community Football Policy Handbook ('the Handbook') for guidance.
  Note: Where Appendix 1 of the Handbook used as a guide, sanctions should align to the Early Guilty Plea sanction in that Appendix, or where the offence is a Category 3 offence (which aligns to a Direct Tribunal Referral offence under the Handbook), to a minimum suspension of 3 matches.

Following completion of its assessment, the Controlling Body may:

- Uphold or overturn the reportable offence;
- Find the player guilty of a lesser or more serious offence and impose the appropriate penalty for that offence; or
- Find the player guilty of the offence but with consideration to mitigating factors impose a lighter penalty

The reported person will be notified in writing of the Controlling Body decision via a *Notice of Sanction.*

REVIEW OF DECISION

Unless otherwise determined by the Controlling Body in exceptional and compelling circumstances, a reported person who has received a suspension of three (3) or more matches for an offence, may request a review of the decision of a Controlling Body on one or both of the following grounds:

- the decision was so unreasonable that no Controlling Body acting reasonably could have come to that decision having regard to the evidence before it; or
- the sanction imposed was manifestly excessive.

For the avoidance of doubt, only the appeal grounds specified above may be relied upon in a request for review of a Controlling Body decision.

The Controlling Body may charge a fee (not exceeding $250) for review of decision. This is to be communicated with the player/s involved upon request.

A request by a reported person for review of a determination of the Controlling Body must:

- be made in writing on the *Request for Review of Decision* form, with all required particulars to be completed;
- attach all evidence to be relied upon in support of the review ground(s); and
- be lodged with the State or Territory Competition Lead by no later than 5:00pm on the first business day following the decision.

Where an Offending Person is under the age of eighteen (18) years, the *Request for Review of Decision* is to be signed by a parent or guardian of the Person.

Legal representation in a request for review is expressly prohibited.

The State or Territory Competition Lead will convene a Panel (**Review Panel**) comprising at least two (2) persons to assess and determine the request for review. No person who was involved in the Controlling Body decision may be appointed to the Review Panel. In determining whether any appeal ground relied upon has been met the Review Panel may inform itself as to any matter in such manner as it determines.

In relation to a Notice of Report, the Review Panel will decide whether a reportable offence against a Participant has been committed on the balance of probabilities.

On completion of its review, the Review Panel may confirm, reverse or modify the decision of the Controlling Body based on the available and provided evidence.

The decision of the Review Panel will be notified in writing to the reported person and is final and binding and subject only to any rights of appeal provided by law.

APPLICATION OF SANCTIONS

A suspension is to apply to the next scheduled match(es) that the suspended participant's team is scheduled to play. During the period of suspension, a suspended participant is not entitled to play in any other AFL Nines or AFL Switch competition.

If the suspension extends beyond the current Nines competition the persons Team is participating in, the remaining matches of suspension will apply to any future competition the participant registers for subject to the following.

- Any such future competition the participant registers for must be one that is reasonably accessible to the participant (e.g. they can't register for one hours away just to circumvent the suspension); and
- The participant must participate in that competition following the end of the suspension.

All sanctions will be recorded by the Controlling Body.

Any breach of these sanction conditions may, at the discretion of the Controlling Body, lead to the Participant's Competition exclusion from all future participation in any AFL Nines or AFL Switch competition.



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