



**THIS IS
GEN W**

PREP TO PLAY

COACHING MANUAL

**ENHANCE PERFORMANCE &
REDUCE INJURY. A PROGRAM
FOR COMMUNITY FEMALE
AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALLERS**



In collaboration with



Sport and Exercise Medicine
Research Centre

Enhance performance and reduce injury

- ➔ Information and content in Prep to Play was developed during a collaborative project between the AFL and La Trobe University
- ➔ Content is informed by best available evidence, as well as expert opinion from coaches, players and medical staff
- ➔ Prep to Play is designed to give structure, guidance, education and resources to assist clubs to further develop their existing programs

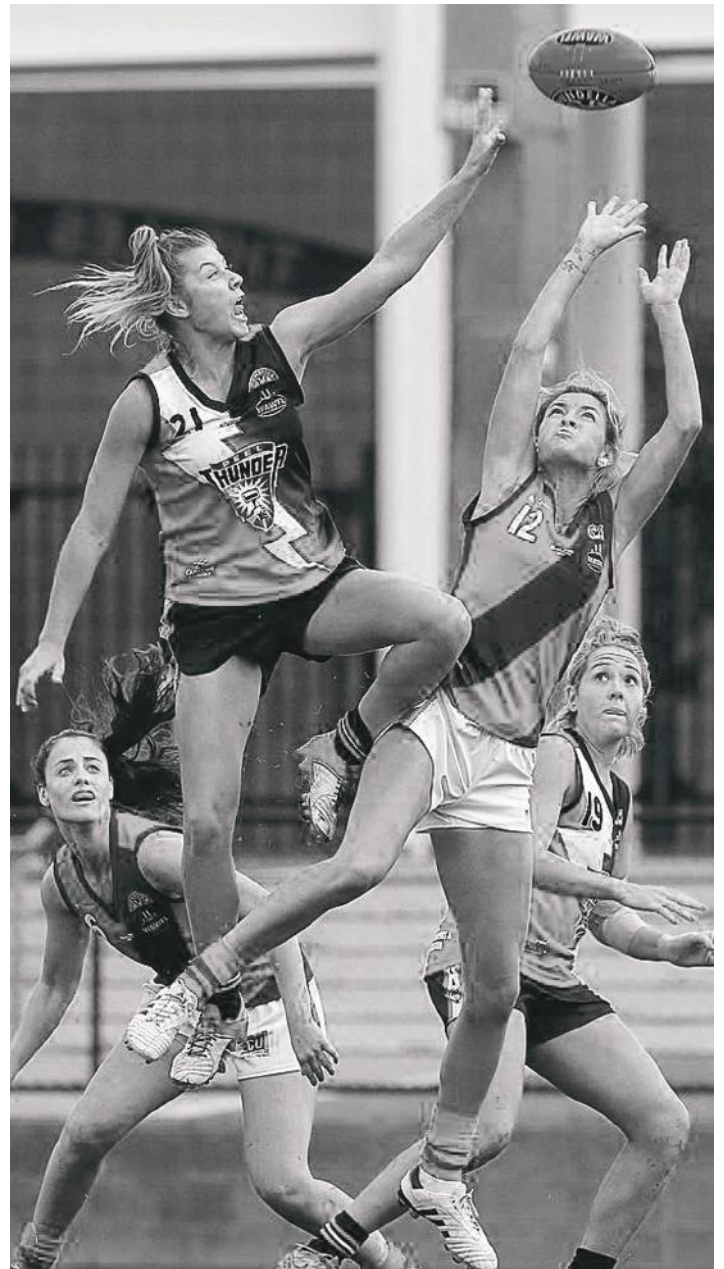
The PREP TO PLAY strategy is a program informed by previous research^{20,21,22} designed to reduce the risk of injuries and enhance performance.^{23,24,25}

Coaches should go to coach.afl/female-football to access video resources which complement this coaching manual.

This program focuses on reducing serious knee and head injuries by:

1 Improving athlete muscle function and movement quality during change of direction and landing activities.

2 Improving safe execution of ground balls, aerial contests, tackling and being tackled.



PREP TO PLAY WHY DO WOMEN NEED TO PERFORM INJURY REDUCTION PROGRAMS?



In all sports, women have a 2-5x greater risk of serious knee injury compared to males.^{1,2,3,4} In the first 2 AFLW seasons, this rate was higher again.⁵

9.2x

**Greater Risk of
ACL Injury for AFLW.**

Female players also had double the risk of sustaining a concussion in the first two AFLW seasons.

