

2026 ACS AFL Rules

Updated 30 April 2026

ACS football matches shall be played under the rules of the Laws of Australian Football in the current year of competition unless otherwise stated hereunder in these ACS Competition Rules.

1. **2026 New AFL Rules to be implemented in the ACS competition across all competitions:**
 - 1.1. **Last Disposal Out of Bounds:** A free kick is awarded against the last team to dispose of the ball if it goes out of bounds between the 50m arcs (excluding deliberate out of bounds inside the 50m arc). If the umpires are in doubt the ball will be thrown in or shall call a ball up 15 metres in from the boundary line.
 - 1.2. **Ruck contests:** Rucks cannot cross the centre line and engage with their opponent before the ball is contested at centre bounces.
 - 1.3. **Shrugging in Tackles:** A "shrug" or "fend-off" motion by a player in a tackle will now be deemed "prior opportunity," making it easier for umpires to call holding the ball if the player is tackled. **Note:** with the caveat of some common sense particularly with players at lower levels who genuinely don't know what's happening and therefore take longer.
 - 1.4. **Goal Square Starting Positions:** The requirement for a player to start in the goal square at centre ball-ups has been removed to reduce game delays. The 6-6-6 rule for player positioning remains in place.
 - 1.5. **Aligned Kick-in Times:** The "reasonable time" allowed for a player to take a kick-in after a behind has been reduced from 12 seconds to **eight seconds**, aligning it with the time allowed for set kicks around the ground. **Note:** with the caveat of some common sense particularly with players at lower levels who genuinely don't know what's happening and therefore take longer.
2. **Mercy Rule:** Applies to all boys and girls competitions, except for 1st Grade Boys and 1st Grade Girls where no mercy rules will apply (note: 2.3. applies to 1st Girls competition).

The mercy rule will be triggered when a team leads by 60 points or more as follows:

- 2.1. the trailing team will gain possession of the ball via a free kick from the centre circle after every score; goals and points by either team and;
- 2.2. 2 players from the leading team must come off the field.
- 2.3. **For 1st Girls Competition:** If the trailing team have sufficient numbers, they may add 2 players to the field to a maximum of 18 players on the field.

If the margin falls below 60 points full rules resume.

Mercy Rule: recording the final score

Limit the entered score to a maximum differential of 60 points based on the losing team score.

E.g., If the winning team wins by 120 to 6 it's recorded as a 66 – 6 win. **Note:** Sports Administrators and coaches must enter the mercy rule score in the ACS online platform as above.

3. **ACS Runner Rule:** One runner may only enter the field to deliver one message to a player and must leave the ground immediately after the message is delivered. Failure to immediately leave when requested by the umpire will result in a free kick to be taken at the spot the ball is at the time or where the runner is whichever is the greatest advantage to the team receiving the free kick. (Note after a point, runners may not go into the 50m arc at the scoring end).
4. **6-6-6 Rule** will be implemented for all boys' divisions.
5. **Rules not being implemented by ACS:**
 - 5.1. STAND the Mark
6. **Operations**
 - 6.1. **The Match Day Checklist** will need to be completed and signed before matches can commence.

6.1.1. Appointment of the match day manager: The Home team must appoint a Match Day Manager. The Match Day Manager may be one of the following: Coach, Team Manager, Director of Sport or other suitable support staff member.

6.1.2. The Match Day Manager is responsible for the following:

- Venue inspection and completing the Match Day Checklist (on the back of the Official ACS Scoresheet)
- Ensuring both sets of team scoresheets are fully completed and signed off by the umpires
- Submission of the completed and signed Match Day Checklist to the Director of Sport for the home team (Match Day Checklists must be filed and stored for a minimum of 7 years)

7.2. Schools Duty of Care to provide a safe surface and safe playing environment

This is the sole responsibility of the home team who should (a) walk the ground to ensure the surface is safe and free from holes or debris, that sprinkler heads are correctly covered and (b) Ensure goal and point posts are padded. Where concrete cricket pitches exist, they must be well covered with soft and safe turf overlay with rubber backing. The Match Day Manager is responsible for completing the Match Day Checklist and ensuring the safety of the playing surface and environment.

