

AFL Junior Match Program

9-10 years

9-a-side, 12-a-side or 15-a-side: NAB AFL Auskick program or in club and school competitions

Purpose

To provide 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 at this age level is the further development of basic game skills (kicking, handballing, marking, gathering, evasion and checking) and learning technical and tactical concepts. The match program for this age group provides further opportunities to develop game skills and the tactical principles of gaining possession, applying pressure, utilising space and positional play.

Spirit of the game

Prior to the commencement of play:

- › all players, coaches and umpires should gather together on the ground and shake hands; and
- › the umpire and coaches should ensure players are aware of the rules and procedures to be followed in the conduct of 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 should be given to the opposition team if they are unable to field the required numbers;
- › coaches should consider modifying the numbers per side 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 15-a-side game.

The umpire should at all times:

- › endeavour to apply the rules of the games while awarding free 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 so they can experience playing as a forward, midfielder or backline player; 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; and
- › 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.

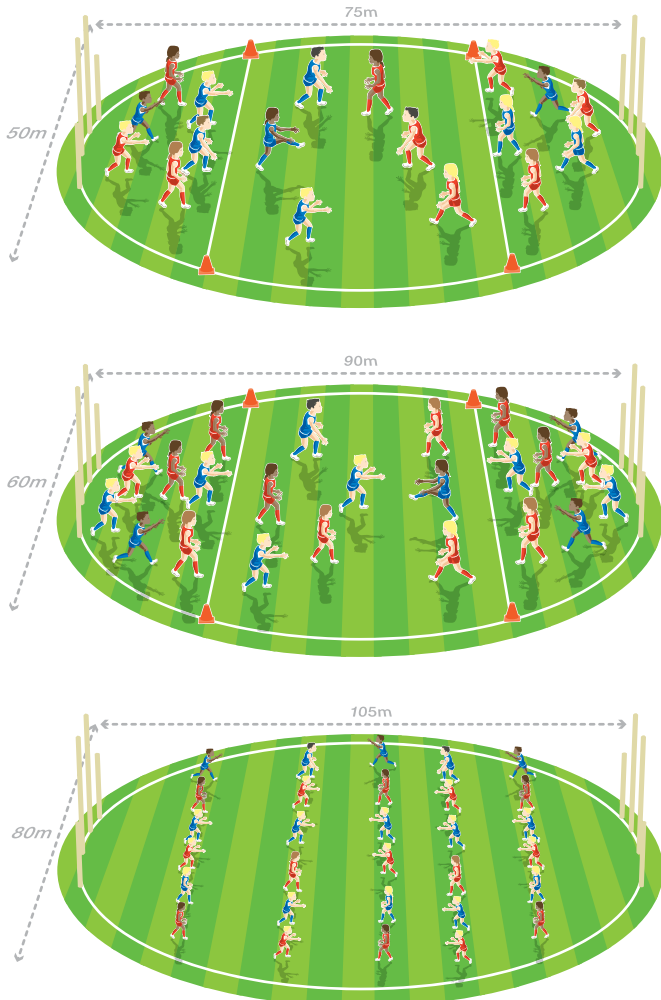
The game – premierships points competitions

The football match program offered to players aged 9-10 must comply with the modified match program presented in this document with no premierships points, no finals, no ladders, no match results (no score) 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:

75m x 50m for 9-a-side matches;
90m x 60m for 12-a-side matches; and
105m x 80m for 15-a-side matches.



The field is divided into 3 equal zones (thirds).
The zones are identified by markers or lines are used, e.g. 9-a-side: 3 x 25m.

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

A field umpire and 2 goal umpires are needed.

There are no boundary throw-ins, so no boundary umpires are required.

The ball

A synthetic size 2 or leather football should be used.

The team

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

12-a-side means: 4 backs, 4 centres, 4 forwards. Reserves: 4 recommended. Rotate one zone off each quarter.

15 players (5 lines of 3 players) participate.
There are no rucks or rovers. Reserves unlimited.

Interchange may take place at any time, but all players must play at least three-quarters of a match.

Rotate players at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions, i.e. players to change from one zone or position on the ground 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.

Equalise the teams and opponents as much as possible (match sizes, abilities).

Zones

Restricting players to zones is optional in this age group. The use of zones is highly recommended as they provide an excellent teaching tool; they prevent ball-chasing and subsequent congestion around the ball.

Leagues will require approval from their state football body before determining not to use zones for this age level.

Staying in position

To stop congestion, the umpire will instruct players to stay in their correct positions. Coaches should also instruct their players to stay in position and enable all players to play in the different positions through effective, regular rotations (see **The team** 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

In 9 and 12-a-side matches with zones, only forward-zone players can 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, other players may apply a hold and release (restraint) or block by standing in the path of the player with the ball. Decide doubtful cases with ball-ups.

Playing time

AFL Auskick program – recommended total playing time of 20 minutes.

AFL Junior fixture – maximum of 4 x 12-minute quarters with no time-on.

Start of play and restarting after a goal

When all players are in position, a ball-up is conducted between 2 centre players of similar height nominated by the umpire. Alternate players for subsequent bounces (full possession rule applies).

Scrimmage and field ball-ups

Conducted between 2 players of equal size selected by the umpire. Before the throw up, the umpire should clear the area by sending players back to their positions or zones (full possession rule applies).

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.

Gaining possession

A player's prime objective should be to gain possession of the ball (eyes on the ball). Shoulder-to-shoulder contact is permitted when players are contesting a loose ball, provided the ball is within 5 metres. Running with the player, rather than running at them must be the intention. Front-on contact and contact from behind are strictly prohibited.

Hold and release (restraint)

Players can hold and release an opposition player in possession of the ball by grabbing the jumper with one or 2 hands. There is strictly no bumping, slinging or deliberately bringing the player in possession of the ball to the ground. Grabbing the arms or applying a wrap-around tackle is also not permitted.

If a player in possession of the ball is held and released without a prior opportunity to dispose of the ball, they have 3 seconds to dispose of it by handballing or kicking. If a player in possession of the ball has had prior opportunity before being held and released, a free kick is awarded against him or her.

When the player is held and released the umpire acknowledges the hold has been applied and instructs the player in possession to dispose of the ball within 3, 2, 1 seconds (counting backwards). A player in possession cannot be held and released again within that 3 seconds.

Players cannot:

- > knock the ball out of an opponent's hands;
- > push the player in the side;
- > steal the ball from another player; or
- > 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

A mark is awarded, no matter how far the ball has travelled, to any player who catches the ball directly from the kick of another player.

Bouncing the ball

Bouncing is optional but no more than one bounce is permitted.

Distance run

While a player in possession of the ball is moving, the player must bounce the ball within 10 metres, irrespective of whether that player 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

A player can be awarded a 10-metre advancement towards their goals if after a mark or free kick the umpire is of the opinion an opposing player hinders that player. This could include such acts as overstepping the mark, wasting time, and using abusive language and behaviour.

Order-off rule

To be applied at the umpire's discretion, or 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.