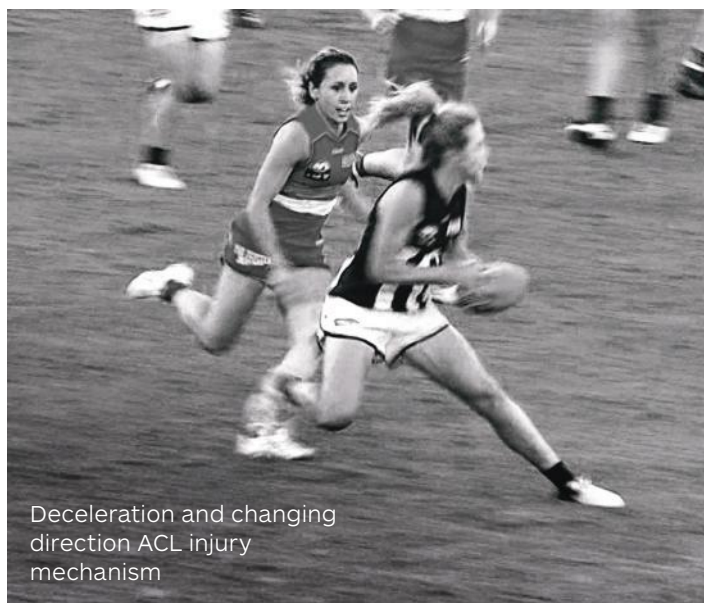
70-80%

**of head injuries in AFLW
occur during tackling
(or being tackled), ground
balls or aerial contests.**

Despite limited injury surveillance data, serious knee and head injuries are a priority in community level football.²⁶

70-80%

**of ACL injuries occur in
non-contact positions
when decelerating and
changing direction, or
landing on one leg.**



Deceleration and changing
direction ACL injury
mechanism



Landing on one
leg ACL injury
mechanism

PREP TO PLAY BENEFITS



**ENHANCE
PERFORMANCE***

**REDUCE INJURY
BY UP TO 50%***

* Benefits based upon similar programs ^{20 21 22 23 24 25}

Increase athletic performance

Speed, vertical jump, agility, strength.



Increase player availability for games

Increase chance of winning games



**INJURIES CAN BE REDUCED
But only when you stick with
THE PROGRAM!**

**Benefits are greater if the program
is performed 3x per week
compared with once per week.**

PREP TO PLAY TRAINING OUTLINE EXAMPLE



All dynamic warm-up and football specific skills are outlined with examples of good and poor technique on pages 10, 12 and 14.

DYNAMIC WARM UP

15 mins at the start of every training session

Phase 1: General warm-up & mobility

Phase 2: Movement skills (jumping/landing, deceleration & change of direction)

Phase 3: Strength & activation (additional 10 minutes can be prior to, during or post-training, coach or player led)

FOOTBALL SKILLS

Craft & technique (15 mins)

In addition to kicking and handballing, time should be dedicated to educate players on safe and effective execution of the following skills:

- ➔ Tackling & being tackled
- ➔ Ground balls
- ➔ Aerial contests

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS

Decision-making and small-sided games

Once good technique is observed progress intensity by increasing contact, speed, unpredictability, or making it a competition. Progress to small-sided games (e.g. 4 v 3, or stoppage into backs vs. forwards).

PHYSICAL PREPARATION

Coaches should provide the opportunity (or encourage players) to develop cardiovascular fitness and muscular strength to cope with physical demands of the game. Strengthening exercises are provided on page 14. These can be completed as a part of training, or independently. No equipment is required.

EDUCATION

- ➔ Athlete wellbeing may also play a role in performance and injury risk
- ➔ Encourage healthy eating, sleeping, and hydration
- ➔ Ensure players are managing injuries, and gaining medical clearance when appropriate

PREP TO PLAY HOW DO I KNOW IF AN ATHLETE HAS GOOD TECHNIQUE?



The following pages outline:



**GOOD
TECHNIQUE**

vs



**POOR
TECHNIQUE**



For dynamic warm-up activities and football specific skills (tackling, being tackled, ground balls and aerial contests).

You may also access the video resources on coach.afl/female-football for example of good and poor technique, and game examples.

Coaches play a vital role in providing feedback for:

- Movement performance
- Motor learning and retention
- Player adherence

To encourage athletes to learn the correct techniques, you may also direct them to the Prep to Play manual or posters, or to the videos on coach.afl.

