

# School Sport SA Australian Football

## Statewide Schools Rules of the Competition

Updated June 2025

### General Rules Matrix

	Girls			Boys			
	Year 5/6	Year 7-9	Year 10-12	Year 5/6	Year 7/8	Year 9/10	Open
<b>Players on Ground</b>	12 a side (4,4,4)	16 a side (5,6,5)		16 a side (5, 6, 5)	18 a side		
<b>Match Squad</b>	16	20		20	22		
<b>Oval Size</b>	100m x 80m	Full Size		120m x 80m	Full Size		
<b>Match Length (single match)</b>	4 x 15min	4 x 17min		4 x 18min	4 x 20min		
<b>Breaks</b>	3, 5, 3	5, 8, 5		5, 8, 5			
<b>Ball</b>	Synthetic Size 3	Leather Size 4		Leather or Synthetic Size 3	Leather Size 4	Leather Full Size	
<b>Out of Bounds</b>	Last Possession (Kick or Handball) Out of Bounds free kick			Last Possession (Kick or Handball) Out of Bounds free kick			
<b>Coaching Position</b>	On field or Sidelines	Sidelines		Sidelines			
<b>Bounces</b>	1 Bounce	Unlimited		1 Bounce	Unlimited		
<b>Contact</b>	Tackling permitted as per Laws of Australian Football			Tackling permitted as per Laws of Australian Football			
<b>Stealing/ Smothering/ Shepherding/ Barging</b>	Permitted as per Laws of Australian Football			Permitted as per Laws of Australian Football			
<b>Marking</b>	A mark is awarded irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled, to any player who catches it or shows control.	Ball must travel 10m for it to be paid a 'mark'		A mark is awarded when a player catches the ball directly from another players' kick that has travelled at least 10m.	Ball must travel 15m for it to be paid a 'mark'		
<b>Kick off the Ground</b>	Not permitted unless accidental	Permitted		Not permitted unless accidental	Permitted		
<b>Penalties</b>	10m penalty applied at the umpire discretion	25m penalty applied at the umpire discretion		25m penalty applied at the umpire discretion			
	Players can be ordered off at the umpire's discretion						
<b>Starting Positions</b>	4,4,4	5,6,5		5,6,5	6,6,6		

### Recent Rule Changes

Please note the recent rule changes to come into these competitions in the last few years:

- No player is required to be in the goal square at restarts.
- Only 1 bounce is available in boys and girls Year 5/6 competition.
- Marking distances in the 5/6 competition have decreased in distance.
- No kicking off the ground is permitted in the Year 5/6 competition for boys or girls.



## Minor Round Format Options

Where possible, rounds of the Australian football competitions will see 3 teams grouped together so that each team will play against multiple opponents on the day. The benefits of this are:

- Teams will play more than one match, even if they are defeated in the first match of the day.
- More opportunity for development, coaching and analysis.
- Less days out of school, less travel and TRT costs.
- More time will be afforded to find a mutual date and organise rounds.

It is imperative that coaches of the teams agree to the format/timings prior to the day. The suggestions below can be modified during the organisational process, in agreement between participating schools, with consideration given to factors such as **year level, division and time available**.

### Three Team Match Ups

Possible format:

4 x 10-14 minute quarters, 3min quarter time, 5min half time, 20-40min between matches.

Round	Time	Teams
Round 1	10:00am	1 v 2
Round 2	11:30am	2 v 3
Round 3	1:00pm	1 v 3

The Home team usually to be team no. 1 and the team with the most distance to travel given the choice of the other two.

### Four Team Match Ups

On occasions, 4 teams will be grouped together. Teams must mutually decide upon an agreed format during the planning process.

Suggested formats:

When 2 ovals are available.

Option A – 2x 12-16 minute halves, 8min half time, 30-40min between matches.

Round	Time	Oval 1	Oval 2
Round 1	10:30am	1 v 2	3 v 4
Round 2	11:40am	3 v 1	2 v 4
Round 3	12:50pm	1 v 4	2 v 3

Option B (when there are time constraints) – 4x 10-14min quarters, 3min quarter time, 5min half time, 25-40min between matches. Teams seeded using previous year's placings.

Round	Time	Oval 1	Oval 2
Semi Finals	10:30am	1 v 4	2 v 3
Grand Final /Conso Final	12:00pm	Winning teams	Losing teams

When only 1 oval is available.

Option A – Semi-finals: 4 x 10-12min quarters, 3min quarter time, 5min half time, 15-25min between.

Round	Time	Teams
Semi Final 1	10:00am	1 v 2
Semi Final 2	11:15am	3 v 4
Consolation Final	12:30pm	Losing teams
Grand Final	1:45pm	Winning teams

Option B – Round robin: 4 x 8min quarters, 2min quarter time, 3min half time, 10min between matches.

Round	Time	Teams
Round 1	9:30am – 10:10am	2 v 1
Round 2	10:20am – 11:00am	3 v 4
Round 3	11:10am – 11:50am	4 v 2
Round 4	12:00pm – 12:40pm	1 v 3
Round 5	12:50pm – 1:30pm	2 v 3
Round 6	1:40pm – 2:20pm	4 v 1

## One Off and Finals Match Duration

Match durations for one-off matches and finals can be viewed in the General Rules Matrix at the beginning of this document.

## Team Composition

The number of players on the ground may be reduced to as low as 12-a-side in negotiation between competing teams to increase the space players have or if one school is unable to field the full complement of players. Competing teams may also agree, prior to competition, that teams both utilise an extended squad of up to 25 players.

### Extra Players on the Field

The field umpire shall at the request of either captain, stop the match and call the players into line for the purpose of counting them. If a team is detected as playing more than eighteen (18) players (or however many has been agreed prior to the match), all points scored by such team since the last break, shall be annulled. The offending team will also concede a free kick and 50m penalty. If a count is incorrectly called that team will concede a free kick and 50m penalty.

