

# JUNIOR RULES



# PROGRAM HANDBOOK

# THE RULES OF JUNIOR FOOTBALL

This program handbook details the rules, structure and environment for the delivery of junior football across the country to create an optimal experience to drive participation and foster a lifelong connection to the game.

The below age-appropriate rules, developed based on research and best practice, provides the opportunity for participants in our junior competitions to develop their skills whilst experiencing activities relevant to their age, progression, physical development, and maturation level. The key focus is enjoyment, fun and satisfaction.

This handbook will provide you with a clear understanding of how football should be delivered across all junior and youth age groups to build a structure and environment which provides people a great experience, helping keep more players playing the game for longer and most importantly increasing people's enjoyment of footy!

<b>RULE</b>	<b>JUNIOR RULES</b>
<b>Age Policy</b>	Competition Age Range: Where possible single age groups. Second option - 2 year age span (8,10,12,14,16,18)
<b>Mercy Rule</b>	The AFL encourages leagues, clubs and coaches once an unassailable lead is reached during a game (e.g. 60 points) to appreciate that it serves no purpose to inflict massive losses on teams. In these instances, a mercy rule should be applied that suits the local competition circumstances.
<b>Game Day Environment</b>	All leagues and competitions to adopt a baseline Game Environment initiative that aims to enhance the experience and environment of participants.
<b>Max no. of games by a player in one season</b>	<p>It is recommended that the number of games that a player participates in across all levels and segments of football is monitored (including Talent, Club and School games) and that measures are put in place to support the welfare of the individual player, once a player gets to Under 14's.</p> <p>Across Youth Football Competitions it is recommended that players are not playing more than 25 games per season across talent, club and school competitions, and ideally should not be playing more than 2 games per week.</p>
<b>Fair Access &amp; Opportunities</b>	As a game, we all (Governing Bodies, Leagues and Clubs) must provide safe and inclusive environments that provide equal opportunities and access to funding, resources and facilities for women and girls, and that we equally value their contribution to Australian Rules Football.

# MYTHBUSTERS

## SEVEN MYTHS ABOUT JUNIOR AFL



### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*No scores = more fun!*

Having fun and learning the game is more important than winning!

1

FOOTY IS TOO

**COMPETITIVE**



### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Little legs, little oval!*

Kids are always part of the fun because the ball is never far away!

2

AFL FIELDS ARE  
**TOO BIG**  
FOR KIDS



### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Non-contact Junior Footy!*

Right rules for the right skill level. Contact is gradually introduced to help kids learn and develop in a safe environment!

3

**TACKLING**  
IS UNSAFE FOR KIDS



ONLY  
**THE BEST**  
**PLAYERS**  
GET THE BAL



### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Everyone gets a kick!*

Reduced numbers and position rotations make sure everyone gets a go.

4

**COACHES**  
ARE INTENSE

### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Everyone gets a kick!*

Our junior footy coaches are positive, encouraging and fully accredited. Best of all, most are parents just like you!

5

**THE**  
**RULES**  
ARE COMPLICATED

### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Play and learn!*

The needs of your kids come first. That's why rules are modified for the right fit for the age group.

6



JUNIOR FOOTY IS  
**CONGESTED**

### MYTH

#### BUSTED!

*Stand your ground!*

Zones prevent ball chasing and congestion. We make sure everyone gets a turn!

7



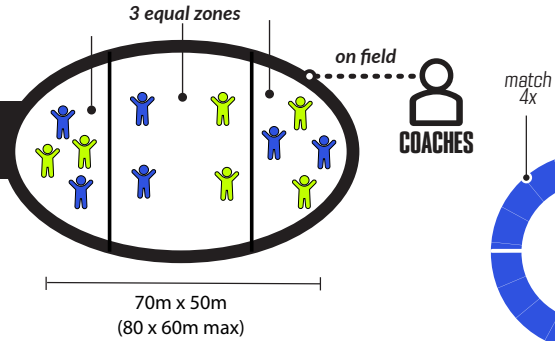
# UNDER 8

## HOW TO PLAY

### Number of players



(9 max per team)