PREP TO PLAY HOW TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK



Strategies which may maximise learning of football and movement skills include:¹⁶

- 1** External or goal-related cues:¹⁷ Use external cues such as “get low” rather than describing coordination of body parts such as “bend your hip and knee.”
- 2** Give positive feedback on correct technique to increase confidence and motivation. Prompt players to note how technique feels, or the output (e.g. higher jump or effective tackle). This will improve motor learning.
- 3** Teammate feedback: Once competency is established, get players to observe each other and provide feedback. This will increase competitiveness and motivation.¹⁹

Examples of technique and cue words are given for the dynamic warm up and football specific skills are provided on pages 9-23.



TIMING AND TYPE

Immediate verbal or visual feedback

Provide verbal feedback during or immediately after the activity. Combine with visual demonstration with the player/group.

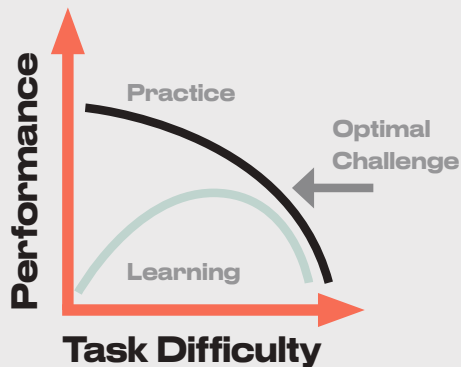


Video Playback

Coaches may wish to film a player performing a skill to provide feedback, or utilise match footage if available.



Optimal Challenge Point



Coaching tip: Where possible progress task difficulty using the principles below

- 1** Start with simple activities, in controlled, uncontested, situations. Skills should be closed with minimal decision making. Progress difficulty if good technique is observed (see posters on pages 9-23)
- 2** Progress difficulty by
 - ➔ Increasing speed, intensity (e.g. jump higher/further) and amount of contact
 - ➔ Making activities less predictable (e.g. Players change direction in response to coach hand signal or whistle)
 - ➔ Increasing attentional demands and decision making (e.g. whilst performing agility drills players call out the number of fingers the coach is holding up)
- 3**
 - ➔ Ensure good technique during warm-up activities (e.g. jumping and landing) is transferred into football specific activities (marking/spoiling)
 - ➔ Ensure good technique of football skills are transferred into small-sided games and match play

NOTE: For the dynamic warm-up there are three predesignated levels of difficulty:

- 1. Foundation warm-up program**
- 2. Development warm-up program**
- 3. Advanced warm-up program**

Refer to pages 9-14 for guidance on what level is suitable for your group, and progress using the above principles.

PREP TO PLAY FOUNDATION WARM-UP PROGRAM



Recommended for first time participants or those without exposure to a dynamic warm-up program

Enhance performance



Reduce injury by up to 50%*

*based on similar programs

3 Parts

1. Mobility (5 mins)
2. Movement skills (5 mins)
3. Strength & activation (10 mins)

Every training session

Go to coach.afl for game-day warm up poster

6-8 Weeks

Then progress to Development program

Part 1 Mobility (5 mins) Set up →

Players perform the warm up activities to the 4th cone, then jog through to a coach to receive ball. Activities can also be performed on the way back to save time. Purpose: Take body through all movements & activate key muscles. Perform 10 metres of each movement unless otherwise indicated.



Coaching Tip →

Time saver: Combine with warm up ball skills i.e. Kick to a partner at end cone, then do activity. Coach/parents/injured players can give handball/ground ball/kick as players run through.



LUNGE WALK

Keep body straight, keep knees in line with hips.



HAMSTRING SWEEP

Get low, sweep fingers to the grass, alternate sides.



OPEN/CLOSE GATE

Lift knee to hip height. Sweep hip out to open sweep in to close, alternate sides.



ARABESQUE KNEE HUG

Extend leg behind balancing on 1-leg. Hug knee to chest for gluteal stretch.



GRAPEVINE

Step one foot in front and then behind in a crossing motion. Face both ways. Keep body tall.



INCH WORMS

Pump heels up & down. Then keeping hands fixed, walk feet up to hands.



A-SKIP

Skip forward driving one knee up to 90 degrees, skipping on the standing leg then alternate.



POGO BOUNCES

Keep knees straight. Bounce forward in continuous motion keeping heels up.



HEEL FLICKS TO 70-80% STRIDE

While running forwards, flick heels to butt. Keep body tall.

