



Australian Football Development Handbook





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Foreword

I created this handbook as a guide for coaches and players, meant to encompass many of the basics of playing Australian Rules football all in one central document. I hope it will help to encourage safe play and improve the standard of football taught in the US. It includes input from CoachAFL sources, various USAFL leaders, and my personal VFL playing experiences. This handbook is intended to guide new players in the basics of football, as well as help supplement the knowledge and experience coaches or players may already have. Use the Table of Contents to guide you to relevant topics - this document is not meant to be read and ingested all at once, but rather as a resource as you move along the season. It also includes a link to an extensive drill library, with diagrams and explanations of drills from both USA national coaches, and the VFL. My love for AFL and desire to see new players learn to love it as much as I do, drove me to create this handbook, and I truly hope this helps you to encourage a safe and knowledgeable culture at your home club.

-Katie Klatt, (Author, 2019)





SECTION 1: Introduction to Australian Football

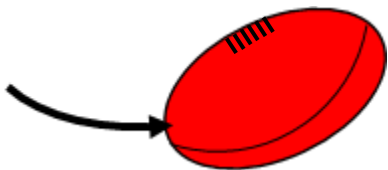
Skills

This section describes the basic skills required to collect and pass the ball in Australian Football.

Handball

A handball is the primary way of passing the footy over a short distance (5-10 meters) quickly and accurately. It involves a striking motion between the clenched fist of the punching hand and the ball. There are three types of handballs, the most accurate method to pass the ball is described (the rocket handball).

- 1) Start using both hands right away
- 2) Footy should be resting in “platform” (non-striking) hand, not gripped
 - a) Hold footy at a slight upward angle
 - b) Ball should not be held too far from the body
 - c) Keep the platform hand stationary - do not move it away in a throwing motion until contact with the ball has been made
- 3) Aim to strike the ball with a closed fist off the platform hand.
 - a) The striking (punching) arm should swing from the shoulder like a pendulum with the elbow slightly bent.
 - b) Try to make contact with the ball in an area toward the point of the ball that is closest to you, that is above the seam (see image):



- c) Think “punch your hand and catch your fist”
 - d) Use knuckles (side of knuckles) instead of soft portion of hand
 - e) Strike through the ball toward where you are aiming
 - 4) Goal: back spin, easy to catch
 - 5) Step with opposite leg for power
 - 6) General distance: 5-10 meters
 - 7) Used for closer passes, when defender in too close to get a kick off (i.e. when drawing defender)
 - 8) See demo [video](#)





Kick

A kick is the primary way of passing the footy over 10+ meters. Accuracy is key with kicking, as it makes it easier for your teammate to catch.

1. Kick Builders program
 - a. Kick builders is a step-by-step program to learn proper kicking technique. It encourages strict technique, and requires weekly commitment to practicing to produce results.
 - b. Contact Tom Ellis: tom.ellis@usafl.com. There are various certified trainers in different regions.
2. While one-handed drop is gold standard, some players may prefer the two-handed drop when learning how to kick.
3. Drop is KEY
 - a. Ball grip: The fingers are spread evenly along each side of the ball, with thumbs extending to the lacing at the top, and index fingers pointing in the direction of the bottom of the laces/bottom of the ball. Grip should be the same for kicking with both left and right foot. Laces of the ball facing forward.
 - i. For better control, you can move your hands forward on the footy (towards the laces)
 - b. Ensure the footy is dropped straight up and down
 - i. Watch the seam of the ball as it drops toward your foot - is it falling to the side? Falling forward or back toward you?
 - c. Head over the footy. Watch the ball down to your foot – see the ball hit the foot.
 - i. Use the cue “nose over toes”
 - d. Strike the footy on the point - want backspin
 - i. Ball contact should occur with the bottom point of the ball, with contact made using the bridge of the foot.
4. Point toe, kick straight through (not across body like soccer)
 - a. Chest up, facing target
 - b. Watch the ball off the boot
5. Follow through with kicking leg, taking a step after kick, landing on kicking foot
 - a. Swing should be straight through (not across the body like soccer)
6. Use a kick for longer distances (over 10 meters), attempts to score, when on the run in open space
7. Demo videos (keep in mind, the techniques demonstrated here are not perfect, but just examples of various techniques).
 - a. Kicking basics [video](#)
 - b. One-hand drop slow-mo [video](#)
 - c. Two-hand drop slow-mo [video](#)





Mark

What is a mark? A mark is catching a kick that travels more than 15 meters on the full without being touched - if caught, a free kick is awarded. The location where the catch is made is also called the "mark". This is the position the opponent must not advance beyond before the free kick is taken.