**BREAKS**  
(5, 8, 5 min)

**NO BOUNCE**  
*permitted*



**A MARK**  
*is awarded*



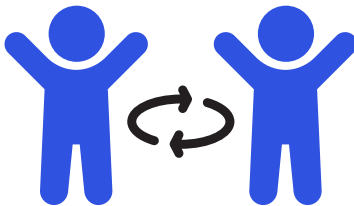
No Tackling or holding of an opponent

No Smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands



No pushing (fending off), bumping or barging another player

No shepherding



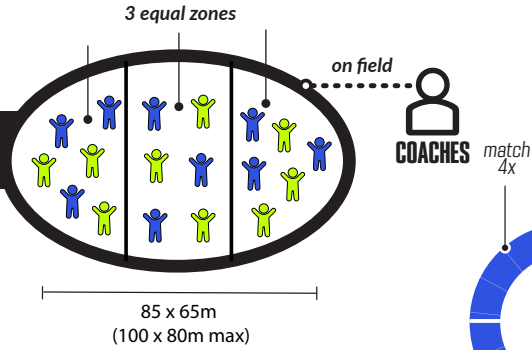
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

*at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.*

*Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game*

# UNDER 9

## HOW TO PLAY



### Number of players



(12 max per team)



**BREAKS**  
(5, 8, 5 min)



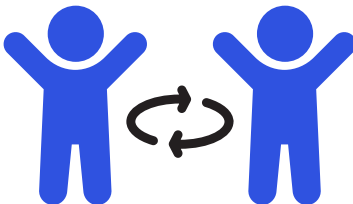
**A MARK**   
is awarded

**TO ANY PLAYER**  
who shows control of the ball



Holding of an opponent

No Smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands



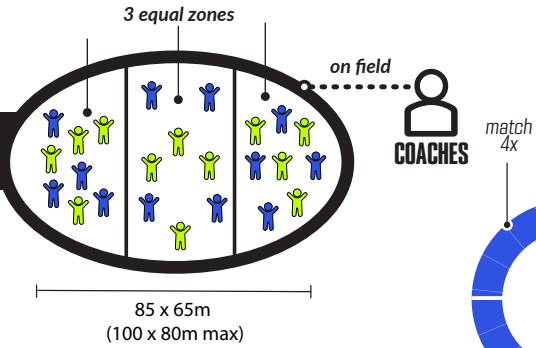
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 10

## HOW TO PLAY



### Number of players



(15 max per team)



**BREAKS**  
(5, 8, 5 min)

**1 BOUNCE**  
*permitted*



**A MARK** ✓  
*is awarded*

**TO ANY PLAYER**  
*who shows control of the ball*



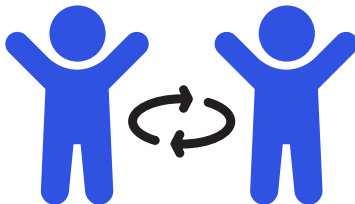
Modified tackling

Holding of an opponent  
No Smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands



No pushing (fending off), bumping or barging another player

No shepherding



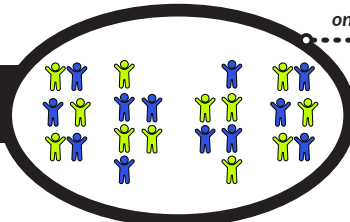
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

*at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.*

*Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game*

# UNDER 11

## HOW TO PLAY



on field



COACHES

### Number of players



(15 max per team)

115 x 75m  
(130 x 90m max)

match  
4x



BREAKS  
(5, 10, 5 min)

