COMPETITION RULES

Australian Rules Football

Revised | April 2026

1. TEAM ENTRY

1.1 Grades are:

Senior A, B and C - it is recommended that teams are selected from girls in Years 10-12. When selecting girls younger than Years 10-12 in the senior divisions, size, skill level and physical strength must be taken into consideration.

Middle A and B - middle teams will consist of only players from up to Year 9.

The Shield grades are **Senior A** and **Middle A**.
The Pennant grade is **Senior B**.

1.2 Schools may enter the grade where they best fit.

1.3 Senior A, B, and C, and Middle A:

1.3.1 Teams will consist of 16 players on the field. A team must commence the match with a minimum of 14 players for a result to count. Any less will result in a forfeit, however a 'scratch match' may proceed.

In Shield grades, a team may request that their opposition lend them a player or match their numbers if they do not have enough. If this happens, this is considered a forfeit by the team making the request, and a 'scratch match' may proceed.

1.3.2 In non-Shield/non-Pennant grades, every effort should be made to ensure an equal number of players on the field between the two teams for the duration of the game. Equalisation options may include:

- Offering spare players to the opposition team OR
- Reducing on-field number of players to 15 or 14

Equal player numbers is within the spirit of school sport.

1.4 Middle B:

Teams are to consist of 12 players on the field. Matches can be played by less per side if mutually agreed upon by both teams prior to the game, however every effort should be made to ensure an equal number of players on the field between the two teams for the duration of the game.

1.5 Schools are expected to provide 1 field for every 2 teams entered in the competition.

1.6 Schools who do not enter a team in an A-grade (or equivalent) competition are not eligible for finals in the corresponding B-grade (or equivalent) competition.

2. ELIGIBILITY

2.1 Eligibility for a finals match: If half or more of the player(s) matches (including any semi-finals) have been played in any given grade, they can play in a final in that grade (as confirmation, if a player plays 50% of their matches in Senior A grade and 50% in Middle A grade, they would be eligible for finals in either grade).

For avoidance of doubt – players **can** play in a higher grade than where they have played 50% of their matches. For example, if a player had played solely in the Senior Bs, and the Senior As are short a player for a Final, the Senior B player may play.

A player may only play in **one** IGSSA Grand Final in each sport.

Schools are expected to keep player attendance records at games so that this information can be provided upon request (for example, student roll in Clipboard).

3. UMPIRING AND OFFICIALS

3.1 IGSSA will ensure the provision of 2 Field umpires for each **Senior A** IGSSA Australian Football match.

3.2 'Home' or first listed school will provide two field umpires for all other grades. Note that Senior C and Middle B can have 1 umpire. IGSSA can organise field umpires for schools upon request.

3.3 1 x goal umpire to be provided by each team.
It is preferable that match officials for Senior A Grade are not enrolled students at participating schools. If it is necessary for a student to be allocated to an official role, then they must be accredited or in a training/pathway program for accreditation, and not wearing school uniform. They should be operating alone in these roles (i.e., goal umpires should not be standing in groups behind football goals).

3.4 Boundary umpires are not required.

3.5 1 x runner per team can deliver a coach's message during play. They are required to deliver the message as quickly as possible and come straight off the ground.

3.6 Water carriers can go onto the ground at any time. They cannot interfere with play, loiter on the ground or occupy space on the ground. They cannot barrack, give directions, or communicate with players other than in providing water. Water carriers cannot be inside 50m when the ball is in that area, or within the centre square at a centre bounce.

4. MATCH RULES (INC IGSSA-SPECIFIC RULES)

4.1 The competition is to be played according to Part D of the current 'Laws of Australian Football' unless stipulated below.

4.2 Matches are to be played on Australian Football grounds where possible. Middle B grade games are *ideally* set up on a smaller playing area to suit 12 players.

4.3 Games will start as close to 4.00pm as possible. If teams are late to arrive due to transport distance, then games will be reduced in time unless the finishing time can be extended by mutual agreement. Coaches should negotiate time before the start of matches. If a team is not ready to play by 4.20pm, it will be considered a forfeit by the late team, however a friendly game may still proceed under agreed revised conditions.

