

SCHOOL SPORT AUSTRALIA

Boys 12 Years & Under and Girls 12 Years & Under Australian Football Championships

RULES AND GUIDELINES

Section A – Championship Overview

- A - 1.** These Rules and Guidelines should be read in conjunction with the School Sport Australia (SSA) Policies, Championship Protocols and the Sport Championship Organisational Manual.
- A - 2.** The Championships shall be conducted according to the Laws of Australian Football, as published by the Australian Football League from time to time unless specifically stated in these Rules and Guidelines.
- A - 3.** The Championships shall be conducted in accordance with a current Memorandum of Understanding between School Sport Australia and the Australian Football League.

A - 4. Championship Length

The Championships will normally run for seven (7) days with teams arriving on the day prior to the Championships beginning.

A - 5. Eligibility

For both the boys and girls Championships, qualifications for selection in teams to compete in this component of the Championships shall be 12 Years & Under as at 31 December of the year in which the Championship is held. Students must be at least 10 years old when attending the championship.

A - 6. Age Dispensation

Age Dispensation is not granted to any SSA member body for these Championships.

A - 7. Team Size

All teams may consist of up to twenty (20) players. All players shall be eligible to compete in each match.

Amended November 2025

A - 8. Attendance at Championships

All students who participate in the School Sport Australia Australian Football Championships must remain in the host member body throughout the duration of the Championships and be bound by all Championship arrangements, except in exceptional circumstances as per School Sport Australia policy.

Section B – Competition Structure

B - 1. Program / Schedule

The Championships will normally run from Sunday to Saturday with teams arriving on the Saturday prior to the beginning of the Championships.

B - 2. Draw

B - 2.1 All Championships are to be conducted as a round robin series.

Amended November 2025

B - 2.2 Draft Draw

At least twelve (12) weeks prior to the commencement of the Championships the Championship Convener shall submit to all States/Territories a tentative program of matches. Any State/Territory wishing to submit an alteration to the tentative program of matches must do so within two (2) weeks of receiving it. Any amendment to the program shall be circularised as early as possible to all States/Territories.

B - 3. Duration of Matches

B - 3.1

B - 3.1.1 In all matches there will be four (4) fifteen-minute quarters with a five (5) minute break at quarter and three-quarter time and a ten (10) minute break at half time.

Amended November 2025

B - 3.1.2 In all matches there will be no 'time on' added (except for the Blood Rule, serious injury that stops play, stretchers and send off).

Amended December 2022

B - 3.2 Seven Team or Less match formats

If there are less than eight teams participating then the game times will be four (4) fifteen minute quarters with a five (5) minute break at quarter and three quarter time plus a ten (10) minute break at half time.

Amended December 2022

B - 4. Game Protocols / Specific Rules

B - 4.1 Coaching

In the spirit of the game and in order to promote the development of the game, tactics such as 'tagging', 'flooding' and dropping players behind the ball are discouraged.

B - 4.2 Even Up Rule

In the spirit of the game and player welfare, if a team is unable to field a full team due to injury and/or illness, then both teams will start with an even number of players.

Added October 2019

B - 4.3 Order-Off Rule

B - 4.3.1 The umpire(s) in charge of a match may order a player from the field for a period of fifteen (15) minutes of actual playing time by use of a yellow card for:

B - 4.3.1.1 verbal harassment,

B - 4.3.1.2 abusive language,

B - 4.3.1.3 other unseemly conduct detrimental to the game

B - 4.3.1.4 any reportable offence according to the 'Laws of Australian Football'.

B - 4.3.2 Such player must report to the interchange bench on leaving the field and before returning. The player will be in the control of the team manager while off the field of play.

Updated Sept 2023

B - 4.3.3 The player sent off may be replaced by an interchange player. When this occurs, the umpire must show the card to the Interchange bench and call time off. Time on shall be signaled when the replacement player is in position.

Updated Sept 2023

B - 4.3.4 It shall be left to the discretion of the umpire whether the player sent off is reported.

B - 4.3.5 For a second offence during the game the player must be sent off for the remainder of the match, shown a red card and be reported. The player may be replaced by an interchange player.

B - 4.3.6 The field umpire(s) may send off a player for the remainder of the match if, in his/her opinion that player constitutes a menace to the physical well being of other players. Such a player must be shown a red card, reported and may be replaced by an interchange player.

B - 4.3.7 The field umpire(s) shall report a player by notifying the National Australian Football Advisor or the Championship Convenor within an hour of the completion of the game.

B - 4.4 Interchange Rule

B - 4.4.1 Both Championships

Any State / Territory may name up to twenty (20) players for any game, of which only 15 may be on the field at any one time.