### A MARK

is awarded



### TO ANY PLAYER

when a kick travels  
10m to any player  
who catches the ball

### 1 BOUNCE

permitted



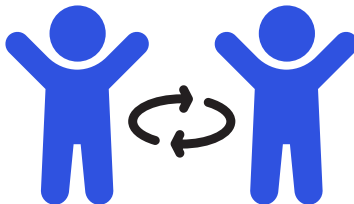
SIZE 3

Stealing the ball

Fending off, smothering, or barging



Full tackling and bumping



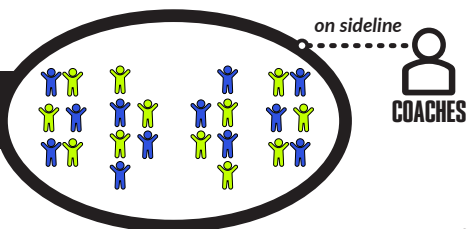
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 12

## HOW TO PLAY



### Number of players



(15 max per team)

115 x 75m  
(130 x 90m)

match  
4x



**BREAKS**  
(5, 10, 5 min)

### A MARK

is awarded



### TO ANY PLAYER

when a kick travels  
10m to any player  
who catches the ball



SIZE 3

### 1 BOUNCE

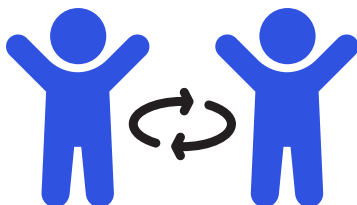
permitted

Stealing the ball



Full tackling and bumping

Fending off, smothering, or barging



### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

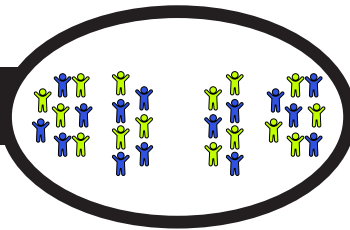
at least every quarter to provide  
opportunities in several positions  
including the interchange.

Every player must play a  
minimum of 50-75% game



# UNDER 13/14

## HOW TO PLAY



### Number of players



(15 max per team)

125 x 95m  
(140 x 110m max)

**A MARK**  
is awarded



**TO ANY  
PLAYER**

when a kick travels  
15m to any player  
who catches the ball

match  
4x



**BREAKS**

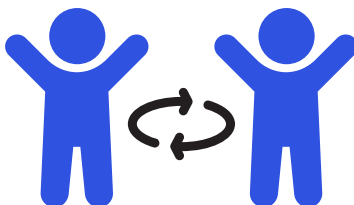
(6, 10-15, 6 min)

Stealing the ball

Fending off, smothering, or barging



Full tackling and bumping



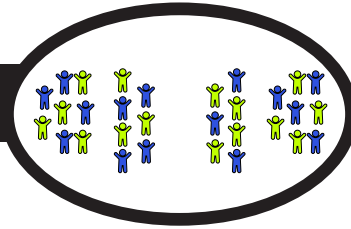
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

at least every quarter to provide  
opportunities in several positions  
including the interchange.

Every player must play a  
minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 15 BOYS

## HOW TO PLAY



130 x 100m  
(150 x 120m max)

### Number of players



(18 max per team)

match  
4x



**BREAKS**

(6, 10-15, 6 min)

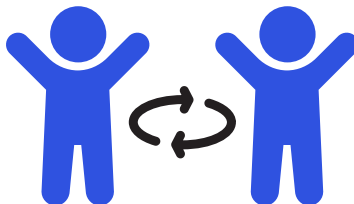


Stealing the ball



Full tackling and bumping

Fending off, smothering, or barging



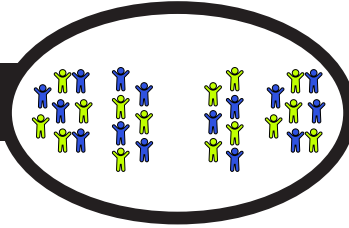
### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 15 GIRLS

## HOW TO PLAY



130 x 100m  
(150 x 120m max)