1. Watch the footy into your hands - **DO NOT CLOSE EYES**
 - a. One trick - try to read the print on the footy as it comes to you
2. Create a "W" with your hands - recommend touching thumbs to ensure no gap
3. Palms facing footy, fingers UP to the sky - **NOT TOWARDS FOOTY** (that's how you dislocate a finger!)
4. Soft hands
 - a. Absorb the impact of the footy by moving your hands towards yourself with it as you're marking it.
5. Catch the footy at the highest point of your jump.
 - a. Only catch the footy on your chest when playing in rain.
 - b. It is recommended to launch off one foot (like a basketball lay-up) and raise a knee up to protect your body.
6. Chest marks: Use when trying to receive balls lower than chest height, or going to ground and needing to slide in, or when conditions are wet
7. Arms stretched out in front (like a zombie pose): Use when incoming ball is at chest level
8. Arms stretched out above head (like a Superman pose): For above chest/ shoulder height marks
9. See "Aerial Contests" [video](#)
10. See demo [video](#)

Ball Pickup

1. F-B-F: Foot - Body - Fingers
 - a. **Foot** - step your foot to be alongside the ball
 - b. **Body** - squat with your legs to get lower to the ball, almost like you are taking a knee next to the footy, but keeping the back knee off the ground. **YOU SHOULD NOT BE BENDING AT THE HIPS ALONE** (This puts you at danger of head and neck injuries). Take this time to position your body in the direction you'd like to face and protect from any oncoming opponents, ie: ready for a hip and shoulder, or your back to them. Stay low and drive your legs.
 - c. **Fingers** - get your fingers in the grass and under the ball, ready to scoop it up and continue on.
2. Contested ball pickup - turn body to protect, place front foot next to the ball on the side where the opposition is
 - a. Put the strongest part of Your body (butt/legs) between opposition and the ball
3. To protect your head - round shoulders (think of yourself as a turtle!) **DO NOT LEAD WITH THE HEAD**, do not lift head (keep your eye on the footy).
4. See "Ground Balls" [video](#)





Playing the Game

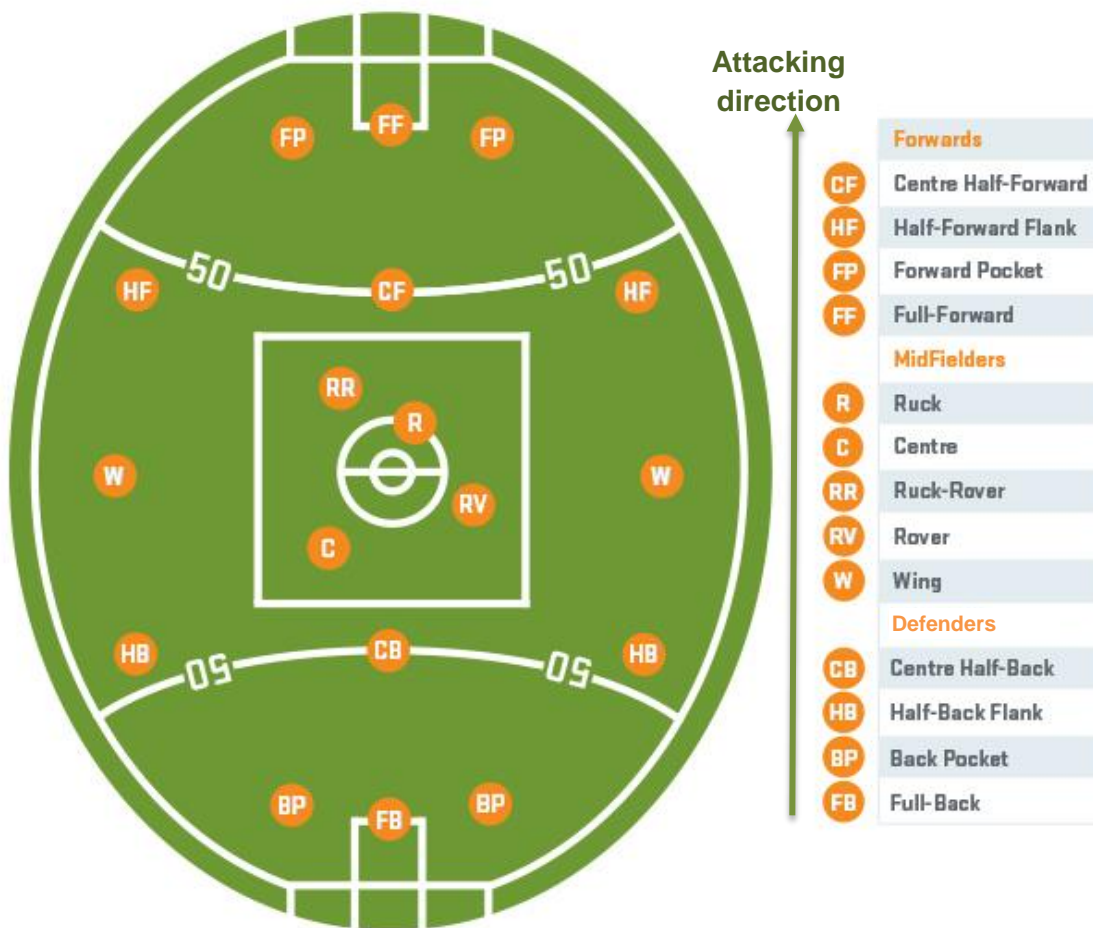
Positions, Approach to the game, Contact Essentials, Rules

General, basic tips for each position

Positions

There are 18 players on the field in a full AFL game, arranged in 3 positional areas of the field; Forwards, Midfielders & Defenders as shown below. This section describes these 3 areas and the objective and role of players in each area.