Amended November 2025

B - 4.4.2 Interchange Area

The ongoing interchange player must enter the playing arena through the defined area. The player leaving the field must leave through the defined area. Failure to do this will mean that the player cannot return to the game. There is no limit on interchanges.

B - 4.5 Stretcher / Carry Off Rule

Any player who is injured during a match and who, in the opinion of a Doctor, Trainer or Official, requires the assistance of a stretcher, shall be attended by the Team's training staff and either carried off or on a stretcher as soon as possible to ensure the health and safety of the player. The normal process of notifying the umpire will occur and the player shall remain off the field for a period of 20 minutes

B - 4.6 Penalties

B - 4.6.1 Boys – Championship: 25 Metre Penalty

A 25 metre penalty will be awarded rather than the 50 metre penalty for the 12 Years & Under Boys Championship.

B - 4.6.2 Girls Championship – 25 Metre Penalty

A 25 metre penalty will be awarded rather than the 50 metre penalty for the 12 Years & Under Girls Championship.

Amended December 2021

B - 4.7 Wet Weather

B - 4.7.1 Decision on wet weather day to be determined by the National Australian Football Advisor or the Championship Convenor in consultation with participating team managers and officiating umpires.

B - 4.7.2 Should wet weather interfere in the Championships, then the State / Territory leading the competition shall be declared the winner. If two or more States/Territories are leading the competition they shall be declared joint winners.

B - 4.8 Girls Championship – Specific Rules

B - 4.8.1 Directly out of bounds by hand or foot, between the arcs.

Kicks or handballs that go out of bounds without being touched by another player result in a "lasso" free kick for the nearest opponent.

B - 4.8.2 Throw ins.

Where a throw in is called for by a field umpire, the boundary umpire will come ten metres inbounds towards the centre before throwing the ball into play.

Added December 2021 Former rules B4.8 removed December 2021

B - 4.9 Specific Rules- 5-5-5 rule

When setting up for a Centre Bounce or Throw-up, at the beginning of a quarter or after a goal, each team must have 5 players in both the forward and defensive arcs. Both teams will have two wingers on either side of the centre square, a ruck positioned within the ten-meter circle on their defensive side and two players contesting the stoppage within the centre square.

Added November 2025

B - 4.10 Specific Rules- Player or Crowd Dissent rule

If field umpires identify dissent arising from a decision or non-decision, they have the authority to award a free kick. This can be either;

- At the location of the ball (in the case of crowd dissent), or
- At the spot where the player committed the dissent, whichever results in the greater penalty.

If a free kick has already been awarded a 25 m penalty may be awarded in addition.

Added November 2025

B - 5. Points Allocation

For all competition three (3) points shall be awarded for a win, and two (2) for a tie and one (1) for a loss.

B - 6. Method of Determining a Winner

At the completion of the competition, where two or more teams finish on equal points, joint winners will be declared and percentages will not be used to determine outright winners.

Former rules 2.3.1, 2.3.2 and 2.3.3 removed October 2018

Section C – Facilities / Equipment

C - 1 . Field Size

C - 1.1 Both Championships

All games to be played on a 130m x 100m ovals. Temporary goalposts must be of a different colour from the permanent posts that they are placed in front of.

Amended November 2025

C - 2 . Match Equipment

C - 2.1 All match balls to be supplied by the host School Sport Australia member body.

Amended September 2016

C - 2.2 Ball Type

C - 2.2.1 All 12 Years & Under Boys games to use a size 3 leather ball unless the National Australian Football Advisor decides a synthetic ball would be better.

C - 2.2.2 All 12 Years & Under Girls games to use a size 3 leather ball unless the National Australian Football Advisor decides a synthetic ball would be better.

Amended December 2021

C - 2.2.3 Team Officials Area

All Coaches & Team Officials shall stand a minimum distance of at least 1.5 metres from the boundary.

C - 3 . General

C - 3.1 Team lists

The Team Manager is to submit one team list, in writing to the Umpires/Ground Manager prior to the commencement of the game. Team lists will be provided by the Host State/Territory.

Updated Sept 2023

C - 3.2 Water Bottles

Team Management must ensure that each player has an individual water bottle for use by the player before, during and after the game.

C - 3.3 Spare Footballs

Spare footballs are kept at each end behind the goals during games.

Section D – Uniform

D - 1 .Jumper Numbers

D - 1.1 Boys Championship

Teams may allocate jumper numbers from one (1) to twenty eight (28) with numbers of contrasting colours.

Amended April 2018

D - 1.2 Girls Championship

Teams may allocate jumper numbers from one (1) to twenty eight (28) with numbers of contrasting colours.