### Number of players



(16 max per team)



match  
4x



**BREAKS**

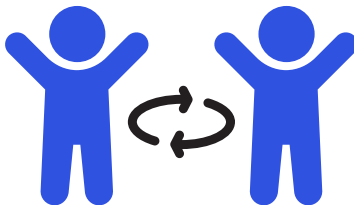
(6, 10-15, 6 min)

Stealing the ball



Full tackling and bumping

Fending off, smothering, or barging



## ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

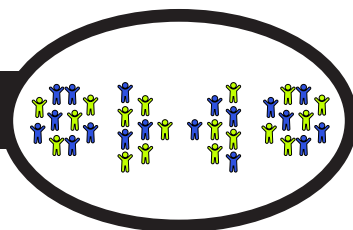
at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 16/17/18 BOYS

## HOW TO PLAY

### Number of players



match  
4x



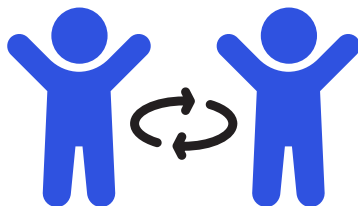
**BREAKS**  
(6, 10-15, 6 min)

Stealing the ball

Fending off, smothering, or barging



Full tackling and bumping



### ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

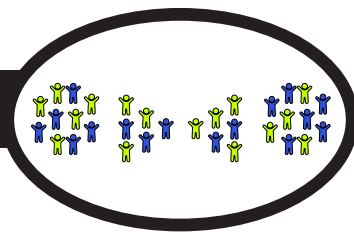
at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 16/17/18 GIRLS

## HOW TO PLAY

### Number of players



match  
4x



**BREAKS**  
(6, 10-15, 6 min)

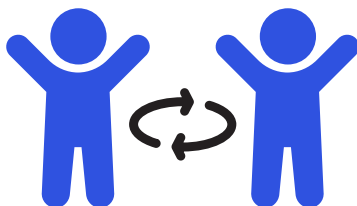


Stealing the ball

Fending off, smothering, or barging



Full tackling and bumping



## ROTATION OF PLAYERS TO OCCUR

at least every quarter to provide opportunities in several positions including the interchange.

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game

# UNDER 8

10  
MINS

x4



○ - SIZE 1  
○ - SYNTHETIC

**GROUND SIZE**  
70m x 50m  
(80 x 60m max)

✔ **ZONES**

👤 **6-A-SIDE (MAX 9)**

**SCORING**

No scores, ladders or finals

**RESULTS**

No recording of best players or goal kickers. No individual player awards.



- No tackling or holding of an opponent
- No pushing (fending off), bumping or barging another player
- No smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands
- No shepherding

**BOUNCING THE BALL**

No bouncing permitted

**KICKING OFF GROUND**

Not permitted

**PLAYER ROTATION**

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

**MARKING**

Any distance, reasonable attempt

✔ **MERCY RULE**

✔ **COACH ON GROUND**

# UNDER 9

12  
MINS

x4



○ - SIZE 2  
○ - SYNTHETIC

**GROUND SIZE**  
85 x 65m  
(100 x 80m max)

✔ **ZONES**

👤 **9-A-SIDE (MAX 12)**

**SCORING**

No scores, ladders or finals

**RESULTS**

No recording of best players or goal kickers. No individual player awards.



- Holding of an opponent
- No pushing (fending off), bumping or barging another player
- No smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands
- No shepherding

✔ **MODIFIED TACKLING**

**BOUNCING THE BALL**

1 max

**KICKING OFF GROUND**

Not permitted

**PLAYER ROTATION**

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

**MARKING**

Any distance, reasonable attempt

✔ **MERCY RULE**

✔ **COACH ON GROUND**

# UNDER 10



X4



- -- SIZE 2
- -- SYNTHETIC

## GROUND SIZE

85 x 65m  
(100 x 80m max)

## 🕒 ZONES

👤 12-A-SIDE (MAX 15)

## SCORING

No scores, ladders or finals

## RESULTS

No recording of best players or goal kickers. No individual player awards.



