



A quick intro to Women's Aussie Rules

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Tackling

Tackling must be between the knees and shoulders. To avoid being penalised for a high tackle, go well below the shoulders. It's a good idea anyway to tackle around the waist and to include their arms, to limit the arm movement of your opponent so they find it hard to pass the ball off. For the most, the object of a tackle is to wrap your opponent up, so they can't pass the ball. Sometimes, though, the nature of the tackle will be to force your opponent to the ground.

When tackling from behind, make sure you bring your opponent directly down or to the side. Umpires are really strict if you tackle from behind and force your opponent down in any forward movement – often known as “in the back”.



Being Tackled

The only time you can be tackled, is, if in possession of the ball. You can be bumped off the ball – but that's a different action.

Your opponent can tackle you by wrapping their arms around you between your knees and shoulders and therefore limiting your movement. An opponent can also charge at you and knock you to the ground – again providing they tackle you between the knees

and shoulders. You only need to be tackled once this way, to realise the importance of not holding onto the ball unless the game situation at that time requires it. Hopefully, your team members around you should be alerting you by telling you ‘you're hot’ (ie someone is on your tail) or if you have the time.

Kicking in Danger

You can kick the ball directly off the ground, providing there is absolutely no chance of you kicking someone's hands, head or any other body part while doing so. Typically, kicking a ball directly off the ground would be done when sprinting to a ball that is nowhere near any other player and you know someone is hot on your heels, and it is to your advantage to kick in front of yourself. You would not do this in a pack situation or where someone is diving for the ball. It is extremely dangerous and will result in a penalty to the other team. Using your hands to gather the ball is considered your best option anyway in most circumstances – as kicking off the ground still does not give you certain possession – and while it may be the ‘easier’ option to kick – it can be a little lazy.

Bumping

Bumping is a technique used to push your opponent out of the way while going for the ball. You can only bump a player if 5 metres from the ball – by using your hip, shoulder, chest, arms or open hand. Typically, this is done while you and your opponent are both running for the ball – but can be done in other ways – but you can't do it when the ball is nowhere near you.



Holding the Ball

Part of the excitement of Aussie Rules is the speed of the game. It is considered an offence not to try to be 'playing' the ball. If you have the ball, and are tackled and make no effort to handball, or kick away immediately, you will be penalised for 'Holding the Ball'.

Centre Bounce/ Centre Throw/ Rucking



At the beginning of each quarter, and after every goal, the ball returns to the centre circle to be thrown up and contested by the 2 opposing rucks. In men's afl, you will probably have seen that the ball is bounced by the umpire. Note that you are only allowed 4 players from your team within the centre box, while this takes place. Other times that the umpire will throw the ball up between 2 contestants is when the ball has been unable to be played. It is not necessary for the same people to go up, but is usually someone with height.

Taking a Mark

If you catch the ball on the full after it has been kicked by a team member or an opponent, it is known as 'taking a mark'. The ball has to travel a distance of at least 10 metres and not have been touched by anyone else. The opposition can not tackle you immediately on taking the mark, unless you decide to play-on by moving forward / sideways off the spot you marked the ball. In most instances (and probably more so while learning the rules), players will walk back a little, to take a run up to kick the ball. The opposition, at this point will be standing on the spot that you marked the ball (see *Holding the Mark below*) to try to smother your kick or at least to distract you.



Holding the Mark

If the opposition takes a mark (catching the ball on the full after being kicked by one of your team members or one of the opposition players), then you need to stand on the place the ball was caught, which the umpire will indicate. You need to then stretch your arms up and jump in anticipation to try to intercept the ball, once it is/ as it is being kicked. If you manage to intercept the kick, it is known as a smother. If you or a team mate do not hold the mark, it may result in the player who marked the ball, heading off unopposed.



Smothering

Smothering is known when a player kicks the ball and it is intercepted by the opposition, usually with their hands. It is a great achievement to do this and takes some courage and accuracy.

There is definitely an art to angle your body and position your hands and arms to prevent any injuries.



