

## Australian Rules Football



This guidance provides measures that should be taken by players, clubs, match officials, volunteers, coaches, and spectators before, during and after all Australian Rules football activity as well as specific advice relating to clubs, coaches, and matches.

It should be read in conjunction with the latest UK Government guidance.

For all activity, the relevant UK Government social distancing guidance should always be adhered to (including throughout warm-ups) save for when there are any changes in the Government guidance.

### Club preparations

Clubs are only allowed to return when directed by AFL England and your league representatives. All activity must be authorised.

Each Club shall ensure that they have provisions in place for the following where applicable:

- Entry exit and parking arrangements in place at venues that ensures social distancing can be maintained.
- Clubs must display the appropriate signage, at all entry and exit points, to ensure that people maintain social distancing rules.
- Clubs shall implement traffic flow systems where possible and appropriate.
- Outline socially distanced areas for teams, officials, and spectators.
- Clubs must also have appropriate hygiene provisions in place. Guidance on this can be found [here](#).

All participants prior to returning to train Australian rules football must review club waiver requirements and sign onto the register for each session.

Before returning to any matches they must have re-registered or registered to via footy web system. This will ensure that participants are aware of the increase in transmission risk associated with partaking in even socially distanced group activity and should ensure that all participants are clear that they are opting to participate in Australian rules football.

All participants (players, coaches, officials, volunteers and spectators) should check for symptoms of COVID-19 prior to attending any activity at Clubs. In line with current UK Government Guidance, if an individual is symptomatic and/or living in a household with a possible COVID-19 infection they should remain at home and follow UK Government guidance.

In addition, any participants who have been asked to isolate by NHS Test and Trace because they are a contact of a known COVID-19 case, or they have returned from a Country that doesn't have travel corridor exemption, must not exercise outside their home or garden and must not exercise with others.

- Personal hygiene measures should be carried out at home before, during and after Australian rules football activity.
- Participants should always bring their own hand sanitiser where possible and maintain strict and frequent hand hygiene measures.
- Participants should follow UK Government guidance on best practice for travel, including minimising the use of public transport and limiting car sharing.



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Each Club should appoint a Club COVID Officer to help assist in ensuring that the Club has taken the appropriate measures to resume activity. The Club ultimately has the responsibility to ensure that there are risk assessments in place for the Club and the activity that is taking place, however, to assist in the implementation of these a COVID Officer should be introduced to ease the burden and be a lead in this area.

The Club Committee shall ensure that the appointed person will receive all necessary support to undertake the role.

The COVID Officer should not put themselves at risk whilst carrying out the role. Duties of the role should include:

- Being aware of and understanding government guidelines, first aid protocols, communicating these with relevant club volunteers and monitoring that these are strictly adhered to especially in terms of the 2m social distancing rules and the training activity undertaken by the Club. (This is subject to change)
- Ensuring that players have completed the Return to Play health questionnaires for each training session and match and shall ensure the Club keeps records of these as they may be requested by AFL England and League representatives.
- Having a central system to monitor the record of attendees at training within the Club
- Ensuring relevant club volunteers are aware of the need to regularly clean and sanitise all relevant welfare facilities and equipment after each session (e.g. balls, door handles, cleaning toilet).
- Making necessary representations to the Club Committee about any COVID-19 concerns.
- Reporting any areas of non-compliance immediately to the Club Committee and ensuring that these are addressed.
- Keeping up to date on all relevant guidelines issued by HSE and AFL England. In the case of players or coaching personnel experiencing or displaying COVID-19 symptoms the COVID Officer should Inform the Club Committee if there is a confirmed case or if they have been made aware of an individual with COVID-19 symptoms.