- Holding of an opponent
- No smothering, stealing the ball or knocking the ball from an opponent's hands
- No pushing (fending off), bumping or barging another player
- No shepherding

## 🕒 MODIFIED TACKLING

### BOUNCING THE BALL

1 max

### KICKING OFF GROUND

Not permitted

### PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

### MARKING

Any distance, reasonable attempt

## 🕒 MERCY RULE

## 🕒 COACH ON SIDELINES

# UNDER 11



X4



- -- SIZE 3
- -- SYNTHETIC OR LEATHER

## GROUND SIZE

115 x 75m  
(130 x 90m max)

## 🕒 ZONES

👤 12-A-SIDE (MAX 15)

## SCORING

No scores, ladders or finals

## RESULTS

No recording of best players or goal kickers. No individual player awards.



- Full tackling and bumping
- Fending off, smothering, or barging
- Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

1 max

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Not permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

10m, direct catch

## 🕒 MERCY RULE

## 🕒 COACH ON SIDELINES

# UNDER 12



x4

## GROUND SIZE

115 x 75m  
(130 x 90m max)



SIZE 3

SYNTHETIC  
OR LEATHER

## ZONES

12-A-SIDE (MAX 15)

## SCORING

Controlling Bodies Decision

## RESULTS

Controlling Bodies Decision



- Full tackling and bumping
- Fending off, smothering, or barging
- Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

1 max

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Not permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

10m, direct catch

✓ MERCY RULE

✓ COACH ON SIDELINES

# UNDER 13/14



x4

## GROUND SIZE

125 x 95m  
(140 x 110m max)



SIZE 4

LEATHER

## ZONES

15-A-SIDE

## SCORING

Controlling Bodies Decision

## RESULTS

Controlling Bodies Decision



- Full tackling and bumping
- Fending off, smothering, or barging
- Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

Unlimited

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

15m, direct catch

✓ MERCY RULE

✓ COACH ON SIDELINES





# UNDER 15 GIRLS

x4

## GROUND SIZE

130 x 100m  
(150 x 120m max)



- - SIZE 4
- - LEATHER

## ZONES

15-A-SIDE (MAX 16)

## SCORING

Controlling Bodies Decision

## RESULTS

Controlling Bodies Decision



# UNDER 15 BOYS

x4

## GROUND SIZE

130 x 100m  
(150 x 120m max)



- - SIZE 5
- - LEATHER

## ZONES

15-A-SIDE (MAX 18)

## SCORING

Controlling Bodies Decision

## RESULTS

Controlling Bodies Decision



- ▶ Full tackling and bumping
- ▶ Fending off, smothering, or barging
- ▶ Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

Unlimited

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

15m, direct catch

☉ MERCY RULE

☉ COACH ON SIDELINES



- ▶ Full tackling and bumping
- ▶ Fending off, smothering, or barging
- ▶ Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

Unlimited

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

15m, direct catch

☉ MERCY RULE

☉ COACH ON SIDELINES

# UNDER 16/17/18 GIRLS



x4

## GROUND SIZE

Full ground



○ - SIZE 4

○ - LEATHER

## ⊕ ZONES

## 👥 16-A-SIDE

## SCORING

Controlling Bodies Decision

## RESULTS

Controlling Bodies Decision



- Full tackling and bumping
- Fending off, smothering, or barging
- Stealing the ball

## BOUNCING THE BALL

Unlimited

## KICKING OFF GROUND

Permitted

## PLAYER ROTATION

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

## MARKING

15m, direct catch

## ⊕ MERCY RULE

## ⊕ COACH ON SIDELINES



x4

# UNDER 16/17/18 BOYS

**GROUND SIZE**  
Full ground



**ZONES**

**18-A-SIDE**

**SCORING**

Controlling Bodies Decision

**RESULTS**

Controlling Bodies Decision



- Full tackling and bumping
- Fending off, smothering, or barging
- Stealing the ball

**BOUNCING THE BALL**

Unlimited

**KICKING OFF GROUND**

Permitted

**PLAYER ROTATION**

Every player must play a minimum of 50-75% game time with the controlling body determining the exact % of game time per player (excluding injured players).

