

## **AFL 9s**

### **RULES + REGULATIONS**

---

#### **INTRODUCTION**

AFL 9s is the Australian Football League's official alternative version of the game. It has been developed to provide all Australian Football enthusiasts, as well as those new to the game, with a match-play experience that has strong parallels with the traditional game. Importantly, AFL 9s is easy to play, not too physically demanding and provides an environment whereby participation, enjoyment and safety are a priority. AFL 9s has many applications in the community, particularly in school and social environments. Fundamentally, AFL 9s enables people of all ages and ability levels to participate in male, female or mixed competitions that fit around their busy lives and provide a social and fitness outlet. The game is played between two teams of nine (9) with interchange players. The field has a recommended length of 100 metres (which can be modified depending on the age and ability level of participants) and is divided into three zones, a mid zone and two scoring zones. Teams score by kicking the football into their attacking scoring zone to designated forwards who are the only players permitted to score. A mark is awarded irrespective of the distance the ball has travelled and if the ball hits the ground it is an automatic turnover.

---

#### **THE PLAYING GROUND**

The recommended playing field measures a maximum of 100 x 50 metres and is divided into three zones. The zones are advised to be set as 30m/40m/30m. Note: Alternative fields (indoor & beach) can utilise different field measurements as suitable for the competition played and appropriate for the skill level, availability of space and players on the field. Where field size is below recommended it is to the discretion of the Competition Manager to reduce team size.

---

#### **THE TEAM & ZONES**

- Nine (9) players to take the field at any one time with unlimited interchange players.
- Interchange of players may take place at any time, and be unlimited in number.
- Teams consist of three backs, three centres and three forwards.
- **Players must be in their zones at the start of each half and after a goal has been scored. Once the game is in progress, players can move freely across all three zones.**
- In mixed competitions there must be a minimum of three players of each gender on the ground at all times, unless an alternative is agreed to by the opposition captain.

---

## THE BALL

An AFL 9s football is recommended to be used. This ball has been specially designed to make it easy to handle for recreational participants and limit the kicking length due to the ground size.

- If an AFL 9s ball is not available, a synthetic ball is suitable.
- Competitions can use leather footballs if they feel it is appropriate for the players involved.

---

## DURATION OF THE GAME

The game will consist of 2 x 20 minute halves with no time on. The half-time interval will be five minutes in duration. The Competition Manager may vary the duration of the match and intervals as needed.

---

## START OF PLAY

- Choice of Goal/End – The umpire shall toss a coin. Before the toss the away or first named team captain shall call “the fall of the coin”. The captain of the team who wins the toss shall choose the end to which their team kicks.
- The game shall be started by a ball-up between two centre line players in the centre of the ground; players must stand toe-to-toe in the ball-up (no run-up or raised knees allowed).
- The two competing players in the ball-up cannot grab the ball or take possession of it until it has been touched by one of the centre players not involved in the ball-up.
- The centre players not involved in the ball-up must start on the defensive side of the ruckmen and not be within two metres of the ball-up. They may play the ball if the ball hits the ground.

---

## GAINING POSSESSION OF THE BALL

- A player make take possession of the ball if the ball is not possessed by another player i.e. the ball is loose on the ground.
- A ‘turnover’ occurs if the ball goes out of bounds or a free kick is awarded.

- If a turnover occurs, the game stops and the opposing team gains possession of the ball from where the ball comes to rest or is first touched following making contact with the ground, or at the point that it went out of bounds.
- Players may attempt to intercept the ball in flight. However, they must not make contact with an opposing player.
- An opposing player is not permitted to touch a player unless the player is in possession of the ball.

---

## **POSSESSION**

A player may stay in possession of the ball for a maximum distance involving one bounce (30m) unless:

- The player is touched (either one or two-handed depending on specific competition regulations).
- The player is directed to dispose of the football by the umpire.

---

## **DISPOSSESSING THE PLAYER IN POSSESSION**

When a player in possession of the ball is touched (either one or two-handed depending on specific competition regulations) by an opponent but deemed to have had 'no prior opportunity' to dispose of the ball, the umpire will call 'touch' and the player must kick or handpass within two steps or two seconds. Failure to do so will result in a free kick being awarded to the opposing team. The umpire will count out aloud so that the player in possession is aware of the time allocated to dispose of the ball. When a player in possession of the ball is deemed to have had 'prior opportunity' to dispose of it when touched by an opposing player (either one or two-handed depending on specific competition regulations), the umpire will award a free kick to the opposing team.