Australian Rules Football Positions





Forward

- Forward line consists of (see diagram)
 - Full forward, forward pockets (L/R) , center half forward, and half forwards (L/R)
- Main role of a forward
 - Set up goal scoring opportunities
 - Kick goals
 - Apply defensive pressure to lock the footy in forward 50
- Lead (actively present yourself as a receiving option) towards ball carrier
 - Leads are intended to create space from defenders - they must be well-timed, fast, and recycled (return and repeat) through if the ball is not delivered
 - Tick/Check lead - run a few meters away from ball carrier to draw defender, then turn and run at speed towards ball carrier
 - Time leads by communicating with teammates, to ensure no one is running to the same place at the same time.
- Tall forwards - marking targets
- Small forwards - “crumb” the ball (collect the loose ball off the ground)
 - Goal is to pick up footy off the ground if not marked by tall forwards
 - One in front of marking contest if ball spills in front
 - One behind marking contest if ball spills behind, be prepared to follow behind a target’s lead
 - Goal is to create space in the forward line for tall forwards to lead into
- When not in a position to score or have a high chance of making a goal, center the ball to the hot spot (area in front of goal at the top of the goal square).
- If the main target leads out of the hot spot, another forward should always fill in behind.

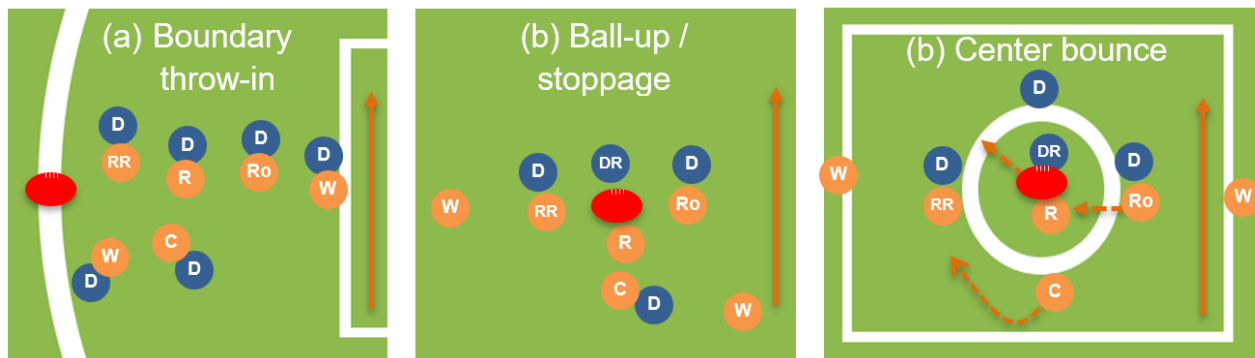
Midfield

- Midfield line consists of:
 - Ruck, ruck rover, rover, center - these all start in the center square at the start of a game, or center bounce after a goal is kicked
 - Also called on-ballers or midfielders
 - Wings (see diagram of “Australian Rules Football Positions”)
- Goal is to follow the footy to each contest through the midfield (between forward and back lines)
 - Outnumber the opposition at the contest
 - Effective delivery of footy into forward line
 - Lock the footy in the forward line
- Members of the midfield include Ruck (takes taps/center bounces/ball ups), Ruck Rover (generally the receiver of the tap), Rover (blocks, receives, etc), and Center (generally sweeps behind stoppage, blocks, receives)





- Setup around each stoppage to prepare for clearing the ball
- When the footy is in the forward line
 - Create a wall around 50m arc to prevent footy from exiting forward line (see “Ball Movement” section)
 - Should not enter forward 50 unless on a run or being used - should remain back in the wall to create space.
- When the footy is in defense
 - Some should be man-on with another midfielder i.e following/guarding an opposition player
 - Or back in the defensive 50 congesting space
- Generally want to kick to advantage into the forward line
 - This involves decision making - where can you kick the footy so that it is easiest for your teammate to catch it without interference from opposition?
- Examples of basic setup at stoppages are shown in the figure below. Consult your coach for more guidance on set up depending on the team game plan. These are just to give you a basic idea.
 - Note - in a center bounce, footy is generally thrown in the air by umpire and not bounced



Examples of set up at stoppages

Wing

- Generally run the sides/”wings” of the field, act as a lateral option in space
- Should ideally use all available space, should stay out of contests when possible (that’s the midfielders job)
- Should be an option outside the contest
- When footy in the forward line
 - Form wall (see “Ball Movement” section, #8) with midfield - instruct to watch open opposition players on the wings that might be used as outlets
 - Wall should be one kick distance away
- When footy in defense





- Stay outside defense, act as an outlet for a clearing kick from defense - acting as a link with forward line
- Not always used when playing small-sided games