**MARKING**

15m, direct catch

**MERCY RULE**

**COACH ON SIDELINES**

# COACHING TIPS & RECOMMENDATIONS

UNDER 8S	AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 1		
		ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
	6	6	0	2-2-2
	7	6	1	2-2-2
	8	6	2	2-2-2
	9	6	3	2-2-2
	10	6	4	2-2-2
	11	7	4	2-3-2
	12	8	4	2-3-3
	13*	6	1	2-2-2
	14	6	1	2-2-2
	15	6	2	2-2-2
	16	6	2	2-2-2
	17	6	3	2-2-2
	18	9	0	3-3-3

UNDER 8S	AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 2		
		ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
	13*	6	0	2-2-2
	14	6	1	2-2-2
	15	6	1	2-2-2
	16	6	2	2-2-2
	17	6	2	2-2-2
	18	9	0	3-3-3

\*When a team reaches 13 players available, recommendation is to set up a second field to maximise participation.

UNDER 9S	AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 1		
		ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
	9	9	0	3-3-3
	10	9	1	3-3-3
	11	9	2	3-3-3
	12	9	3	3-3-3
	13	12	4	3-3-3
	14	12	2	4-4-4
	15	12	3	4-4-4
	16	12	4	4-4-4
	17*	9	0	3-3-3
	18*	9	0	3-3-3

UNDER 9S	AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 2		
		ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
	17*	8	0	2-3-2
	18*	9	0	3-3-3

\*When a team reaches 17 players available, recommendation is to set up a second field to maximise participation.

## UNDER 10S

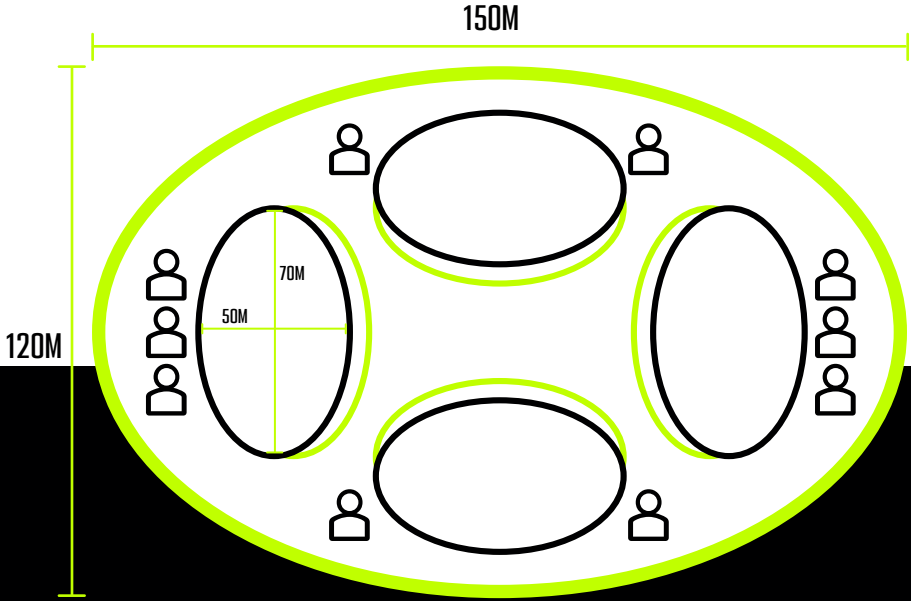
AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 1		
	ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
12	12	0	4-4-4
13	12	1	4-4-4
14	12	2	4-4-4
15	12	3	4-4-4
16	12	4	4-4-4
17	12	5	4-4-4
*18.	9	0	3-3-3
19	10	0	3-4-3
20	10	0	3-4-3
21	11	0	4-3-4
22	11	0	4-3-4
23	12	0	4-4-4
24	12	0	4-4-4

## UNDER 10S

AVAILABLE PLAYERS	FIELD 2		
	ON FIELD	BENCH	ZONES
*18.	9	0	3-3-3
19	9	0	3-3-3
20	10	0	3-4-3
21	10	0	3-4-3
22	11	6	4-3-4
23	11	6	4-3-4
24	12	6	4-4-4

\*When a team reaches 18 players available, recommendation is to set up a second field to maximise participation.