### **Pre-attendance symptom check and general hygiene**

All players, officials, volunteers and spectators must undergo a self-assessment for any COVID-19 symptoms. No-one should leave home to participate in sport if they, or someone they live with, has symptoms of COVID -19 currently recognised as any of the following:

- A high temperature
- A new, continuous cough
- A loss of, or change to, their sense of smell or taste

Should an individual have demonstrated any such symptoms, they must follow NHS and PHE guidance on self-isolation

All Individuals should:

- Wash their hands thoroughly before and after sessions (and when returning home);

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- Use hand sanitiser at regular intervals (N.B. Children, particularly younger ones, are not always as aware about good hygiene, so special attention should be paid to children's hand hygiene.)

### Test and Trace

- All participants (players, coaches, support staff) in the training session have responsibility to notify the Club COVID Officer should they display symptoms of COVID-19 within 48 hours of a training session and or match.
- Anyone with symptoms should ask for a test online or call to arrange a test by calling 119.
- They must complete the test within 5 days of the symptoms starting.
- Club COVID Officer to direct the infected individual to the National Government's Test and Trace procedures. In England this will mean that individual will have a test within 48 hours. Each nation: England, Scotland, Wales and NI, have different procedures currently.
- In addition to the above advice, Club COVID Officer to contact all individuals that attended the training session and or match in question to advise that an individual within that group has reported symptoms.
- If the individual is a coach, then all participants of all sessions will need to be contacted and informed that they must follow the Governments advice on self-isolation for 7 days (see the below diagram).
- If a member of the club presents with symptoms within 48 hours of a training session/game, then training/practice/ matches played by the club must be suspended and a period of isolation as set out by the government followed, currently 7 days for an individual and 14 days for members of the household. (see the below diagram).
- The name of the infected individual is not to be disclosed to protect anonymity.
- All attendees of the session should be advised to isolate for 14 days (as per government guidelines) in case symptoms arise.
- In the event there is a positive case then the Club COVID Officer should complete a COVID-19 incident report form available from the AFL England website.

### Safeguarding

The lockdown period will have affected children in many ways. While most will have had a positive time with family, others may have had negative experiences and could be at increased risk.

There are a few simple steps clubs can take to support children at this time:

- Please continue to follow the process outlined in our Safeguarding Policy for reporting concerns.
- Remind all Club volunteers how to respond if a child or adult at risk talks about a concern. Please visit the link below from the NSPCC which includes information, advice and posters which can be shared with staff and volunteers.

For more information please visit: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/coronavirus-abuse-neglect-vulnerable-children/>

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### Behaviour at the club – during training and playing

It is expected that Clubs will draw up their own detailed protocols, however all participants (players, coaches, officials,

volunteers and spectators) should observe the following.

- Must abide by strict social distancing measures at all times, except during essential risk assessed training and matches, keeping a 2m distance between themselves and others at all times where reasonably practical in and out of the sporting environment.
- Must ensure that there is no congregation in communal areas at the Club as directed by the Club.
- Must wear PPE as set out by RFL and/or the government.
- Must carry out before and after use cleaning of equipment used as directed by the Club.
- Must not share towels, clothing, water bottles, boots, headgear, guards, etc.
- Must not share lip balm, sunscreen, shampoo or any other toiletry product.
- Must not share disposables such as strapping etc.
- Must not spit or chew gum.
- Must avoid shouting or raising voices when facing each other during, before and after games.
- As the virus is transmitted from respiratory secretions, mouthguard etiquette is very important. Players should refrain from touching or removing their mouthguard, and if they do so must wash their hands. Mouthguards must not be left on shared surfaces or public places but be placed in a personal container and stored with personal possessions.

### Arriving at a game or training

Clubs should strictly limit the time spent congregating at a venue before activity begins. Meet-up times should reflect this. This includes arriving changed and ready to begin the warmup, if possible, to minimise time spent waiting or in holding areas. All bags and personal belongings should be kept in the car.

In such instances where changing rooms need to be used, such as a disabled participant, Clubs should follow the government guidance on changing rooms and toilets.