Ruck

- Tall/high jumping player who contests ball-ups and boundary throw-ins
- Starts a few meters from opposing ruck, giving enough space for a run-up (so the approach is a bit like a volleyball spike)
- Used in all ball-ups and boundary throw-ins
- Direct ruck tap to the team's advantage - direction will depend on where teammates are set up
 - Midfielders and ruck should communicate before each stoppage to have setup organized
- Protect body with knee up

Defense

- Backline consists of:
 - Fullback, back pockets, center half back, half backs
- Main goal is to:
 - Clear the footy from the backline
 - Prevent opposition forwards from taking marks
 - Prevent goals being scored
- If can't easily mark the footy, the bigger goal is to prevent forwards from marking
 - In marking contest, punch ball with closed fist
- Once defense wins possession of the footy, aim is to clear WIDE to the OUTSIDE - DO NOT clear down the middle!
- "Man-on-man" defense
 - Simplest for new players
 - Defender touching their opponent at all times, follows them
- "Zone" defense
 - Defenders have a set zone they cover, don't have to stay directly man-on-man
- When footy in defensive team's forward line
 - Move up the field to be within 2 kicks, so they can impact the play if the footy gets out of our forward 50
- Defensive player generally will take the kick-ins after a behind
 - As a rule of thumb, you should look for a marking target (tall midfielder, for example) that is leading WIDE towards the boundary
- Play to your strengths
 - If you are stronger than your opponent but slower, stand in front and keep one hand touch on opponent, use body to block their leads
 - If you are faster but not as strong, stand behind opponent and follow them, then use speed to reach the footy before them on their leads





Versatility

Often, players may play different positions in metro vs. USAFL games, or they may have to combine with other teams for USAFL games and be thrown into an unfamiliar position. Some tips for adapting to new positions are:

- In metro games, don't limit yourself to just one position. Use this as a chance to practice new positions
- Watch AFL games (see "Watching the Game" section)
- Become familiar with the basic principles of each position as listed above
- Communication is key! Teammates should be helping each other with positioning etc
 - If combining with new teammates for a tournament, ensure you learn names of your new teammates before stepping on the field.
- Talk to your coach or captain about positions best suited to you and tips on playing different positions

Approach to the Game

Includes general game flow, what players need to know to participate in drills or touch footy.

Key points:

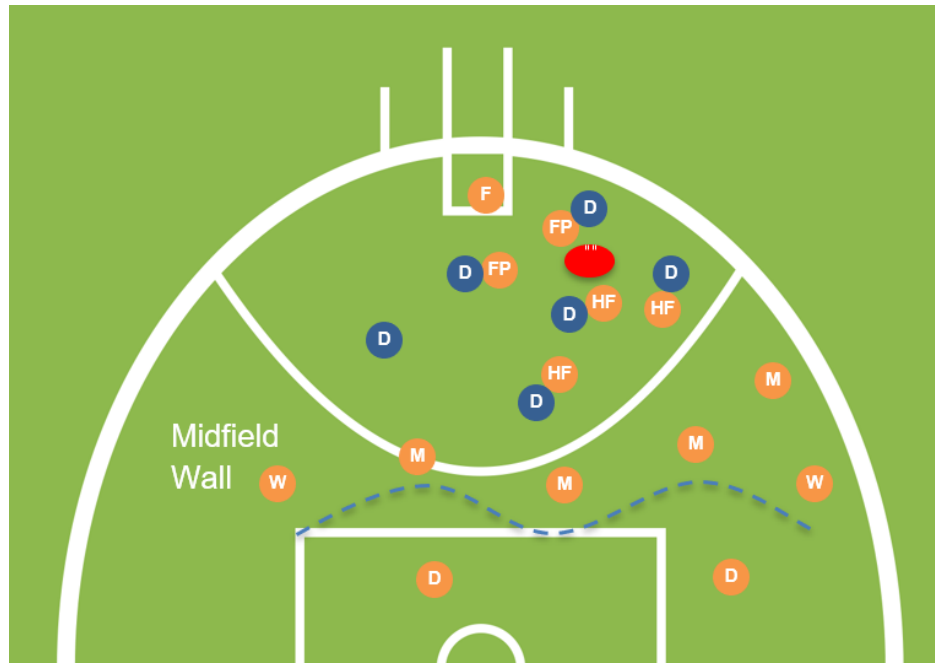
1. **COMMUNICATION!** Talk constantly on the field, using direction and names
 - a. Example: Jess hands on your left! Katie I'm behind! Jess you're hot! (Hot = pressure, man on).
 - b. Try to use direction (i.e. left, in front), inside/outside, goal side, etc.
2. The game is 360 - look behind and to the sides for teammates, not just forcing it forward
 - a. Look for handballs backwards out of trouble. Hands out the back is one of the most common ways out of a pack in all levels of football
 - b. Always have a lateral option - will often clear opponents
 - c. Remember to swivel your head. This is the notion that you should always be looking to all directions when looking to dispose of the ball, to find the best option.
 - d. Use the width of the field - look for a switch option to the fat side of the ground, look for space
3. New players often crowd the footy - too many numbers at the contest (kids soccer style). Instruct some players to remain out of the contest but nearby as an option for teammates looking to get out of trouble
 - a. Often, when players think they are an option out of the contest, they are too close to the play and do not help with the overcrowding problem. Player should be a handball distance off the pack, about 5-8 meters
 - b. Think to Yourself - "can I impact this contest right now?" If not, think, "how can I impact the next contest" and get there!