Free Kick

If your opponent is awarded a free kick, you need to hand the ball to them fairly precisely. If you throw the ball in anyway not directly at them, they could be awarded a 50 metre penalty which means they advance 50 metres towards their goal. Also, free kicks usually go to the player who has had the infringement against them i.e. if someone is tackled high – it is that player who has to take the free kick.

Scoring

The object of AFL is to kick as many goals as you can – worth 6 points. A goal is scored when it is kicked by an attacking player through the middle posts without the ball being touched by the opposition. If it is kicked by an attacking player through the outer posts, then it is worth only 1 point and known as a behind.

If the opposition kick or touch or handball the ball as it goes through any of the posts, then it is also known as a behind and worth only 1 point also. A defender will deliberately put a ball through the goals they are defending if she feels that the risk of the opposition scoring a goal is too high. This is known as a 'rushed behind'. Each team is expected to supply their own goal umpire throughout the season with the exception being the finals games.



Ball out of bounds

If the ball is kicked over the boundary line on the full or if it is deliberately propelled otherwise, then the opposition gets to kick the ball in. If the ball goes over the boundary line in any other way, then it is thrown in. In men's footie, there are boundary umpires who do this. Presently with the swaff competition, 2 players (1 from each team) stand on the line with their backs to the field and the player from the attacking half that play is in, will throw it in using both hands and over their head. Boundary umpires are supplied during some of the finals games (see picture left).

Handballing

After kicking, handballing is the technique most used to move the ball around, and to maintain possession. You can't throw the ball like in league, netball etc, but you can bat the ball in front of you, or tap the ball away from your opponent. To handball, position the ball on one of your outstretched palms, clench your fist with the other hand and punch the ball off your palm using a short swinging action with a neat follow through. When forming the fist, focus on using the triangular shape formed by your index finger to help guide the ball. If you are punching with your right hand, step forward at the same time with your left foot for control of balance. It's definitely easier than how it sounds.

Spoiling

If the pressure is on, then it might be safer to just repel the ball out of the playing area by punching the ball away. Defenders are often seen doing this if it is too risky for them to fail attempting to take a mark.



Running with the ball / bouncing

You can only run 15 metres while holding the ball before you have to release it. You can continue to keep possession by bouncing the ball or touching the ground with the ball, providing you do it before the 15 metre limit. This is often done if you have no-one to pass to and you have clear space in front of yourself. Also, it is sometimes done to hold up the game, to give your players time to setup in their attacking positions. Be careful not to get carried away with this one – as you should always look for your passing options first and may be caught holding the ball.



Shepherding

Shepherding is one of the best offensive tactics. The idea is to prevent the opposition from tackling or getting close to the player in your team who has the ball. This can be done by positioning yourself between your team mate with the ball and any oncoming opposition.

Arms are usually outstretched to minimise access by

the opposition. (see left) It's generally a good practice to also put your body between the ball and any opposing player (see right) to gain the advantage when going for any ball.



Talking

Communication on the field is paramount. Especially because players can attack you from 360°, it's important that your team mates alert you of your situation. One of the most dangerous situations is when a player thinks they have time to consider their next move, and a defender is only seconds away from tackling them to the ground because no-one has informed them.