7.3. 1st & 2nds: Appointment of a Team Manager

Each team shall appoint a Team Manager. The Team Manager is responsible for the following:

- 7.3.1. Ensuring one goal umpire in 2nds and one boundary umpire in 1st and 2nds are provided and are correctly attired and with the required equipment.
- 7.3.2. Ensures one timekeeper is available and sits with the opposition's timekeeper. If one is not available the Team Manager will act as the Timekeeper.
- 7.3.3. The Home Team Manager will greet the umpires, direct them to the umpires' change rooms and ensures both scoresheets and any incident reports are completed and signed and umpire payments are made at the conclusion of the match.
- 7.3.4. Records and manages when the 'order off' rule is imposed on a player(s) with a yellow card (off for 15 minutes; no replacement) or red card; (no replacement for 15 minutes).

8. Matches

8.1. MATCH TIMES:

It is important that matches start on time and the times for quarter/half time breaks are strictly adhered to. The latest finishing time for matches is 4.15 pm. If, due to unforeseen circumstances a school arrives late but before the forfeit time of 3.00 pm, the quarters can be shortened to ensure the match is completed by 4.00 pm. (Refer to ACS Competition Rule 2.5 for 5 minute mandatory warm up information).

1st XVIII Boys

1st Boys Matches shall consist of 4 x 20 minutes; with NO time on (except Grand finals as below under OFFICIALS: 'Timekeepers' and directed by the umpires)

Time Intervals should be:

Quarter time	5 minutes
Half time	10 minutes
3-Quarter Time	5 minutes

1st XVIII Girls, 2nd XVIII Boys, Intermediate Boys and Years 7 Boys

Matches shall consist of 4 x 15 minutes, with NO time on, except for injury in Grand Finals as directed by the umpires

Time intervals should be:

Quarter time	5 minutes
Half time	10 minutes
3-Quarter Time	5 minutes

8.2. Footballs to be supplied by home team

- 1st, 2nd XVIII games and Intermediate Boys: Full size Sherrin (size 5)
- All Girls and Year 7 Boys: Size 4 Sherrin
- The ball should be in excellent condition. A new ball should be used for the Grand Final.

8.3. Player Numbers

8.3.1. **Boys** (all levels): A team may consist of unlimited players but no more than 18 players may take the field at any one time. A match cannot commence or continue if a team has less than 14 players on the field.

8.3.2. **New for boys in 2026: Exception:**

- Senior Girls 1st Football
- Senior Boys 2nd Football
- Intermediate B Football

This rule is amended to support up to 18 players on the field under certain circumstances. If these parameters are not met, then matches are played as 16 a side.

For no more than 18 players on the field at any one time (for both teams):

- Both teams may consist of unlimited players but no less than 20 players i.e. a minimum of two players on the bench and then no more than 18 players may take the field at any one time. Once a match commences with 18 a side, it remains that number for the match.

For no more than 16 players on the field at any one time (for both teams):

- If one or both teams have 19 players or less available for a match, then no more than 16 players are on the field at any one time. The opposition team is not required to reduce numbers should a team have less than 16 players on the field. A match cannot commence or continue if a team has less than 12 players on the field.

9. **Uniform**

- 9.1. All players' jumpers must wear team uniform with all jumpers numbered
- 9.2. Correct uniform includes team football shorts with no pockets and team socks. Lycra shorts may be worn under shorts but they must be skin colour.
- 9.3. It is strongly recommended that players wear mouth guards.
- 9.4. Gloves are not permitted
- 9.5. Jewellery is not permitted

10. **Officials**

10.1. Umpire Appointments:

10.1.1. The ACS Director of Umpiring will allocate:

10.1.1.1. Two field umpires for all senior 1st and 2nd XVIII Boys matches and 1st XVIII Girls matches.

10.1.1.2. Two goal umpires for 1st Senior Boys and 1st Senior Girls matches

Schools must notify the ACS office and ACS Director of Umpiring; John Harvey of any venue changes within one week of a match

10.1.2. The home team will provide independent and competent field umpires in Intermediate and Year 7. The Intermediate A and B Boys competitions will have 2 umpires supplied by the home team. (The ACS AFL Director of Umpiring can provide umpires for other year levels if required but this needs to be organised separately, with a management fee applied)

10.2. Schools are to provide the following officials at all levels:

- One boundary umpire who shall carry a whistle and be attired in umpiring whites or the official school tracksuit or sports uniform. Boundary umpires are to signal when the ball is out of bounds.

For the 2nds, Intermediate and Year 7 competitions:

- One goal umpire who shall possess a pair of white flags and keep score. Goal umpires must use flags to confirm score after signalling. Scores must be checked at the end of each quarter.

(With appropriate notification the ACS Director of Umpiring can provide goal & boundary umpires.)