- i. Ways you might be able to impact future play - running to be a mark option further down the field, shepherding for the next contest, running as a backwards handball option, etc.
- 4. Take the grass - if there is space in front of you, run and bounce (if able to gain meters before kicking). This is often referred to as “breaking the lines” or “taking space” and is a good tactic for penetrating the opposition defense.
- 5. Players need to know their kicking distance. For example, when in front of goal, if they can’t kick that far accurately, instruct them to look for a teammate
 - a. It is recommended that everyone should know their teammates’ estimated kicking distances, so they can adjust leads accordingly and present options when needed
 - i. Pay attention to your teammates’ kicking distance during training and warmups
- 6. Decision-making
 - a. Don’t rush - take an extra second to look up and assess options. Goal is to find a teammate for a mark rather than to just boot it forward.
 - b. If you can’t identify a perfect target in the back line, clear the ball wide. In the midfield or forward line, put the ball in the most productive position for a teammate to run on - in front of them.
- 7. For teams that play together often - while a switch kick in the backline can seem dangerous, it can be advantageous to open up an entire side of the ground
- 8. A common method employed to help lock the ball into the forward line is Forming the defensive wall (see diagram below). Consult your coach to determine if they
 - a. A good basic tactic involves creation of a “wall” on the field
 - b. This involves midfield, and some halfbacks
 - c. Midfielders should not enter the forward 50 unless part of play. Instead, they should form a wall around the 50m arc, to prevent the footy from leaving their forward 50





Forming the midfield wall

9. Leads
 - a. The term “lead” refers to a run made by a player without the footy, in order to receive the footy
 - b. Leads are most effective when made towards the teammate with the footy, or at an angle
 - i. It is difficult for a teammate to hit their target if lead is running away from them. It is also potentially unsafe as keeping eyes on the ball requires the player look away from oncoming defenders
 - c. MUST communicate - yell player’s name, direction
 - d. Kick should be placed out in front of the player running
 - e. Timing is key - don’t start a lead too soon before kicker is ready (or you might bring a defender with you), and don’t start it too late and not get to the intended spot in time while kicker is looking for an option

Contact Essentials

Tackling, shepherding, contested marks

Tackling Technique

A tackle is the main way to stop an opponent who is in possession of the ball by grabbing them with your arms to impede their progress or to force them to dispose of the ball quickly. A correctly





applied tackle that results in the opposition player not legally disposing the ball will be rewarded a free kick.

1. Come at your player with **T-rex arms** (This is to protect your shoulders and elbows from getting run into and potentially dislocating).
 - a. Keep arms close to your body, like a T-rex! This will encourage you to get closer to your opponent. If your arms are extended fully, it is easy for your opponent to push through you - your body is much stronger than your arms!
 - b. *Imagine your opponent is standing in a hula hoop* **Step into the hoop** with the leg of the side you are going to use for your tackle into the hoop, ideally between the opponent's legs
 - i. You should have length and width in this stride so that you remain balanced
2. **Engage and make contact with your player**
 - a. Your shoulder of the side you stepped with into the belly button of your opponent
 - b. Belly button height is ideal as any higher could put your head in range of getting elbowed; any lower would hit their pelvis and would be painful for you
3. **Cheek to Cheek**
 - a. Your cheek to their "butt cheek" (more like on their hip). If you stepped with your right foot, hit with your right shoulder, your right face cheek will be against their right butt cheek.
4. **Bind**
 - a. Bind your arms around the opponent and pin their arms to them so they cannot dispose of the ball. Too many tackles are easily broken by opponents. If you lock your limbs around the opponent, they are less likely to break it.
5. **Drive**
 - a. Front-on and side-on
 - i. Push off of the foot you stepped with into the opponent and drive them forward and off balance.
 - ii. In lieu of drive, dropping is another technique used in tackling. Though, if you drive before dropping, your opponent is off balance and will drop more easily.
 - b. From behind
 - i. Caution to avoid "in the back" - cannot knock player straight in the back onto their stomach
 - ii. In this case, follow the steps above but ensure you bring them down onto their side (and your side)
 - c. Sometimes, you can't bring someone to ground (i.e. they are bigger than you). When you go to tackle, wrap your arms around their arms so their arms are pinned, making it difficult to get rid of the footy - which is technically considered a tackle - this can often be more effective than taking someone to ground!
 - d. Get Low and Stay Low