Amended December 2021

D - 2 .State and Territory Uniform colours:

Australian Capital Territory	- Royal Blue and Gold
New South Wales	- Navy Blue and Sky Blue
Northern Territory	- Ochre, Black and White
Queensland	- Maroon and White
South Australia	- Red, Gold and Navy
Tasmania	- Red, Bottle Green and Yellow

Victoria	- Navy and White Vee
Western Australia	- Gold and Black

- D - 3 .** States/Territories must notify the National Australian Football Advisor of any changes to uniform at least twelve (12) weeks prior to the commencement of the Championships for endorsement and circulation to competing States / Territories.

Section E – Injury Management

- E - 1.** Refer to School Sport Australia Championship Protocols and Policy for the management of injuries. This policy will override any sport specific injury management Protocols. [School-Sport-Australia-Injury-Management-Policy.pdf \(schoolsportaustralia.edu.au\)](https://schoolsportaustralia.edu.au/School-Sport-Australia-Injury-Management-Policy.pdf)

New Policy Dec

2023

- E - 2.** If medical treatment by a doctor or other external medical professional is required for a player, the National Sport Advisor must be advised. Prior to their next match, a medical clearance must be provided to the NSA to allow that student to play.

New clause Sept 2023

Section F – Officials

F - 1. Match Officials

F - 1.1 Ground Officials

F - 1.1.1 Two official timekeepers shall be appointed by the Host State/Territory to act in concert for all matches.

F - 1.1.2 A Ground Manager should be appointed for each game. Updated Sept 2023

F - 1.1.3 A Sports Medicine person be supplied at each field by the Host State, provided within the budget.

F - 1.2 Umpire / Student Officials

F - 1.2.1 Each participating Team should bring a field and a goal and a boundary umpire who are current Secondary students. Preference should be given to Secondary school students holding or gaining Level 1 accreditation. Where this is not possible the State/Territory must notify the host State/Territory and the National Australian Football Advisor one (1) month prior to the Championships. Student Officials will be supplied with one full Umpiring uniform for the Championships and provided with lunch when officiating.

F - 1.2.2 The Host State/Territory is responsible for appointing a suitably qualified Umpires Coordinator and evaluator. The Umpires Coordinator must attend the Pre-Championships meeting which will discuss rules and players/coaches codes of conduct. Should the Umpire's Coordinator not be available to attend the Pre-Championships meeting, then a written statement containing rules and expectations shall be produced by the Coaches/Managers/Championship Organisers at the Pre-

Championships meeting and this is to be given to all officiating umpires prior to the commencement of the competition.

F - 1.2.3 The Host State/Territory will appoint a teacher as the Umpire Supervisor to the Championships in addition to the Umpire Coordinator. Funding for this position will come from the Championship budget.

F - 1.2.4 Where possible neutral field umpires be appointed to pool and round robin games.

F - 1.2.5 Before all games field umpires should introduce themselves to both coaches, shake hands and briefly address the teams. Umpires will check for safety of all boots at the beginning of each game. Gloves and jewelry are not permitted.

F - 1.2.6 Competent boundary and goal umpires shall be appointed. If such umpires are not accredited, they should receive training for their duties.

F - 1.2.7 In addition to goal umpires, a neutral scorer shall be appointed.

F - 1.2.8 Interpretation or clarification of rules should be requested by the team manager through the Umpires Coordinator following the completion of matches.

F - 2. Team Officials

F - 2.1 Coaches

F - 2.2 A Runner

Coaches of playing teams will be restricted to occupying the Coach's bench during playing times, except in the case of a serious injury. A designated team official, other than the coach, will be allowed on the field to attend injury and to act as a runner. The designated team runner should be an adult and must wear an official uniform supplied and maintained by the participating State or Territory. The uniform is to adhere to the colour and design as stipulated by the National Australian Football Advisor.

Amended October 2017

F - 2.3 Sports Trainer

Each participating team is encouraged to provide a qualified Sports Trainer as part of their Team Management.

F - 2.4 Water Carriers

Each team shall be entitled to use three (3) water carriers. Each water carrier must be clearly identified, must not engage in coaching of individuals in teams whilst on the field of play, must avoid areas of actual play and must not remain on the field for extended periods of time. The water carriers are to wear an official uniform supplied and maintained by the participating State or Territory. The uniform is to adhere to the colour and design as stipulated by the National Australian Football Advisor.