4.4 Teams play 4 x 12-minute quarters (with breaks of 3/5/3 minutes) with a running clock. Games must be completed by 5.15pm. If teams are late to arrive due to transport distance, then all quarters will be reduced equally in time unless the finishing time can be extended by mutual agreement. Coaches should negotiate time before the start of matches.

For finals games only, the clock will be stopped for injury. This will happen when the player is not able to leave the field in a reasonable amount of time, and will be adjudged by the field umpire.

Shield grades only – quarter lengths are to be 14 minutes where games are able to commence before 4.15pm. If game commences at or after 4.15pm, quarters will be reduced to a maximum of 12 minutes.

4.5 Choice of ends shall be determined by the toss of a coin.

4.6 Tackling is permitted (no sling tackles are permitted).

4.7 A mark to be awarded when a player marks the ball directly from another player's kick that has travelled at least 10m.

4.8 Last disposal rule applies between the 50m arcs. This means a free kick will be paid against the last player who disposes of the ball before it goes out of bounds.

4.9 Soccering off the ground is permitted (but not encouraged).

4.10 A 25m penalty can be awarded at the umpire's discretion.

4.11 Starting zones of 5-6-5 (if playing 16-a-side) are required. This can be proportionally modified for 12-a-side games.

4.12 In all grades, the maximum number of players on the bench is 8. The number of interchanges allowed during the game is unlimited.

5. RESULTS

5.1 In the event of tied scores at game end, the match will be deemed a draw. There is no provision for extra time (this excludes finals).

5.2 Incomplete matches

6.2.1 If a match is unable to commence for reasons beyond the control of either team, then every reasonable effort should be made to reschedule. Shield and Pennant grades should be prioritised where practical when venues are weather (or otherwise) affected. If a mutually agreeable reschedule date between the participating schools cannot be reached, then the match result will be a draw, with a 0-point differential.

6.2.2 If a match has commenced but is not able to proceed at any time prior to **half time**, the result will be a draw with scores at the time of match interruption used to calculate score differential.

6.2.3 If the **half time interval** has been reached and the match is unable to proceed at any time after, the scores of the teams at the time the match was interrupted shall be deemed the final scores of the match.

6.2.4 If **half or more** games from an IGSSA Division are unable to be completed in a single Shield/Pennant round, then **all games** from that round in that Division will be considered a draw, with a 0-point differential. For the avoidance of doubt, for example, if there are six scheduled Shield/Pennant games in a round, and three are unable to be completed, then all games in that round are considered a draw.

5.3 Scorers/Timers or an official rep from each school to be responsible for keeping score and time for the match. Both to sit together for the entire match and confer scores with officials at each break.

5.4 All results from the preceding week's matches must be submitted to Clipboard by 48 hours post-fixture in order for accurate Premiership Tables to be published in a timely manner.

5.5 Three points will be awarded for a win, one point for a draw and zero points for a loss. The maximum win tally that will be registered is 48 points. If teams win (or lose) by more than 48 points, it will be just the 48-point margin registered. In the event of a bye, the team drawn to have a bye will be awarded zero points. In the event of a forfeit, the non-offending team will be awarded three points and the maximum winning margin. The offending team will be awarded zero points and the maximum losing margin.

6. FINALS

6.1 Shield grades – single pool - two semi-finals, 1 v 4 and 2 v 3, will be scheduled, with the winners of the two semi-finals (finalists) playing for the Shield in the Grand Final. The winner of the Grand Final will be awarded the Shield. If season length/number of nominations does not allow for semi-finals, then a 1 v 2 Grand Final will be scheduled, and the winner of the Grand Final will be awarded the Shield.

Shield grades – two pools - two semi-finals, 1 (Pool A) v 2 (Pool B), and 2 (Pool A) v 1 (Pool B), will be scheduled, with the winners of the two semi-finals (finalists) playing for the Shield in the Grand Final. The winner of the Grand Final will be awarded the Shield. If season length/number of nominations does not allow for semi-finals, then a 1 (Pool A) v 1 (Pool B) Grand Final will be scheduled, and the winner of the Grand Final will be awarded the Shield.

