



AHJFA Playing Format and Rules

All Non-Competitive Age Groups

Start of play and re-start after a goal

Pass to a teammate from the middle of the halfway line. All players must be in their own half of the field of play. Opponents must be at least 5 metres away from the ball until it is in play. The ball must touch a teammate before a goal can be scored.

Ball in and out of play

The ball is out of play when it has wholly crossed the goal line or the touch line on the ground or in the air, or when play has been stopped by the Game Leader.

Method of scoring

A goal is scored when the whole of the ball passes over the goal line, between the goalposts and under the crossbar. When goal posts are not available and cones are used for goals, a goal is scored when the ball passes between the cones without touching them, below shoulder height of the player.

Attackers/Defenders in the Goalkeeper safety zone (U8 and U9 only) should only be penalised if they are playing or attempting to play the ball or if their presence impedes the goalkeeper. Other accidental incursions should receive a reminder that they must stay out of the safety zone.

Shin guards

Shin guards must be worn by all players without exception.

Concussion

Any player suspected of suffering from concussion should be examined by a medical practitioner before returning to play. As a general rule, "If in doubt, sit it out".

Substitutions

Players may be rotated on and off the field at any time during the game. A coach/parent may make substitutions while the ball is in play, ensuring the player is off the field before the substitute goes on.

Equal playing time should be a priority ensuring all players regardless of age, gender and/or ability get to take the field.

Regular rotation of players is key. Kids don't register to watch football – they just want to play! If there's space on the sidelines, substitutes should be encouraged to set up small-sided games or practice their skills in a designated area, not interfering with play.

Coaches and Game Leaders

One coach from each team is permitted on the field for U8 and U9 games only.

Each game is to be controlled by one Game Leader. The main role of the Game Leader is to keep the game moving fluently, limit stoppages and assist players with all match re-starts.

The Game Leader can be a club official, parent, older child/player or beginner referee and should always be enthusiastic and approachable.

Be sure to make every effort to create an environment that ensures that all players have fun, are learning the game and have maximum involvement. Most importantly, remember the children are learning the game – be flexible and patient.

The Game Leader and Coaches should:

- Encourage all children to have fun and different children to take re-starts
- Ensure the correct number of players are on the field
- Discourage players from permanently over-guarding the goal
- Check all players are wearing shin guards
- Use a "Ready, Set, Go" prompt to encourage quick decisions when restarting play
- Encourage children to dribble or pass ball to team mates rather than kick the ball long
- Ensure the opposing team is at least 5 metres outside the penalty area for all goal line restarts
- Ensure team officials and parents create a safe, enjoyable, and positive playing environment for the children
- Encourage children to be involved in all aspects of the game, attacking, and defending
- Award free kicks as appropriate to help children learn the rules and consequences of committing fouls
- Explain the rules to players and why a free kick has been awarded
- Let the game flow and give instruction to all players on the run, where you can praise and encourage both teams and be enthusiastic and approachable.

Game leaders and coaches are encouraged to undertake a free FSA Grassroots Certificate prior to start of the season.