- i. By being lower you are stronger and more balanced throughout the tackle
- e. Corral opponent to where you want to meet them (possibly toward a boundary line, or your teammate), “pick a spot” in front of them where you plan to meet them mid-run.
- f. Hesitance to get in or stay out of a contest is often what leads to an injury - go in with full effort
- g. See “Coaching the Tackler” [video](#)
- h. Coaching tips
 - i. As a coach, provide immediate feedback on technique. For a good tackle, encourage the player to think about how that felt and try to reproduce that in the next tackle.
 - ii. Be cautious of a sling tackle - do not throw the opponent, but rather bend your knees and use gravity to fall with them.
 - iii. Always have new players practice tackling/being tackled BEFORE a real game.
 - iv. Practice tackling basics frequently - Tackling Gate drill is good for this.
- i. See tackling demo [video](#)

Being Tackled/Safe Falling

Ball carrier - how to receive, break or avoid a tackle

- a. See “Coaching the Ball Carrier” [video](#)
- b. To break tackle - Stay low, drive legs
- c. Unable to break tackle?
 - i. Once you know you can’t escape the tackle, don’t fight it
 - ii. Stay low, engage core
 - iii. Tuck your chin
 - iv. Don’t break your fall by putting your hands down
- d. Spatial awareness - be aware of opposition surrounding you even before you get the footy
- e. Running with the footy - To get away from tackler, turn body with back shoulder away from tackler
- f. Try to keep arms free of tackle by raising with the ball above the head to be able to dispose of footy via handball

Shepherding

- A teammate (non ball-carrier) shields the ball carrier from opposition, protecting them from being tackled
 - Purpose is to buy your teammate an extra second to get away - any effort that gets them some extra time is a success!
- Player puts their body between teammate with the footy and opposition
 - Must maintain eyes on the footy at all times - cannot turn your back to the footy
 - Similar to a box-out in basketball
- Stay low and engage core to prepare for impact





- Place of impact on shepherd- side/shoulder/hips or backside (cannot wrap player up if they do not have possession of the footy).
- Careful to avoid using arms to push, avoid opponent's back
- When using a teammate's shepherd, keep them between yourself and your opponent. Run on the side that makes sense.
- Must be within 5 meters of footy
- See demo [video](#)

Side-on Bumps

- Purpose is to buy your teammate an extra second to get away - any effort that gets them some extra time is a success!
- Player puts their body between teammate with the footy and opposition
- Must maintain eyes on the footy at all times - cannot turn your back to the footy
- Similar to a box-out in basketball
- Stay low and engage core to prepare for impact
- Place of impact on shepherd- side/shoulder/hips or backside (cannot wrap player up if they do not have possession of the footy).

Contested marks - using your body in a contest in the air

- Purpose is to buy your teammate an extra second to get away - any effort that gets them some extra time is a success!
- Player puts their body between teammate with the footy and opposition
- Must maintain eyes on the footy at all times - cannot turn your back to the footy
- Similar to a box-out in basketball
- Stay low and engage core to prepare for impact
- Place of impact on shepherd- side/shoulder/hips or backside (cannot wrap player up if they do not have possession of the footy).

Rules

Listed below are some VERY BASIC rules of the game. See resources listed below for more detailed rules. Before a game or scrimmage, it's a good idea to ask the umpire to explain to the players what they will be looking for before each game.

- Tackling
 - No contact above the shoulders or below the knees
 - No pushing in the back
 - No slinging, chicken wing, slam or spear tackles
 - Examples of illegal tackles:





- Sling tackle [video](#)
 - Chicken wing [video](#)
 - Slam tackle [video](#)
 - Spear tackle [video](#)
- Marks/Kicks
 - When a player catches a kick that has traveled over 15 meters without being touched or hitting the ground, it is called a mark. The umpire will blow his whistle to indicate the mark was paid.
 - Opposition cannot come closer to the marking player than the spot on which they marked. This spot is called 'the mark'. They can move laterally across this line, but not forward or they will be given a 50 meter penalty.
 - If marking player moves laterally off the kicking line, play starts when the umpire has called "play on" and opposition can move off the mark. If the player on the mark leaves before "play on" is called, they will be given a 50 meter penalty.
- Handballs
 - No throwing
 - Must use closed fist
- Goals
 - Must be kicked (can be kicked with any part below the knee, or off the ground, no minimum distance)
 - 6 points between middle posts
 - Behind - 1 point between outside posts, or if touched or handballed through middle posts
 - After a behind, a kick-in occurs
 - The offensive player must position themselves at least 10 meters from the goal square
 - After a behind, the defensive player kicking the ball in can directly kick from the square, or can run out of the square and kick on the run. This may allow the player to gain some space and get the ball further down the field.
- Gameplay
 - If a player has run 15 meters with the footy, they must bounce the footy, touch it to the ground, or dispose of it (kick or handball)
 - Stoppage/ball up - how play is restarted after a goal, or during play when neither team can take clear possession of the ball
 - If a player is tackled immediately upon gaining possession of the footy (i.e. they had no prior opportunity to dispose of the footy), there is a ball-up
 - If a player is legally tackled after attempting to run with the footy, they will be called for "holding the ball" and it is a turnover to the opposition with a free kick
 - Out of bounds
 - On the full - if the footy travels out of bounds after a kick, without touching the ground or another player, it is considered "out on the full". It is a turnover to





the other team, with a kick from the boundary line at the spot where it went out.