Preventing and Minimising Injury

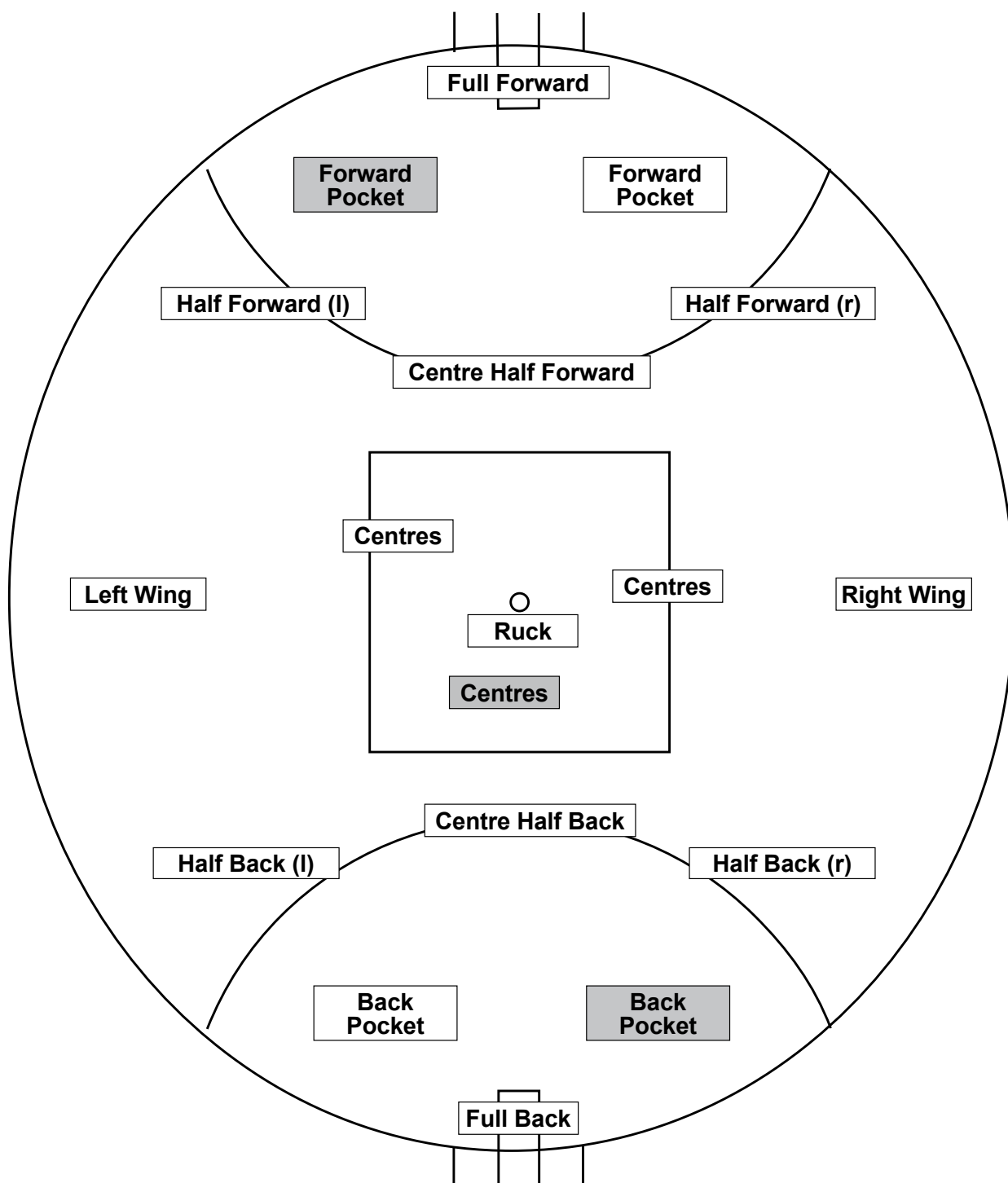
Wearing mouthguards (which are compulsory), talking on the field, fitness preparation and conditioning, pregame warm-up, staying hydrated etc are all things that you can do to help prevent injury playing AFL. Other injuries, unfortunately, may occur due to players' ignorance of the rules or lack of discipline, such as, kicking in danger, high tackling and tackling late.

Please note, that essentially, this is a guide for players who are new to the game or who have been playing a short time. While there are some tips on playing, this is not a technique guide. It relates more to what you can and can't do on the field.

Playing Positions

SWAFL plays a 16-a-side game (which is great for our fitness!). SWAFL does however permit as many subs as your team may have. If you are subbing, the player going on waits until the player coming off has done so. Subbing is also done at a specific point of the field – usually at the halfway point on the side. Subbing can be done at any time. The game is played over 20 minute quarters.

Below is a 'traditional' 18-a-side field positions for a men's game. With the women's games because they are played with three less, they tend to drop one from up front, one from the middle and one from the back (coloured in grey) – but obviously this is a matter of choice.



Staying on your feeting

As a last ditch effort, it may be necessary to go all out and aim to tackle an opponent – but be careful with overdoing this as you several things may occur: 1) it requires a lot of energy to recover from being on the ground 2) you could badly injure yourself 3) the minute you are on the ground – your team is one player down