Designated entrance and exit points to the building:

- Identified entry point and exit point with clear signage and use of one-way systems where possible.
- Assign specified drop off and pick up times for different groups / teams linked to your kick off time to reduce crossover of players from different teams.
- 2m spacing at entry points to filter players/coaches as they arrive.
- All individuals must wash or sanitize their hands upon arrival into the facility.
- In the event that a changing room cannot be used in line with government guidelines then Clubs may wish to consider introducing holding areas. These should be external and used for a minimal amount of time and well ventilated, with social distancing maintained at all times. Once players are ready, they

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should vacate the holding area and move to designated warm up or playing area. Clubs may wish to consider the following:

- Use of any external covered areas for team talks ensuring social distancing can be maintained.
- Away team should contact home venue to find out if there is an area, they can use to hold team talks prior to game – share information with team prior to travelling.
- Team talks before the game must take place in holding areas or during the warmup. At half time, this must be done on the pitch.
- After the game, team talks should happen on the pitch but be brief. If another game is due to be played on that pitch, teams should collect bags from the storage area and disperse as quickly as possible.

### During activity

#### Warm Up

- In preparation for play, the warm-up for all players should still adhere to social distancing guidance whilst being drawn from the principles of Raise, Activate, Mobilize and Potentiate model.
- Raise – To increase the body temperature and consider sport specific motor skills. e.g. jogging/running to include ball control, catching, and passing.
- Activate / Mobilize – The muscles and joints using stability, mobility, object control and strength activities e.g. movement activities, holding balances, dynamic balance activities, getting up and down with a ball.
- Potentiate – Increasing the activity to more resemble the game, which introduces some power activities e.g. tackling activities that remove face to face interactions, use of tackle bags/shield and running at increased speeds with inclusion of start and stop requirements. This would also see the introduction of passing and catching of the ball between players and consider fomite transition and hygiene measures pre/post activity.

#### During Breaks

- All participants must remain socially distanced during breaks in play with spaced areas for equipment and refreshment storage for everyone including officials and substitutes. Coaching staff and substitutes, should, for example, spread out and avoid sharing a dug out or bench if social distancing cannot be observed.
- Water bottles or other refreshment containers should in no circumstances be shared. Participants are advised to bring their own, in a named container.
- Use of equipment
- The sharing of equipment must be avoided where possible, where equipment is shared, equipment must be cleaned before use by another person. This will include tackle bags and shields.
- Pitch surroundings such as post protectors and corner posts must be washed before, during half time and after.
- All players should have their own water bottles.
- Participants should take their kit home to wash it themselves, rather than have one person handling a large quantity of soiled materials. Where kit absolutely must be shared or kept together (e.g. last-minute stand-in players, shortage of kit, or an essential club function), each person handling it must wash or sanitise their hands immediately after.



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- Tags as used Touch Australian rules football rules will be treated as a fomite transmitter and subject to the hygiene and preparatory guidance utilised for balls. All tags will be sanitised, in the same way as hands and balls, prior to the game taking place. Each player will be responsible for a single set of tags for the duration of the game. Each game will factor in at 10 minutes a hygiene and sanitisation break in that each set of tags will be sanitised in preparation for continuation or substituted for new (pre- sanitised tags) whilst the starting tags are re-sanitised. Half-Time will be used as a natural break point for further hand, ball and tag hygiene and sanitisation protocols

### Balls

- Teams will warm up using their own sanitised Australian rule football balls.
- Match Balls will be provided by the Home Club. It is recommended that 4 balls are to be used in rotation during the Match. All balls must be sanitised before use.
- The following processes (with equipment to be provided by the Home Club) should be followed:
  - one bucket with clean water and soap on each side of the field.
  - air dry or single use towels to dry the balls on both sides of the field.
  - In the event a ball leaves the field of play then it should be collected and returned to the nearest bucket to be cleaned before it can be returned to the field of play.
  - The ball shall be cleaned at every stoppage where this is possible, with minimum disruption to the match. When the ball goes out of play it must be retained and cleaned and a new sanitised ball used for the restart. If there is no natural stoppage after each period of 10 minutes, the Match Official shall temporarily call time off whilst the ball is changed for a clean one.
  - If a Match Official suspects that the cleaning of balls process has not been followed then they can hold up play.
  - In the event that these protocols are not followed then the Clubs may find themselves guilty of a misconduct charge.