---

## **BOUNCING THE BALL**

When a player is moving while in possession of the ball he/she must bounce the ball or touch it on the ground after 15 metres. A player in possession may bounce the ball only once. He/she must dispose of it by hand or foot and may not touch it again until it has been touched by another player.

---

## **DISPOSAL OF THE BALL**

The ball must be disposed of by a handball or kick (as per the Laws of Australian Football). Players are not permitted to throw or hand the ball to another player or a free kick will be awarded to the opposing player. If a deliberate attempt to handball or kick the ball into an opposing player occurs to retain possession of the ball, a free kick will be awarded to the opposing team. In any case where the umpires are unsure if this has occurred deliberately, a ball-up will ensue.

---

## **MARK**

- A 'mark' is awarded if, in the opinion of the umpire, a player catches or takes control of the football after it has been kicked by another player irrespective of the distance travelled.
- It is not a mark if the ball touches the ground or has been touched by another player during the period when the ball was kicked until it was caught or controlled by the player.
- When a player is awarded a mark or free kick an opposing player may stand at the position on the playing surface where the mark or free kick was awarded, known as 'the mark'.
- The player awarded the mark or free kick must only play on from behind the point of 'the mark' except if the field umpire plays the advantage in a free kick situation.
- No player (except for the player on the mark) may be closer than two metres away in any direction.
- There is to be absolutely no contact in a marking contest. The player in the front position has every opportunity to mark the ball, and the umpire may nominate which player has right-of-way to attempt a mark. A free kick will be awarded against any player initiating contact.

The player taking the mark will have a reasonable opportunity to dispose of the ball or play on. If he/she delays, the umpire will place a five-second count for play to resume.

---

## **PLAYING ON**

The umpire shall call "play on" in the following:

- When a player after taking a mark runs around or over the spot 'the mark' where he/she caught the ball.

- When a player after a turnover has occurred runs around or over the spot 'the mark' where the ball made contact with the ground and resulted in a turnover.
- The ball after being kicked has been touched in transit.

---

## PLAYING THE ADVANTAGE

The field umpire, instead of awarding a free kick, may allow play to continue by calling "Advantage, play on" in the case that the individual player in possession of the ball initiates the advantage.

---

## SCORING

Anyone can kick for goal within their scoring zone. This can be during general play by receiving a kick or handball, or upon marking the ball and taking a set shot for goal. The player kicking for goal must be inside the scoring zone. The field umpire will be the sole judge of whether the kick for goal was successful. Anyone may kick for goal from a free kick (initiating contact, 'holding-the-ball' etc.), but not from a turnover (ball going out-of-bounds). A goal or behind is scored if the ball touches the ground and bounces through, provided that it is kicked by a designated forward and has not been touched between making contact with the ground and passing through the goals. Scoring is as per the Laws of Australian Football. However, in mixed competitions, a goal scored by a female forward is worth nine points.

---

## BALL TRANSITION

The ball cannot be kicked or handballed from the back zone directly into the forward zone. If this occurs, a free kick will be awarded to the opposing team at the point in which the ball entered the scoring zone.

---

## OUT OF BOUNDS

When the ball goes out of bounds (ball completely over the line) by hand or foot, the nearest opponent shall kick the ball back into play. If there is any doubt as to which team last touched the ball before it went out of bounds, the umpire shall call a ball-up five metres in from the boundary line.

---

## **RESTART OF PLAY**

After a goal, play is restarted in the centre of the field via a ball-up. If a behind (one point) is scored the ball is required to be kicked back into play from between the goals by a defender.

---

## **BUMPING/TACKLING/BARGING**

There is to be no contact or spoiling. Players cannot:

- Hold an opponent with their hands.
- Knock the ball out of an opponent's hands.
- Push the player in the side, front or back.
- Steal the ball from another player.
- Deliberately bump another player.
- Smother an opponent's kick by trying to block the kicking motion at the point of impact.
- Barge, fend off or shepherd opponents.
- Touch the ball while another player has possession.