- If the ball goes out of bounds after touching the ground, a player, or in the arms of a player, it will be a “throw-in”, where the boundary umpire throws the ball in (in the direction of the center circle) and a ruck contest occurs.
- Umpire signals
 - AFL [Resource](#).

For more detailed rules, see this AFL [resource](#) or this USAFL [resource](#).

The USAFL Umpires Association have published a [Document](#) which contains a summary variations to AFL rules adopted by the USAFL in 2019.

Section 2: Safety

The following section covers Concussion Protocol being adopted by the USAFL as well as recommended safety practices for players

Concussion

- USAFL Concussion Protocol for [Players](#)
 - While no one wants to stop playing, it is VERY IMPORTANT to follow these steps after head injuries
 - Please read and become familiar with these guidelines for use in training or games
- 1. AFL Resources:
 - a. Concussion [Guideline](#)
 - b. Concussion [Management](#)
- 2. USAFL [resource](#)

Equipment

- Equipment
 - Mouthguards are ESSENTIAL
 - Impact mouthguards sold [here](#)
 - Does a scrum cap help prevent concussions?
 - No. There is no evidence to show they can prevent or reduce severity of concussions - there is not enough padding. However, they may help increase player’s awareness of their head and thus make the player less likely to have their head in a place of danger and give the player more confidence when getting back on the field after recovering from a concussion.
 - Can also consider the Full90 headband (soccer).





- Cleats
 - Help prevent slipping on grass surfaces
 - Soccer cleats most often used, proper football “boots” must be bought/shipped from Australia
 - No metal cleats are allowed
- Footy
 - USAFL sponsors sell footies - [Play Aussie USA](#)

Injury Prevention

The following are tips for injury prevention for training and games;

- Warm-up and prevention programs are very effective in reducing injuries!
- To be effective programs must include certain aspects
 - They are performed multiple time per week
 - They include strength and jumping components
 - They are started in preseason and continued throughout the season
- Ideally warm-up prevention programs are performed in conjunction with cardiovascular fitness training and strength training
- Proper landing and cutting technique is important.
 - Avoiding knee valgus or the knees collapsing together (sometimes referred to as kissing knees or knee abduction), is especially important for women! The knee valgus position puts the knees at significant risk for injury. Practicing jumping and cutting in front of a mirror or taking/watching a video of your movements can be helpful to identify and improve your movement pattern. Think about your shoulder, hip, knee, and foot being in one straight line as you land or cut.
 - Jumping technique [video](#)
- Increasing your glute and hip strength as well as practicing good form will help improve your landing and cutting technique.

Warm up

Resources:

- Coach AFL [warm up](#)
- Knee-Injury prevention warm up [video](#)
- USA Freedom warm up [recommendations](#)
- ICI7 USA Freedom [warm up](#)

Pre-training, Pre-game

The following are examples of warm up activities recommended before games and training sessions to help prevent injury and prepare players for the physical demands of football.





1. Joint circles
 - a. Neck circles 5e
 - b. Small arm circles 5e
 - c. Large arm circles 5e
 - d. Hip circles 5e
 - e. Trunk circles 5e
 - f. Good mornings 10
 - g. Ankle warm up (knees over toes) 10
2. Dynamic Stretching: 10m up, easy jog back
 - a. Quad/reach
 - b. Glute stretch into Walking Hamstrings
 - c. Walking Lunge with T Spine
 - d. Frankensteins
 - e. Side Lunges (5m each direction)
 - f. Open/Close Hurdle Steps (5m in, 5m out)
3. Ground Based
 - a. Plank Sequence 10s each
 - b. Dead Bugs (legs only, slowly lowering) 5e
 - c. Glute Bridge with Hold and March 5e
 - d. SL Balance with touches from partner 20-30s each side
4. Running Drills
 - a. A skips
 - b. Butt kickers
 - c. Side shuffle
 - d. Karaoke/grapevine
 - e. Skip
5. Hops and Run
 - a. Lateral Zig-Zag Hops with Pause (2e)
 - i. Into 50% acceleration
 - b. Speed Skaters (2e)
 - i. Into 70% acceleration
 - c. Partner Run-Jump w/ Bump w/ Stick Landing
 - i. Into 90% acceleration

Recovery

The following recovery plan is suggested following a game of footy. Your club coach may have additional advice for recovery.

- Elevate your legs
 - Lying with your legs propped against a wall or couch so that your legs are above your heart will help the circulation and recovery of your muscles.