# FIELD OF PLAY ACCESS UNDER 8



Spectators to be based on the outer side of the field of play

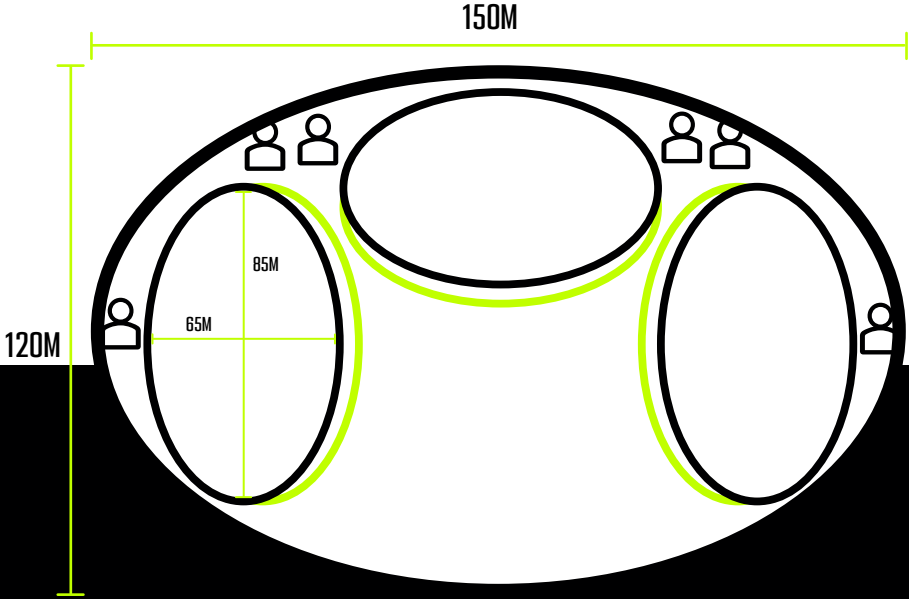


Field of Play



Team listed officials only

# FIELD OF PLAY ACCESS UNDER 9/10



Spectators to be based on the outer side of the field of play



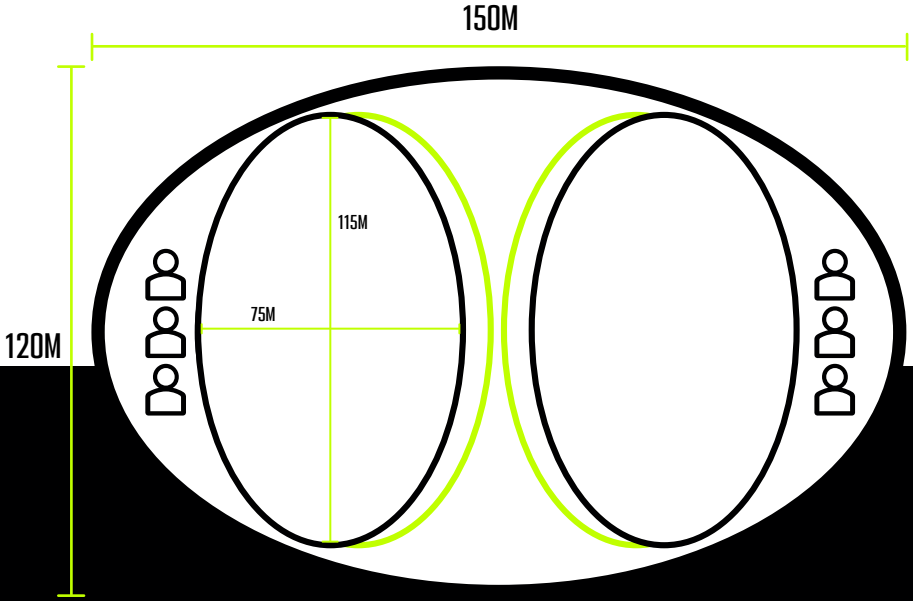
Field of Play



Team listed officials only



# FIELD OF PLAY ACCESS UNDER 11/12



Spectators to be based on the outer side of the field of play



Field of Play



Team listed officials only

<b>RULES</b>	<b>UNDER 8</b>	<b>UNDER 9</b>	<b>UNDER 10</b>	<b>UNDER 11</b>	<b>UNDER 12</b>
Ground Size	70 x 50m (80 x 60m max)	85 x 65m (100 x 80m max)	85 x 65m (100 x 80m max)	115 x 75m (130 x 90m max)	115 x 75m (130 x 90m)
Game Time	4 x 10min qtr	4 x 12min qtr	4 x 12min qtr	4 x 15min qtr	4 x 15min qtr
Break Times	5, 8, 5mins	5, 8, 5mins	5, 8, 5mins	5, 10, 5mins	5, 10, 5mins
Ball Size	1	2	2	3	3
Ball Type	Synthetic	Synthetic	Synthetic	Synthetic or Leather	Synthetic or Leather
Zones	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Team No's	6 (9 max)	9 (12 max)	12 (15max)	12 (15max)	12 (15max)
Marking	Any distance, reasonable attempt	Any distance, shows control	Any distance, shows control	10m, direct catch	10m, direct catch
Tackling	✗	Modified (Wrap Tackle only)	Modified (Wrap Tackle only)	✓	✓
Bumping, pushing, shepherding, smothering, stealing the ball	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓
Bounces	✗	1 max	1 max	1 max	1 max
Kicking off Ground	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Scoring	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Prem Points	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Ladders & Finals	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Publishing of Names	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