Section G – Protests

- G - 1.** In the event of a protest concerning any match played during the Championships, such protest in writing must be lodged with the National Australian Football Advisor or the Championships Convenor, within two (2) hours following the completion of the match concerned.
- G - 2.** A copy of the protest must also be lodged with one of the managers of the team protested against within the same period.
- G - 3.** The protest shall be adjudicated by a Protests and Disputes Committee consisting of one (1) delegate from each State/Territory competing in the Championships, but excluding the delegates of the States/Territories concerned in the dispute.
- G - 4.** The President of the host State/Territory member body or his/her nominee, shall be chairperson, and shall have a casting vote only. The National Australian Football Advisor shall summon a meeting of the Protests and Disputes Committee as soon as possible after the receipt of the protest.
- G - 5.** No appeal shall be made to any outside organisation, and the decision of the Protests and Disputes Committee shall be final.

Section H – Tribunal / Judiciary

- H - 1.** The National Australian Football Advisor, in consultation with the Executive of the State/Territory conducting the Championships, shall submit to the Pre-Championships meeting, for approval, its proposal for the constitution of the Match Review Officer (MRO) and Tribunal to arbitrate in cases of players being reported for field offences. Reports shall be dealt with by MRO investigation as soon as possible, in the presence of the umpire(s) that made the report. The MRO shall have the power to investigate and impose a suspension of one or more games on any player found guilty, by following the current AFL MRO Matrix.

The above change reflects not only the best practice Australia wide, the MRO model allows for team officials to launch investigations if they have grounds. The MRO model also reduces stress for players and umpires, by not having to front a full tribunal process with twelve people involved.

Amended November 2025

Section I – Trophies / Awards / Medals

I - 1. The Alex Howe Trophy

The Alex Howe Trophy, which shall be held by the winning State / Territory for twelve (12) months. The name of the winning team is to be engraved on the Trophy at the expense of the winning State / Territory. It shall be the responsibility of this State /

Territory to see that the Trophy is with the National Australian Football Advisor in time for presentation to the winner of the succeeding Championship.

I - 2. The 12's Girls Trophy

The 12's Girls Trophy, which shall be held by the winning State / Territory for twelve (12) months. The name of the winning team is to be engraved on the Trophy at the expense of the winning State / Territory. It shall be the responsibility of this State / Territory to see that the Trophy is with the National Australian Football Advisor in time for presentation to the winner of the succeeding Championship.

Added December 2021

I - 3. The R.G. Newman Shield

The Richard G. Newman Shield recognises one Boys Team, which extols the virtues which Richard upheld throughout his long association with the School Sport Australia Australian Football 12 Years & Under Championship. The team will include the twenty three (23) players and the designated Team Officials. The Shield will be presented at the Closing Ceremony and appropriate pins/medallions will be given to each member of the winning team. The cost will need to be included in the budget.

The successful team will be judged on the following criteria:

- The team which demonstrates outstanding ambassadorial aptitudes for their State/Territory and the game during the Championships on and off the field.
- Demonstrated exemplary Sportsmanship by team members.
- A recognised team commitment by all to all-working as a team.
- An inclusive attitude to all educational and sporting components of the Championship.
- An ability to have fun.

The following areas are provided as a guide to the selection panel in determining the successful Team: Functions; Team presentation; Game conduct and general behaviour.

The award will be judged by a selection panel consisting of the Championship Convenor, the Championship Umpires Coordinator and chaired by the National Australian Football Advisor.

I - 4. The Donna Mitcham Fairplay Trophy

The Donna Mitcham Fairplay Trophy recognises one girls Team, which extols the virtues which Donna upheld throughout her long association with the School Sport Australia, Australian Football 12 Years & Under Championship. The team will include the twenty three (23) players and the designated Team Officials. The Trophy will be presented at the Closing Ceremony and appropriate pins/medallions will be given to each member of the winning team. The cost will need to be included in the budget.

The successful team will be judged on the following criteria:

- The team which demonstrates outstanding ambassadorial aptitudes for their State/Territory and the game during the Championships on and off the field.
- Demonstrated exemplary Sportsmanship by team members.
- A recognised team commitment by all to all-working as a team.
- An inclusive attitude to all educational and sporting components of the Championship.
- An ability to have fun.

The following areas are provided as a guide to the selection panel in determining the successful Team: Functions; Team presentation; Game conduct and general behaviour.

The award will be judged by a selection panel consisting of the Championship Convenor, the Championship Umpires Coordinator and chaired by the National Australian Football Advisor.

Updated September 2022

Section J – Rule Guideline: Equitable Game Time for Players in Team Sports

- J-1:** To ensure fair participation and development opportunities for all players, team guidelines should be implemented to ensure equitable game time in team sports competitions.

Added November 2025