---

## **KICKING OFF THE GROUND**

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

---

## **FIELD BOUNCES/BALL-UPS**

The ball shall be thrown up when the umpire is unsure which team touched the ball before it went out of bounds. If the umpire calls a ball-up during general play, all players in the zone where the ball-up is held must start on the defensive side of their ruckman and not be within two metres of the contest.

---

## **FIFTEEN-METRE PENALTY**

A 15-metre penalty may be awarded when a player:

- Oversteps 'the mark'.
- Engages in time-wasting.
- Uses abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language or behaviour towards an umpire.
- Enters the protected two-metre area around a player which has been awarded a mark or free kick.
- Has not returned the football directly and on the full to the player awarded the free kick or mark.
- Engages in any other conduct for which a free kick would originally be awarded.

---

## **INJURED PLAYER**

If a player cannot take a free kick that has been awarded due to injury or illness then another teammate may take the kick.

---

## **PLAYER'S BOOTS, JEWELLERY AND PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**

A player shall not wear during a match:

- Any form of jewellery.
- Boot studs, plates/cleats or protective equipment unless the field umpire is satisfied that the item does not constitute a danger or increases the risk of injury to other player completing in the match.
- A field umpire may inspect a player's boots or hands or any protective equipment that a player intends to wear or use during the match.

---

## **SEND-OFF RULE/CALLING OFF A GAME**

The process for penalties adjudicated by the umpire are as follows:

- For crude language or incidental rough conduct, a verbal warning and free kick against them will be given for the first offence, with a 15-metre penalty to be given for a second offence.
- In most cases it would be expected that a warning will suffice except in extreme circumstances involving threatening/intimidating behaviour.
- For verbal abuse or deliberate rough conduct, a 15-metre penalty will be given for the first offence.

- For additional offences of the above actions, the player will be sent off for the remainder of the match.
- If the umpire deems that a reportable offence has been committed, the offending player will be sent off and a set penalty will be provided.
- If a second reportable offence occurs during the competition, the player will be de-registered and not able to participate in the competition any longer.
- In extreme cases involving threatening/ intimidating behaviour or extreme weather the umpire may, at his/her discretion, call off a game.

---

## **SET PENALTIES**

- Using abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language towards or in relation to any participating player/umpire - 1 week
- For a second offence in the same season - 2 weeks

Behaving in an abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene manner towards or in relation to any participating player/umpire

1. Kicking another person - 2 weeks
  2. Striking another person - 3 weeks
  3. Tripping another person whether by hand, arm, foot or leg - 2 weeks
  4. Engaging in time wasting - 1 week
  5. Charging other person - 2 weeks
  6. Throwing or pushing another player after that player has taken a mark, disposed of the football or after the football is otherwise out of play - 1 week
  7. Engaging in rough play against an opponent which in the circumstances is unreasonable - 2 weeks
  8. Spitting at or on another player - 2 weeks
- Attempting to kick another person - 1 week
  - Attempting to strike another person - 1 week
  - Attempting to trip another person by hand, arm, foot or leg - 1 week
  - Wrestling another person - 1 week

Team captains will be informed of players who are to be sent off. The manager of the competition reserves the right to invoke heavier penalties if circumstances require. Repeat offenders will have their suspensions doubled from the previous time or double the prescribed penalty if a different incident has occurred with the same player.

---



## **APPEALS**

The player will have the right to appeal if he/she believes that the umpire has made an error of judgement in his/her dismissal from the field of play or the competition. The appeal must be lodged with the State AFL 9s Coordinator in writing within three days of the game concluding. Ultimately, the State AFL 9s Coordinator has the capacity to:

- Uphold the on-field decision.
- Overturn the on-field decision.
- Finding the player guilty of a lesser offence and imposing a lighter penalty.
- Finding the player guilty of a more serious offence and imposing a greater penalty.
- Finding the player guilty of the offence but in the light of the circumstances imposing a lighter penalty.

The decision of the State AFL 9s Coordinator will be final and there will be no further avenue for appeals.

---

## **CONTROLLING BODY**

A controlling body includes:

- The AFL.
- Any league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of matches of AFL 9s Football, who has determined to play such matches in accordance with these Laws.
- A league, association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of matches of AFL 9s Football and who is affiliated to the AFL (AFL Affiliates).
- Any league association or body responsible for the organisation and conduct of matches of AFL 9s who is affiliated to the AFL Affiliates.