Play by the Rules


Play by the Rules aims to create a safe, fair and inclusive culture across sport by:

- contributing to policy, programs and practice at national, state/territory and local levels
- adopting a behavioural and social change approach to shift knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of all people involved in sport and recreation
- engaging with the media and in social discourse around relevant issues
- developing and promoting evidence-based and content-focused key messages
- building capacity of all people involved in sport to prevent and deal with behaviours that does not promote these values

The information that is provided focuses on the protection of child welfare, creating safe and enjoyable sporting environments and codes of behavior for participants, coaches, officials, parents and administrators. To view relevant sections of the ‘Play by the Rules’ website go to playbytherules.net.au and locate the ‘Managing Risks’ tab at the top of the page.

Management Guidelines for Junior Competition

The development and implementation of structured junior competition within every affiliate in Australia is a key objective for Touch Football Australia. The two greatest challenges that are faced by affiliate committees are the ability to recruit new volunteers, and the required knowledge surrounding junior development and child protection. These sticking points can frighten and prohibit committees from attempting to develop junior participation within their affiliate, which in the long run, affects their ability to run the affiliate as a lack of junior development may result in the loss of new participants entering the affiliate.

The aim of the following is to assist affiliates in the thought process, set up, implementation and continued development of either a standalone junior affiliate or a junior competition within a senior affiliate.
Committee Structure

For a junior affiliate to be sustainable, it is essential that a junior committee is put in place to manage the competition in the same way a committee would manage and run a senior affiliate. In instances where a junior competition is operating within a senior affiliate, a junior committee should be set up to sit underneath the senior committee. In this situation, the senior affiliate committee would be responsible for all financial and legal decisions and reporting, while the junior committee would be responsible for the operation and development of the competition.

Below is an example of a junior committee within the affiliate committee structure. It is important to note that this is an example of an ideal committee with a number of volunteers to fill positions on the committee. In situations where volunteer assistance is limited, it is possible for two or three people to combine the roles required to operate a junior competition.

- Liaise between senior affiliate committee and junior affiliate committee. Oversee junior competition and coordinate members of the junior committee.

- Set up fields with cones and sign on sheets, as well as answer queries while at the fields

- Create and update the draw and website

- Coordinate referee to fields during competition

- Train and develop player’s skills and game awareness. May conduct clinics in schools with School Liaison.

- Attend school clinic/competitions to become the link/contact between Affiliate and schools.
Injury Prevention, Safety and Child Protection Policy Guidelines

Touch Football is a sport that is conducive to junior participation because it promotes active participation and physical fitness for both boys and girls, while providing a sport that is extremely safe as it involves minimal contact and no particular equipment.

To ensure a safe environment for young players, those involved in the delivery of junior touch football need to

- take into account any long or short term medical condition participants may have
- ensure that junior touch fields and equipment are appropriate and safe
- take into account the ways in which the physical and emotional maturity of a child differs from that of an adult
- ensure that participants are properly prepared for their sporting involvement, especially through quality teaching and coaching
- ensure that coaches/teachers have adequate first aid knowledge.

Further information on safety in sport is available from Sports Medicine Australia [sma.org.au](http://sma.org.au) and their respective state offices.

Physiological Considerations for Junior Sports

Warm up and cool down exercises should accompany all sporting activities. Repetitive training techniques should be avoided, and endurance activities restricted, so that developing bones, joints and muscles are not injured. Children should play in a variety of positions and not over train in particular skills.

i) Body Temperature Regulations
Compared with adults, children have a larger skin surface area to body mass ratio, and their sweat glands are immature, making them more susceptible to heat loss or heat gain. Touch sessions should not, therefore, be of long duration (over 30 minutes) in conditions of extreme temperature (over 30 degrees) and humidity (over 50%).

ii) Fluid Replacement
Children do not instinctively drink enough fluids to replace the amount they lose during activity. Water is essential to fluid replacement. Regular fluid intake before and during training and competition is also an important component of a nutrition program and should also be encouraged.
iii) Nutrition
The nutritional needs of junior sport participants are affected by their level of activity. A balanced diet that provides them with all the essential elements should be encouraged.

iv) Weight Training
Before adolescence, weight training does little to increase muscle size or strength; time and effort may be better spent on lifting technique or skill development. At any level, weight training should only be undertaken with the supervision of a qualified instructor.

v) Stress
Whether children find playing touch stressful depends on the attitudes of parents, coaches, referees, officials and supporters. Adults should not set unrealistic goals but instead should offer support and encouragement.

vi) Drugs and Sport
The drugs most commonly used by (mostly older) children are alcohol and tobacco. Their use affects general health and well-being and sports performance.

Less common but still of concern is the use of performance-enhancing drugs, which some children may use in response to pressures to ‘win at all costs’. The ATA anti-doping policy states that doping is forbidden. The ATA condemns the use of performance enhancing substances in sport as both dangerous to health and contrary to the ethics of sport.

Everyone involved in junior touch can help children to develop appropriate attitudes by discussing the issue with them, emphasising participation rather than outcome, and setting a good example. It should be stressed that good training practices and a healthy lifestyle are the factors that most contribute to enhanced sport performance.

vii) Sun exposure
Organisers of Touch competitions and events have a responsibility to protect junior participants to the greatest extent practicable, from the dangers of exposure to the sun.

Participants should be encouraged or obligated to wear hats, protective clothing such as long sleeves and apply 15+ (as a minimum) sunscreen on exposed skin and wear.

