

School Sport SA

Sapsasa Australian Football State Carnival

2025 rules and match conditions

Current as of April 2025.

Teams

Boys

Teams shall consist of 20 players with 16 on the field – 5 forwards, 5 defenders and 6 midfielders, including 2 wings and a ruck.

Girls

Teams shall consist of 15-16 players with 12 on the field – 4 forwards, 4 defenders and 4 midfielders including a ruck.

Should a team be reduced to less than a full compliment through injury or illness, their opponents should similarly reduce the size of their teams, or give player/s to the other team to ensure on-field numbers remain equal.

Game time

Matches must start and finish as close to the allocated time as possible. During the break only team officials and players shall be permitted on the ground.

Starting (and restarting) of play

The game shall be started by a ball-up between two players in the centre of the ground*.

Any two players may contest the ball-up.

A player may not grab the ball at ball-ups and play on. They must knock, palm or punch the ball to a team mate or open ground, and may not play the ball again until it has either been touched by another player or hits the ground (full possession rule).

*unless the mercy rule has been enacted (see 'Mercy Rule').

Boys

No more than 4 players from each team shall be within the centre square (approx. 20m), with 1 on each wing. 5 players must be on the defensive side of the square and another 5 on the attacking side of the square, with at least 1 player from each team in each goal square.

Girls

No more than 4 players from each team shall be within the centre square (approx. 20m). 4 players must be on the defensive side of the square and another 4 on the attacking side of the square, with at least 1 player from each team in each goal square.

Kicking in from a behind

A player may leave the goal square without kicking to themselves.

The player on the mark must be 10m back from the top of the goal square.

Ball up

Where a scrum develops the umpire shall stop play and call a ball-up.

Full possession at the ball-up is not permitted.

Each team should have a player attempt the ruck contest. If an umpire determines a player is deliberately not attempting a ruck contest they may pay a free kick against them.

Out of bounds

When the ball goes out of bounds from a kick or handball, a free kick in shall be awarded to the nearest opponent.

If there is doubt as to which team kicked the ball out of bounds, the umpire shall throw the ball up 5 metres in from the boundary.

When the ball goes out of bounds off hands or body, the umpire shall call a ball-up 5 metres in from the boundary.

Full possession at the ball-up is not permitted.

Tackling

Normal age-appropriate tackling rules apply. No sling or over-aggressive tackles permitted. If the umpire deems a tackle to be dangerous or overly aggressive a free kick will be awarded. If a player repeatedly lays dangerous tackles they may be asked to leave the ground, coaches/managers will be asked to speak to the player before they return to the field.

Mark

Any player catching a ball directly from the kick of another player provided the ball has travelled at least 10 metres shall be awarded a mark.

Bouncing the ball

A player in possession may bounce the ball only once. They must then dispose of it by hand or foot and may not touch the ball again until it has been touched by another player.

Kicking off the ground

A player is not permitted to deliberately kick the ball off the ground.

Advancement Penalty

Umpires shall award a 25m penalty if a team who already has a free kick or mark is further impeded by their opposition.

Mercy Rule

Once a team gets to a lead of 60 or more points, after each goal – regardless which team has scored it – the trailing team shall restart play with a free kick from the centre circle. This shall continue for the remainder of the match, regardless of the score. Scorers will be required to monitor the margin and notify the field umpires when the lead reaches 60 points. Scores will continue to be kept as per normal after the mercy rule has come into effect.

Behaviour

Managers and coaches are responsible for the behaviour of their players on and off the field from the start of the first game to the conclusion of the last.

Order-off rule

Players whom the umpires consider to be guilty of foul play or bad language are to be sent off for a period of 10 minutes. The player may be replaced. If the player is sent off again, they will remain off for the remainder of the game or another 10 minutes, whichever is greater.

Shaking hands

Shaking hands after each match is encouraged subject to current health advice.

Staying in position

To stop congestion or where the integrity of the game is threatened, players can be instructed by the umpire to return to their starting positions.

Coaches and Runners

Coaches are not permitted on the ground during the course of a game and are only permitted to use one adult runner or trainer on the ground at any one time. Use of a runners should be minimal and only to deliver essential messages / hydration.

Injury

In the event of serious injury, the umpire will stop the game and only authorised persons are to enter the playing area. Time would continue to run.

Premiership Points

Three (3) for a win, two (2) for a draw, one (1) for a loss and zero (0) if a game is forfeited.

Goal posts

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.

Umpires

1 umpire per match will be appointed where possible. Should an umpire not be able to be allocated or not arrive, both teams shall provide an umpire each. Each team is to provide a goal umpire. Goal umpires should be adults.

Timekeeping

Each team is to provide a designated Timekeeper for every match. This timekeeper should keep time with the timekeeper from the opposing team for each match. Timekeepers should stick to times stated on the draw.

Equipment

One match ball will be provided to each district. The football is synthetic Sherrin size 3. Teams are to supply:

- goal flags,
- timer,
- horn/siren/bell and
- balls for warm-up.

Team Officials

Teams must be accompanied by the following officials:

- coach,
- team manager,
- Side line official,
- back-up field umpire,
- goal umpire,
- timekeeper.

A runner is optional.

Ovals

The oval size is approximately 105m x 60m.