- Support Staff: Each school is allowed two trainers and a runner. They must be dressed in school tracksuit or sports uniform. Trainers and runners are not to speak to opposing players or the umpire. Except where the runner shall seek permission from the field umpire to have a replacement player enter the ground.

Timekeepers:

- Home and Away and Semi Finals matches:
 - **No Time On in any Home and Away or Semi Finals matches**
 - Coaches or Team Managers may carry out this responsibility in home and away games. Timekeeper duties include:
 - Timing each quarter.
 - Timing a player who is ordered off from the field once the runner has notified them of the order off. The timekeepers notify the runner when the 15 minutes has expired who must confirm with the field umpire the player is able to return to the field.
- **Time On: 1st Boys and 1st Girls Grand Final Only:**
Timekeepers: Time on only in the grand final but only if two qualified timekeepers are appointed and as directed by the umpires. For 1st Boys and 1st Girls Grand Finals each team is to provide one timekeeper to sit together. Timekeeper duties include:
 - Timing each quarter
 - Stopping the clock after goals to the resumption of play
 - as instructed by the umpire due to an extended delay (e.g.: injury delay / lost ball)
 - Timing a player who is ordered off from the field once the runner has notified them of the order off. The timekeepers notify the runner when the 15 minutes has expired who must confirm with the field umpire the player is able to return to the field.
- Coaches or Team Managers must monitor time for any players subjected to the 'Order Off' rule.
- At games end, score sheets and any incident reports are to be fully completed and signed off by coaches and umpires.

11. **Playing the game in the right spirit:** Prior to the start of the match: umpires, coaches and captains shall meet to agree on playing in the correct spirit of the game and toss the coin in the centre of the ground. Coaches and captains are responsible for ensuring that their teams play the game in accordance with the ACS Code of Ethics and Behaviour.

12. **ACS Order off Rule:** The ACS has two categories of send offs:

RED CARD	Serious offences	Send off for the game	No replacement for 15 minutes
YELLOW CARD	Minor offences	Send off for 15 minutes	No replacement

The decision to order off and the card issued rests solely with the field umpire. Goal and Boundary Umpires have no power to order players from the field.

As a guide we provide the following:

- **Three or more red cards from one team during a game will result in the immediate forfeiture of the match with zero points applied (0)**
- **Match abandoned due to behaviour:** where umpires are forced to call a game off due to behavioural concerns, the result of the match will be determined by the Heads of Sport from the two schools with a report and recommendation from the umpires.

Specific Offences that may cause a red card (send off for the game – NO replacement for 15 minutes)

- intentionally, recklessly or negligently making contact with or striking an Umpire;
- attempting to make contact with or strike an Umpire;
- using abusive, insulting, threatening or obscene language towards or in relation to an Umpire;
- use of an obscene gesture towards an umpire or another player;
- intentionally, recklessly or negligently kicking or attempting to kick another person;
- striking or attempting to strike another player
- spitting at or on another person
- failing to leave the Playing Surface when directed to do so by a field Umpire;
- being sent off for a second time in the same match
- an act of misconduct of a serious nature.

Specific Offences that may cause a yellow card (15 minute send off – NO replacement)

- minor strikes or attempted strikes
- disputing umpires decision
- general swearing
- an act of misconduct of a minor nature

ACS Incident Report

The umpire(s) must complete an ACS Incident Report where a red card is issued with copies emailed to the ACS Director of Umpiring and ACS Executive Officer. The Coach of the player(s) concerned must provide the umpires with the ACS Incident Report form and forward completed reports to their Director of Sport for distribution. Therefore, both the home and away teams must always carry copies of the incident report forms.

Player leaving the ground

A Player ordered off by the umpire shall leave immediately through the interchange gate.

Where a Player refuses to or does not immediately leave the field when ordered to do so by an Umpire, the following shall apply:

- the Player shall be further reported for misconduct in failing to follow a direction of an Umpire;
- the Match shall immediately end and the reported Player's Team shall forfeit the Match

Replacing the player

The 15 min replacement time will not start until the player ordered off reaches the boundary. After the expiration of 15 minutes the runner shall seek permission from the field umpire to have a replacement player enter the ground.

13. ACS Local Rules

13.1. Field umpires may overrule goal umpire if they believe a clear error has been made.

13.2. Rushed behinds will NOT result in a free kick.

13.3. 50m Rule applies in all ACS Football Competitions.

