

A BRIEF INTRO TO WATCHING AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL

The end?

Hardly. There's so much more to this fascinating game, but these basics should help improve your footy experience.

Good on ya' for taking it in.

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So, what the heck is going on
out there anyway?

GET CULTURED. AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL.



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So you're watching Aussie Rules Football, also known as 'Footy.'

While the name may sound like a pair of women's socks to us Americans, the game itself can be rough at times. And fast. And confusing...especially if you're watching for the first time. So here are some basic answers to some basic questions to help improve your level of enjoyment.

Wow. That's one big friggin' field.

Just how big is it?

It's big. In fact, Australian Football fields are essentially the largest of any team sport. Sizes usually range from 135 to 185 meters long (or about 148 yards to 202 yards), and 110 to 155 meters wide (about 120 yards to 170 yards).

How many guys are out there?

When played full-on, there are 18 active players per side, 36 in all. But based on how teams travel, occasionally the game is played with as few as 14 aside.

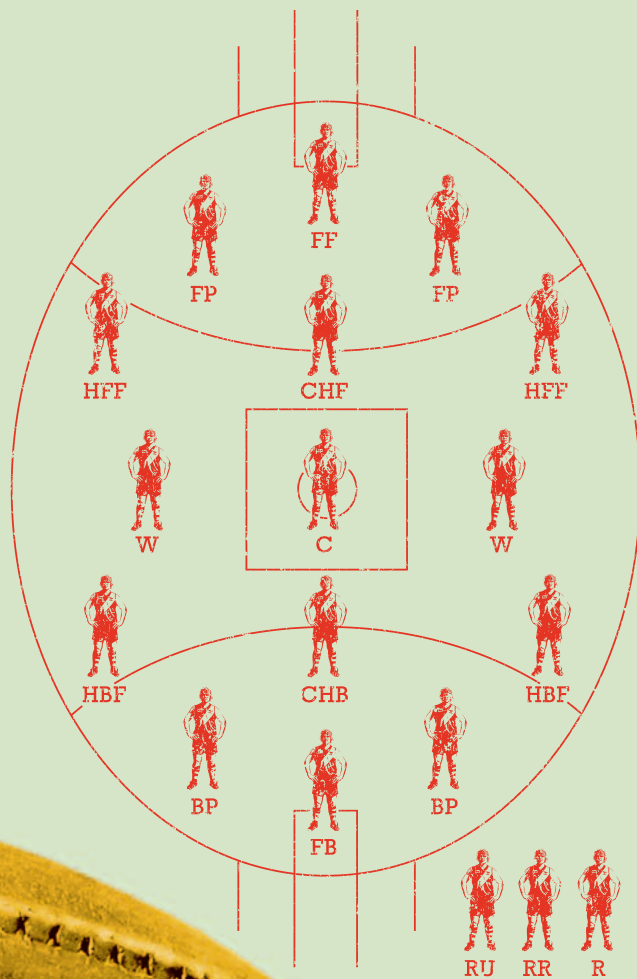


Are there positions?

Yes. When playing 18-aside, the lineup looks something like this:



OFFENSE/DEFENSE	Fwd Pocket	Full Fwd	Fwd Pocket
	Half Fwd Flank	Center Half Fwd	Half Fwd Flank
OFFENSE/DEFENSE	Wing	Center	Wing
DEFENSE	Half Back Flank	Center Half Back	Half Back Flank
	Back Pocket	Full Back	Back Pocket
ON BALL	Ruck	Ruck Rover	Rover



Getting started...and following play.

• **A Ball-up** – Resembles a jump ball in basketball in the center square (middle of the field). Starts the game and restarts play back in the center of the field after a goal.

There are also ball-ups if the ball gets stuck in the bottom of a pile.

• **Making a mark** – When a player catches a ball that's been kicked more than 10 yards in the air (by either a teammate OR an opponent), it's called a mark and play CAN stop.

From a mark, a player can handball, kick or run with the ball. He can move in a straight line BACKWARDS WITHOUT ANY contest. The opposing player (who stands on the mark) CANNOT attack UNLESS the player with the ball deviates from that line. If he deviates, the umpire will call "play on" and that player is fair game.

Advantages to stopping play after making a mark: you give your teammates a chance to get open.

Advantages to playing-on after making a mark: you can catch the other team out of position.



• **Running with the ball** – The player with possession MUST have the ball make contact with the ground (by either touching it to the ground OR by bouncing it) every 15 yards or so. It's a subjective call that the umpire makes.

If the player runs too far OR simply holds onto the ball too long, he'll get called for "holding the ball" and the other team gets the ball at that spot.

• **Passing the ball** – There are just two ways to deliver the ball: the handball or kick. There's NO throwing or dropping the ball allowed.

• **Tackling** – If you tackle a player while he has the ball and he had an opportunity to get rid of it before being tackled (umpire's discretion), the tackler gets the ball on that spot.

If a player is tackled but DID NOT have a reasonable amount of time to get rid of the ball, the umpire will call for a ball-up.

• **Kick-outs** – When a behind is scored (1 point), the team that was scored upon kicks the ball out from their own goal square.

• **Dropping the ball** – A player is NOT ALLOWED to simply drop the ball if he's in danger of or in the process of being tackled. He MUST make a reasonable attempt to get rid of the ball.

• **Out of bounds** – If a ball is kicked out of bounds in the air, it's "Out on the full," and the opposing team gets to kick the ball in from where it went out.

If a ball goes out of bounds on the ground, it's no advantage. The ball is thrown back into play.



How do you keep score?

See the posts at each end of the field? When you kick a ball through the two middle posts, it's called a GOAL and is worth 6 points. If you kick between the outer posts, OR a ball is touched

before it goes through the two middle posts (but still goes through), OR the ball hits the two middle posts, it's called a BEHIND and is worth 1 point.



Reading the scoreboard.

There are 3 sets of numbers: goals, behinds, total points.

So...if the scoreboard reads:

Home	9	8	62
Away	2	4	16

The home team kicked 9 goals (6 pts each), 8 behinds (1 pt each) for a total score of 62.

Player substitutions.

Players can come off the bench while play continues. BUT, the change MUST be made at the designated midfield "interchange," and a player coming on the field MUST wait until the other player is off.

Coaches are also allowed to send both water and messages to players on the field during the game through "runners."

Are there any rules?

There are some, most are common sense. The penalty in many cases is simply a turnover. But on occasion, a 50 meter penalty is assessed.

- **No kicking in danger** – When people are reaching for the ball, you can't kick at it, their hands...or their heads. This stops action and the player getting kicked gets a free ball on the spot.

- **No pushing from behind** – Like a clip in football. Push from behind and the pushee gets the ball on the mark (or the spot of the foul).

- **No tackling above the shoulders or below the knees** – Usually a stop in play, depending on the severity.

- **No throwing the ball** – Ever. Another turnover.

- **No walking between a man with the ball and the mark** – Opposing players are not allowed to cross that imaginary line. Always a 50 meter penalty.

- **You MUST give the ball** to the opposing player who made the mark or is rewarded a penalty (for lack of a better term) nicely. If you toss the ball and it hits the ground, the umpire will call it a 50 meter penalty.

- **No crying, whining or complaining** to the umpires. Sometimes they deserve to be whipped with barbed wire, but you can't complain.