Rep Teams	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Coach on Ground	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Runner	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓
Season Length	10-14 games	10-14 games	10-14 games	10-14 games	12-16 games

<b>RULES</b>	<b>UNDER 13/14</b>	<b>UNDER 15 (BOYS)</b>	<b>UNDER 15 (GIRLS)</b>	<b>UNDER 16/17/18 (BOYS)</b>	<b>UNDER 16/17/18 (GIRLS)</b>
Ground Size	125 x 95m (140 x 110m max)	130 x 100m (150 x 120m max)	130 x 100m (150 x 120m max)	Full Ground	Full Ground
Game Time	4 x 15-20mins qtr	4 x 15-20mins qtr	4 x 15-20mins qtr	4 x 15-20mins qtr	4 x 15-20mins qtr
Break Times	6, 10-15, 6mins	6, 10-15, 6mins	6, 10-15, 6mins	6, 10-15, 6mins	6, 10-15, 6mins
Ball Size	4	5	4	5	4
Ball Type	Leather	Leather	Leather	Leather	Leather
Zones	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘
Team No's	15	15 (18 max)	15 (16 max)	18 max	16 max
Marking	15m, direct catch	15m, direct catch	15m, direct catch	15m, direct catch	15m, direct catch
Tackling	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bumping, pushing, shepherding, smothering, stealing the ball	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Bounces	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
Kicking off Ground	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Scoring	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Prem Points	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ladders & Finals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Publishing of Names	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rep Teams	State body decision	State body decision	State body decision	State body decision	State body decision
Coach on Ground	✘	✘	✘	✘	✘
Runner	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Season Length	20 games max	20 games max	20 games max	20 games max	20 games max



For further information please visit  
[www.play.afl/play/junior-football-rules](http://www.play.afl/play/junior-football-rules)