13.4. **Zero tolerance for disputing umpires decisions:** As in all junior football there is a zero tolerance policy for disputing umpires' decisions by coaches, players and spectators and this is consistent with the ACS Code of Ethics and Behaviour.

Coaches; if you have questions about the officiating of a match you may approach the umpires briefly to discuss during the breaks and away from students.

13.5. **Penalty for late starts:** If players are not in position and ready to play 2 minutes after the official break time has expired, a free kick will be awarded against the late team to be taken at the centre circle.

Umpires will give 2 warnings; whistle and verbal – First warning one minute prior to quarter's start and a second warning a minute after play was due to start.

13.6. **Negative Tactics / Harassment:** Any player who is not involved in the play but engages in harassing an opponent either physically or verbally by; bullying, sledging, bumping, pushing, holding the jumper or any other unacceptable behaviour will result in a free kick to the opponent.

14. **Only Authorised Officials Inside Fence:** Only the coach, two officials, two trainers and the runner are to be inside the fence. Everyone else must be behind the fence. Play will cease until this rule is complied with.
15. **Result if Match is Unfinished and Called Off:** (*due to weather or safety concerns*). Should a match be called off due to extreme weather or safety concerns then for a result to be declared the match must have reached half time then the score as it stands when play ceased shall be taken as the final result. Should a match not reach half time then it is deemed a draw. This does not apply for matches called off due to behavioural reasons or if team numbers reduce below the minimum.
16. **Drawn Grand Finals:** If at full time scores are level, then an extra two 5 minute periods shall be played. The first period teams will kick to the same end they did in the last quarter. After the first period teams will change ends with a two minute changeover period. If scores remain level at the end of the second period of extra time the time keeper will not sound the final siren until the next score who will then be the winner. Coaches WILL NOT address teams at all after $\frac{3}{4}$ time.

Contact Information for Football Umpire arrangements and notification of late venue changes:

ACS Director of Umpiring: John Harvey

Mobile: 0407 298 642 (please call or text if venue changes are within 24 hours of a match)

Email: swampy25@gmail.com

2026 ACS AFL 10's Rules (Year 7 Girls and Intermediate Girls)

Last Updated 29 April 2026

1. Match Times:

- Year 7: 4 x 10 minute quarters
- Intermediate: 4 x 12 minute quarters

Quarter time	5 minutes
Half time	10 minutes
3-Quarter Time	5 minutes

2. **Footballs:** Year 7 and Intermediate Girls: Size 4
3. **Player Numbers:** Year 7 and Intermediate Girls: A team may consist of unlimited players but no more than 10 players may take the field at any one time. A match cannot commence or continue if a team has less than 7 players on the field. At all centre bounces teams must set up with 3 Defenders – 4 Midfielders – 3 Forwards
4. **Applies to Year 7 and Intermediate Girls Football:** Once a team is 60 or more points behind, they have the option to add 2 players on the field, if they have enough players to do so. If the trailing team does not have additional players, then the team that is ahead will take 2 players off. If the margin falls below 60 points full rules resume.
5. **Uniform:** All players must wear team numbered football jerseys.
6. **Officials:** The home team will provide one independent and competent field umpire
7. **THE ACS ORDER OFF RULE APPLIES:** Refer to AFL Football Rules – Rule 12.
8. **For Year 7 Girls only: MODIFIED TACKLING RULE:** The tackler and the player being tackled must keep their feet and cannot be taken to ground. Umpire to award a free kick if a player is brought to the ground when tackled. **No Year 7 Girls competition in 2026**
7. **Boundary Throw ins: Last Disposal Out of Bounds:** A free kick is awarded against the last team to dispose of the ball if it goes out of bounds between the 50m arcs (excluding deliberate out of bounds inside the 50m arc). If the umpires are in doubt the ball will be thrown in or shall call a ball up 15 metres in from the boundary line.
9. **Goal Umpiring:** Schools are encouraged to provide a goal umpire (can be students), when a goal umpire is not available, the field umpire will make the final decision. The Field umpire may overrule any goal umpiring decisions.
10. **Penalty:** 15m penalty rule applies in all ACS Year 7 and Intermediate Girls Football matches.
11. **Support Staff:** Each school is allowed a runner that can deliver and coach on the field of play.
12. **Field Dimensions:** Grounds for Year 7 and Intermediate Girls is to be an oval shape but reduced in size. Approximate size should be length from goal-to-goal, 100m – 120m x 70m across. No rectangle fields are to be used.