Note: this is the only occasion in which 'time-on' is to be added.

### Starting Positions

School Football matches should adhere to the implementation of a traditional set up at centre bounces – clubs must have six (five for Year 5/6 boys, four for 5/6 girls) players inside both 50-Metre arcs, with one player required to be inside the goal square. Four (three for Year 5/6 girls) midfield players are positioned inside the centre square with the wingmen required to be placed somewhere along the wing (no closer to either goal than the centre square line). Repeated failure to adhere to this shall result in a free kick to the opposition ruckman.

## Ball Size (Recommended)

Recommended ball sizes can be viewed in the General Rules Matrix at the beginning of this document. If both coaches agree this can be altered.

## Match Results

- All matches must be played out to a result. In the event of a tie at full time, teams should play 5 minutes each way with only a short break to swap ends. If the scores are still tied after both periods of extra time play continues until the next score (golden point). If time is an issue, and both teams have agreed prior to the start of play, the golden point system could be used immediately at the conclusion of regular time, with timekeepers being instructed that the siren is not to be sounded until the next score is made. Note: Timekeepers must consult both goal umpires at three quarter time or the score board if it is being used and then keep a record of the score during the last quarter.
- Both teams present (and all teams, when possible, in a 3-team match-up) should keep score to avoid disagreements and disputes.

## Determining Placings

In a round robin group, in the event of 2 or more teams being tied on premiership points, please refer to the [Determining Placings](#) process.

## Umpires

- For all matches in the rounds preceding the grand finals, both teams are to provide a competent boundary and goal umpire. The home team is to organise the field umpires. Player safety is paramount, and umpires should enforce dangerous tackling and high contact rules ultra-strictly.

## Umpire Guidelines:

- Field umpires must be suitably qualified and experienced to officiate the grade of the match,
- Field umpires should come from a neutral source,
- If using senior student field umpires, ensure that both teams supply one each and that they are suitably qualified and experienced for the grade of the match,
- Any players arguing with umpires' decisions should be removed by their own coach before the umpire has to send them off.

## Payment of Field Umpires – Minor Rounds.

It is usually the home team's responsibility to pay for the field umpire(s). This assumes that the visiting team has travel costs i.e., bus hire. Achieving some degree of equity in the cost of conducting the match is the aim of these arrangements. There is a suggested payment structure on the website.

School Sport SA will not make payment towards the cost of umpires for any minor round matches.

## First Aid

Qualified first aid providers must accompany each school at all school football matches as per the Department for Education camps and excursions policy and procedure. Competing schools should ensure these First Aid Providers are not occupied in other roles (such as coach or umpire), or, schools should engage an additional external sports trainer/s. Extra precautions and medical resources are advised for football matches, due to their highly physical nature.

## Runners and Water Runners

A maximum of 1 (one) runner and 3 (three) water runners may be used but must minimise their time on the ground.

## Disciplinary Matters

### Yellow Cards

- Misconduct - the player may be ordered off the field by the umpire for a specified period of time (recommended time equal to a quarter of play) and may be replaced by a reserve.

### Red Cards

- Serious offence - the player must be ordered off the field and shall not be replaced for the remainder of the day.

**Note:** If a red card is issued the competition convenor must be notified as soon as possible so this information can be forwarded on to the SANFL.

## Reports and Tribunal

- School Principals are to deal with matters relating to the discipline of their students (both on and off the field).
- In the event of a player(s) being reported, the team manager or coach must:
  - a. Keep the Player Report Form for reference and make record of the facts on the space provided on the official results sheet,
  - b. Refer the matter to the Principal, who shall refer to the SANFL and School Sport SA disciplinary documents for guidelines,
  - c. In more serious cases the school Principal, or representative, shall form an experienced tribunal panel and hold a tribunal with the reported player and their counsel/advocate, as soon as practically possible,
  - d. Promptly inform the School Sport Officer organising the competition of the outcome with the relevant supporting documentation.

## Cross Competition Sanctions

- Players who have been red carded or reported and resultantly suspended must serve the equal sentence in any competition affiliated with the SANFL, subject to SANFL determination.

Refer to the SANFL and School Sport SA cross-competition sanctions (on the [School Sport SA website](#)) for explanation, procedures and documentation.

## Additional Rules

- School Sport SA has a local rule that applies to all competitions which involves the player who swears, racial vilifies or fights being sent off.
- If nails are longer than the end of the finger (whether real or false) they must be either trimmed or covered with band aids or similar.
- Any jewelry must be removed before playing.
- All goal and behind posts must be suitably padded to a height which can be reasonably expected to prevent injury. Field umpires shall not allow games to proceed unless this rule is complied with. Portable posts are to be erected in such a manner as can be reasonably expected to prevent injury.

## Administration Papers

The following forms should be taken to games and can be found on the website - please photocopy enough for each match.

- a. Team sheet – these must be accurately recorded and signed by the sports coordinator before the start of each match. The opposition and umpires may request a copy. After the match these sheets are to be kept at the school in case of a dispute.
- b. Score sheet
- c. Results sheet
- d. Player report forms

## Managing Players

There will be situations where students are also playing at an SANFL club.

- Based on the lengthy discussions that occurred between the various parties, it is strongly advised that these points are followed:
  - The school must identify players who are in this position as early as possible.
  - Dialogue between the school, player(s) and the SANFL club(s) must begin as early as possible and continue regularly so that all parties can discuss/negotiate the situation.
  - As often as possible, arrange to play school matches early in the week to allow plenty of time for players to recover for their club game. The preferred day from the club's perspective is generally Tuesday, second preference is Wednesday and the third is Monday.