### Match Officials

- Match officials should observe the governing body guidance in the same way as participants are required to. Match officials must remain socially distanced from players where possible during play.

### Injury Treatment

- Injuries during play should still be treated as participant wellbeing is utmost. The best way to protect yourself and others is through rigorous cleaning, personal hygiene and regular hand hygiene. An increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of all surfaces and equipment, using standard household cleaning and disinfection products, is recommended.
- Face Coverings and disposable gloves must be worn by the person administering first aid.
- After contact with an injured participant, clean your hands thoroughly with soap and water or alcohol hand sanitizer at the earliest opportunity. This advice is applicable to all situations, regardless of whether there was close contact, or the

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minimum 2 metre social distancing was maintained. Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose.

- Physios or their equivalent, should keep a record of each participant they have treated.
- The duty of care of all participants remains that of the Club and therefore other matters such as First Aid must continue to be provided. First Aid equipment (including AEDs where available) and suitable PPE for First Aid must be made available. Advice on First Aid during the COVID-19 pandemic is available from St John Ambulance via the link below: <https://www.sja.org.uk/get-advice/first-aid-advice/COVID-19-advice-for-first-aiders/#>

### Spectators

- Supporters, parents, and other spectators, will be permitted depending on current government and/or local policies. All spectators should remain socially distanced whilst attending events. Clubs must ensure that the following guidelines are adhered to:
  - Have clear 2m spacing at entry points to filter visitors as they arrive.
  - Display internal and external signage reminding visitors of the requirement to maintain a safe social distance at all times whilst on the premises.
  - Crowd numbers must comply with current government guidelines.
  - Teams with elevated viewing areas will be able to accommodate more spectators by using the height of the surrounding landscape
  - All visitors are encouraged to wash their hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizer, especially upon arriving and prior to leaving the facility.
  - Only use, where appropriate, the touchlines as spectating areas, to leave entry and exit points clear for teams to access the field.

### After Australian rules football activity

- After activity participants must maintain government mandated social distancing for social interaction. This includes when using any available changing rooms, showers, and any clubhouse facilities or other venue participants may congregate in afterwards.
- After match refreshments should not be offered. Players from both teams must bring their own refreshments and eat them after leaving the facility
- Players and spectators should be off the premises within 30 minutes of the final whistle of their game. This includes showering and changing for players.

### Changing Rooms and Toilets

- Where possible, players must arrive changed and shower at home. Use of changing and shower facilities as per 7.2 must follow government advice on the use of indoor facilities when available.
- Increased frequency of cleaning of changing rooms and communal areas with a cleaning log in all changing rooms.
- High contact points given particular attention including toilets, door handles, light switches, benches/chairs, clothes pegs.
- Remove any unnecessary items, especially if they are hard to clean.
- Toilets will need to be opened for pre-match, during match and for 30mins following.



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- Toilets should be cleaned regularly in line with the government guidance for clubhouses/indoor facilities.
- Toilets capacity should be managed via entry and exit as per government guidelines.

### Respect

- Australian rules football prides itself on being a family game which is inclusive, uncompromising and passionate.
- The game will take positive action to ensure that high standards of behaviour are always maintained in Australian rules football. For the avoidance of doubt this includes matches, training and at all other times, and includes comments or behaviour made in person or by any other means, including, but not limited to social media.
- RESPECT sets out the standards of behaviour which the game expects from the entire Australian rules football family. The Game is an inclusive sport and is committed to the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and will not tolerate any form of discrimination.
- Due to the ongoing situation with COVID-19 we encourage participants and spectators to respect the social distancing rules of 2 metres on and off the field of play to ensure that there is a safe and welcoming environment for all.