Touch organisers should also maximise the provision of shaded areas at venues and events.

viii) Hot and/or humid conditions
Coaches should be aware that children are a high risk group for developing heat illness due to their poorly developed ability to sweat and cool the body. This may result in over heating which is a precursor to heat illness.
When assessing the environmental conditions both the temperature and the humidity need to be considered. The humidity is particularly important as the higher the humidity of the air the less effective sweating is in cooling the body.

In hot or humid conditions:
- Children should be watched closely for signs of heat illness;
- A non-oil based sunscreen should be used where appropriate, as oil based sunscreens can block the skins pores and affect the sweating mechanism;
- Appropriate clothing including hats should be worn at all times where possible
- Clothing should be:
  - light weight
  - light coloured
  - loose fitting
  - made of natural fibre, e.g. cotton or fabrics specifically manufactured for hot conditions such as CoolMax or Dri-Fit
  - adequately ventilated

Adequate fluid should be consumed before, during and after the game to prevent dehydration. A flavoured solution may be more palatable to children and therefore more likely to be used.

**Heat Illness**

All children should be continually monitored for signs of heat illness when exercising in hot or humid conditions. If there is any suspicion of heat illness, stop the child from participating in the activity and seek medical advice.

In the early stages of heat illness the child may present with any of the following:
- Tiredness
- Weakness
- Headache
- Hot
- Cramps
- Nausea
- Flushed skin
- Fainting
- Excessive sweating
If any of the above indicators are present:
- Remove the child from the field/event;
- Lay the child down in a cool place;
- Give plenty of cool water;
- Cool the child (reduce the body temperature) by placing wet towels over them or sponging the body with cool water.

ix) Exposure to cold conditions
Children are also susceptible to illness in cold climates, in particular thin/lean children because they have a greater body surface to mass ratio from which to lose heat.

Children also have a less developed perception of when they are cold and therefore may continue to exercise when they should actually stop. Coaches should pay particular attention to these factors when children are playing water sports or are subject to wet conditions as the water will enhance the loss of body heat.

In wet or cold conditions:
- Avoid standing exposed for long periods
- Wet clothing should be changed as soon as practicable
- Wear appropriate clothing
- Dress in layers to trap the heat and prevent heat loss
- Add or remove layers of clothing as necessary according to exercise level/conditions
- Jackets with a hood may be worn or removed according to exercise level/conditions
- Clothes with press clips or drawstrings (e.g. waist, arms, neck, etc.) so they can be loosened or tightened as necessary. A drawstring at the neck is not recommended due to the potential risk of choking if the string gets caught on equipment
- Hat and gloves to reduce the amount of heat loss.

Do not train or play outdoors during a thunder storm as there is potential for being struck by lightning.

Medical Consideration

Some children have medical conditions that may affect their participation in physical activity. Particular care should be taken in the case of long-term conditions (e.g. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and heart or lung disease). Coaches/teachers should be aware of each child’s specific needs and also know how to deal with an emergency.

Medical opinion should be sought when the fitness or performance of any junior touch football participant is questionable, and when recovery from illness or injury is in doubt.
Playing Field, Equipment and Uniforms

Touch Football is a sport that does not require goal posts, nets or on-field equipment which means there is considerably less chance for a participant to injure themselves by running into, falling on or being hit by these objects. The only equipment required to assist in the game are plastic cones to mark the corners and half way points of the field.

Nevertheless, the following measures should be adopted to reduce the risk of field related injury during touch activities

- properly supervise all participants during sessions
- modify rules and field dimensions (as appropriate)
- cancel matches or training where inspection of playing surfaces shows they are unsuitable or unsafe for play.

Wearing Glasses
Players and Referees are permitted to wear glasses or sunglasses while competing in Touch Football events. The minimum recommendation is that the glasses be fixed on so they can't fall off, usually with some form of elastic going around the back of the head.

Touch Football Shoes/Boots
Touch Football shoes/boots may be worn in all games and trainings, but must comply with Rule Three (3), Point Three (3) of the Touch Football Australia Playing Rules – 7th Edition. “Shoes with screw-in studs or cleats are not to be worn by any player. Light leather or synthetic boots with soft moulded soles are permitted, provided individual studs are no longer than thirteen millimetres (13 mm) in length; the measurement being taken from the sole of the boot.”

Jewellery
For the safety of all those participating, all Jewellery is required to be removed or taped over prior to taking the fields. This includes watches, bracelets, rings, earrings, neck chains, body studs or other items of jewellery.

Medical alert bracelets or necklaces are not considered jewellery but if worn, they must be taped to the body. Silicon wristbands must also be removed before taking the field. Fingernails may need to be trimmed or taped.

Other Items
Players are NOT permitted, under any circumstances, to play either with their arm in a cast, be it made of plaster, fibreglass or any other material, or with fingers in splints, or have any covering which may be dangerous to another player.
Child Protection Policy

In the sporting environment, parents place a considerable amount of trust in the officials and volunteers who coach and referee their children. Child protection policy and legislation has received considerable focus in recent times and the requirement for sporting clubs and associations to comply can be quite daunting. It is important for committees to realise that these policies are designed to protect not only the children who are participating, but also coaches, referees, volunteers and even committee members.

As a component of the Member Protection Policy, Touch Football Australia has incorporated information relating to child protection and requirements regarding the screening processes for all people who work with children within the Touch Football community.

All affiliates and competitions involving participants less than 18 years of age are obliged to take these steps to minimise the exposure of risk to children participating in activities in which the organisation is involved. Affiliates and associated competitions must comply with the following steps to ensure that they and the children involved in activities conducted by them are protected.

To access the TFA Member Protection Policy visit austouch.com.au, locate ‘Our Sport’ within the ‘Play Touch Football’ tab at the top left hand side of the page, and select ‘Rules and Policies’.