Pennant grades – one Grand Final, 1 v 2, will be scheduled, and the winner of the Grand Final will be awarded the Pennant.

The team which finishes higher on the regular season ladder has the right to host any semi-finals, or the Grand Final, at their choice of home venue. In the event that the preferred home venue is not available, IGSSA will schedule an alternative venue in consultation with the school with hosting rights.

In the event that finalists are from different pools, the hosting rights will be granted to the team which earned more ladder points. If teams in one pool played fewer games than the teams in the other pool, overall ladders will be adjusted on average wins.

Finalists will be determined by total points initially (i.e., win/loss tally) and then SD (Score differential) if points are equal but a split needs to be made.

If the Score Differential is also equal, then the team who has won in Head-to-Head games in any Shield matches from the regular season will advance. Where more than one H2H Shield game has been played, total score from the two games shall be combined to determine a winner. For example, if Team Blue and Team Red

played two Shield games in the regular season, with Blue winning the first 3-0, and Red winning the second 2-0, Team Blue would advance.

6.2 If a Finals match is tied, a 2-minute break is called, followed by a change of ends. The match then operates on the "golden point" system, whereby the next score wins the game.

6.3 If either or both semi-final matches cannot be played, the higher-ranked team will advance to the Grand Final.

6.4 If no Grand Final match can be played and team(s) are on tied points in Shield/Pennant grades at the end of the season, the Shield/Pennant winner will be identified using the following criteria:

i. Head-to-Head – Calculate the premiership points for games played between *each team involved in the tie* only. The school with the most Head-to-Head premiership points wins the Shield/Pennant (providing equal number of Head-to-Head games between tied teams exist). If there is still no clear winner from Head-to-Head calculation, then:

ii. Score Differential – Calculate the score differential for all games played. The team with the greatest score differential will be awarded the Shield/Pennant. If there is still no clear winner from the score differential, then:

iii. The Shield/Pennant will be shared between all teams on tied points.

7. EQUIPMENT

7.1 Each school is to provide a Yellow Sherrin MATCH size 4 ball for their home games.

7.2 Mouthguards are compulsory.

7.3 Teams **must** use interchange gates when entering and exiting the field for rotations. Both teams must be set up on the same side of the field at either side of the gates. Gates can be marked with paint or cones.

7.4 If teams' uniforms are similar in colour, it is the responsibility of the away/second-listed team to provide clash bibs or a clash uniform to wear.

SPORTSMANSHIP GUIDELINES

Sport plays an essential role in the personal and social development of students, fostering teamwork, discipline, and resilience. To ensure that every student has a positive and enriching experience on the field or court, it is important that we prioritise sportsmanship, respect, and enjoyment in every competition.

IGSSA's Sportsmanship Guidelines are designed to maintain a healthy balance in competition, ensuring that students from all skill levels and backgrounds have the opportunity to feel engaged and supported. In this spirit, collegiality and open communication between schools and coaches are vital. By working together, we can create an environment where the well-being of our athletes comes first, where every match is competitive yet compassionate, and where the values of respect, fairness, and encouragement shine through.

These guidelines are a reminder that while winning is part of sport, the ultimate goal is to nurture a love for the game and foster strong character in all our students.

RULES

At the below point margin for the appropriate grades;

- 48 points for all grades

The following rule/s shall apply:

- The trailing team is awarded a free kick from the centre after each goal, and all players must be in their positions when this kick is taken (for avoidance of doubt – the leading team may not move all their players to their defensive half, knowing the kick is going in that direction)

- When the trailing team is kicking in following a behind from the leading team, they may take the kick from the 50m arc instead of the square

When the score differential reaches 68 points:
The leading teams removes a player from the ground

When the score differential reaches 88 points:
The leading team removes another player from the ground

The maximum score difference (48 points) is awarded in the recording of results once the margin is reached and the Sportsmanship Guidelines are activated.

CONSIDERATIONS

The following are not implemented rules, however, suggestions for coaches to help ensure sportsmanship is present for all teams.

- Common sense is the first factor that need to be considered – rotating the best players off the court/field or providing players opportunities in different positions.
- Collegiality and communication are important between schools/coaches.