- Compression
 - Compression garments such as compression socks or pants can help your legs feel better, particularly when you play multiple games in a day or weekend.
- Water
 - Gentle movements, such as walking, marching, leg swings, butt kicks, walking hamstring and quad stretches in cool or cold pool can be helpful in recovery.
- Don't ignore pain
 - Addressing injuries when they happen is important.
 - Minor injuries can often be treated with R.I.C.E. (Rest, ice, compression, elevation), but if you have any questions or think the injury may be anything more than a minor tweak seek medical consultation. Injuries that cause pain for longer than a 5-7 days should also be addressed. The longer an injury goes unaddressed the longer it will take to heal.
- When in doubt, sit it out
 - Playing through an injury is not worth the repercussions. In particular, if you or a teammate are hit in the head seek medical assessment immediately! Do not return to play in the same day!





Section 3: Further your learning

Watching the game, key terms

Watching the game

If you are new to football, watching AFL games can seem chaotic. Here are some tips for how to learn valuable insights from watching AFL (watchafl.com.au).

- Choose a player who plays your position. Follow them along the field, watch where they go and how they set up
 - You can even count possessions, kicks, backwards handballs, tackles, etc. - choose a skill that you are working on yourself, and see how they execute it
 - Notice where they are on the field in different scenarios
- Watch player positioning around the footy for those not directly involved in play. For example, watch how the defense sets up behind the ball when it is in their forward 50.
- Pick a team to follow week to week. You will start to pick up on their playing style
- When watching AFL games, don't focus too much on how the laws are applied as the USAFL has different interpretations of some laws in the interest of player skill and safety
- Watch AFLW game replays for free [here](#)
- Watch VFL (Victorian Football League) [here](#) and [here](#), and VFLW (Women's Victorians Football League) [here](#)
 - VFL/VFLW is essentially the "minor leagues", or the draft pool/listed players for the AFL. The play will look a little closer to the USAFL play.

Drills

See [Drills Document](#) for a database of drills, organized by skill type (or game sense), and experience level. Includes drills that can be done with low numbers.

Experienced Players

Transitioning from playing with men to women, leadership

Differences between men's and women's football

At some clubs, the numbers of women at training are not large enough to sustain a women's metro league, so women play with men. However, at tournaments, these women will join women's divisions. Here are some tips about the differences between men's and women's footy and how to transition between them

- Women's footy tends to be more congested, with a higher tackle count
 - Be prepared for more stoppages and more tackling





- To combat this, don't fall into the "pack mentality", but instead be around the perimeter of the pack to receive the footy when it spills out
- Kicks will often go shorter distances in women's games
 - Adjust your leads to account for a shorter kicking distance
- A women's footy is a size 4, men's footy is a size 5
 - This often improves women's marking capabilities
- There is usually a wider range of athletic abilities and heights
 - You may need to adjust your kicks depending on the speed and height of your teammate

Leadership

As a veteran of your club, you will be relied upon as a source of knowledge for the constant influx of new players

- COMMUNICATION is so important in this sport, on and off the field, and leaders should set an example of that
- Be open to teaching skills and repeating messages
- Be inclusive. New women will be more likely to stick around if they feel a part of the social circle of the club. As a veteran, it is your job to ensure new women are folded into the team easily.
 - Encourage attendance at social events for new and veteran players to get to know one another.
- Be open to constructive criticism. Just because you have been around the club does not mean there are no areas in which you can improve.

Key Australian Football Terms

- Behind
 - When the footy either hits the middle posts, touches a hand/arm/anything but a kick before crossing the goal line, or goes between the outside posts, it is considered a behind and counts for 1 point
- Block/Shepherd
 - Using your body to prevent a player from running in the direction they wish to go
 - Can be used within 5 meters of the footy to prevent opposition from being able to reach your teammate to tackle them
- Boundary
 - Side-line, out of bounds line
- Fat side
 - The fat side of the ground is the open grass on the opposite side of the field





- Front and center
 - Refers to positioning yourself to receive the footy via handball from your teammate
 - Involves being in front of your teammate, within a 45 degree angle of their vision
 - Imagine a slice of pie, with the point being the teammate. Positioning yourself within this zone makes it easier for your teammate to get the football to you while avoiding a U-turn or potentially getting tackled.
- Hot
 - Similar to “man on” in soccer, you can yell “hot” if you see your teammate has an opposition player closing in on them and they need to get rid of the footy ASAP before being caught.
- On the full
 - Out without being touched by another player or hitting the ground
- Pocket
 - In the deep back or forward areas, the pocket references the outside area (within the forward 50)
- Smother
 - Using hands, arms or body to block a kick close to the kicker by getting in the immediate path of the kick
- Spoil
 - Closed fist that punches the footy away, prevents opposition from taking a mark
- U-turn
 - Generally should be avoided
 - Involved receiving the footy and immediately turning on the spot
 - Dangerous because you cannot see what is immediately behind you; players often get slammed in a tackle from a U-turn
 - Instead, run in the direction you are facing or look for a teammate in the direction you are facing (hence the use of front and center above). If you continue running, if no options appear, you can create a wide turn. By running in the same direction you are facing first before turning, you have created space between yourself and the opposition, giving you time to turn around and assess your options before getting tackled.

A more comprehensive glossary of Australian Football terms can be found [here](#)





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