Coaching Tip →

Get creative: You may combine these warm up activities and movement skills into a fun, competitive game. View the Foundation warm-up video on coach.afl for ideas.



PARTNER LEG SWINGS

Swing leg forwards and backwards or side to side (x10 each).



BALANCE AND HANDBALL

Balancing on one leg handball with a partner (x10 right, left).



PARTNER BUMP 90% STRIDE

3 bumps on each side then run through.

PREP TO PLAY FOUNDATION WARM-UP PROGRAM

Following Part 1, the warm up should include 5-10 minutes of movement skills and strength exercises

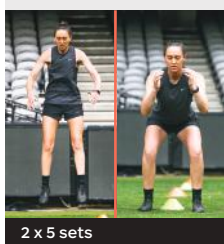


Over 50% of serious knee injuries occur in position when decelerating and changing direction, or landing on one leg.

Part 2 Movement Skills

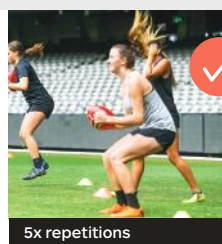
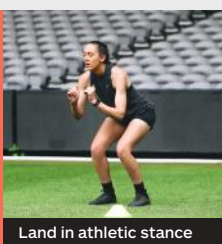
1. Jumping and landing 2. Deceleration 3. Change of direction

Jumping & Landing Jump higher, be stronger in the air and land with balance.



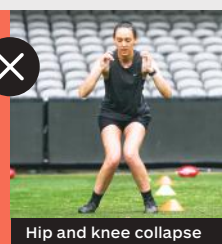
SQUAT JUMPS

Squat, then jump up high, land in an athletic stance (bending at knees and hips). Keep knees in line with hips.



FORWARD JUMP

Jump forwards as far as you can, landing in athletic stance.

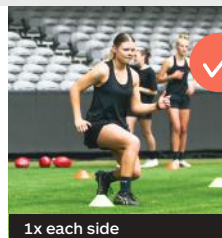


Deceleration Quick feet, respond to play, prepare for skills.



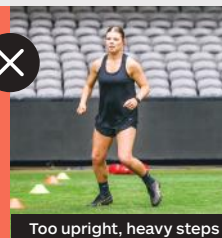
DOUBLE LEG STOP

Get low & use short quick steps to come to a stop at the 4th cone. Accelerate, repeat at last cone. Finish in athletic stance on 2 legs.

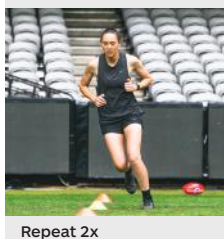


SINGLE LEG STOP

Get low & use short quick steps. Finish in athletic stance on one leg.



Change of direction Get low, dodge players and improve agility.



S-BENDS

Weave around, keeping close to the cones. Keep movements smooth & subtle.



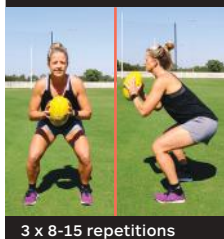
45° ZIG-ZAG CUTS

Using short quick steps, get low and use outside leg to plant & push off.



Part 3 Strength (10 mins)

Can be performed prior to movement skills, or at the end of training. Can be player or coach led. If athletes are unable to do the full amount, let them have short break.



SQUATS

Keep knees in line with hips, bend hips & knees. Lower bottom to the ground like sitting on a low chair. Harder: hands above head.



BRIDGES

Lift your bottom off the ground as high as you can, pushing through your heels. Harder: hands across chest.



PLANK

Hold your body by leaning on your elbows and feet. Keep your body straight and head tucked in.

PREP TO PLAY DEVELOPMENT WARM-UP PROGRAM



Recommended as a progression from the Foundation warm-up program

Enhance performance



Reduce injury by up to 50%*

*based on similar programs

3 Parts

1. Mobility (5 mins)
2. Movement skills (5 mins)
3. Strength & activation (10 mins)

Every training session

Go to coach.afl for game-day warm up poster

6-8 Weeks

Then progress to Advanced program

Part 1 Mobility (5 mins) Set up →

Players perform the warm up activities to the 4th cone, then jog through to a coach to receive ball. Activities can also be performed on the way back to save time. Purpose: Take body through all movements & activate key muscles. Perform 10 metres of each movement unless otherwise indicated.



Coaching Tip →

Time saver: Combine with warm up ball skills i.e. Kick to a partner at end cone, then do activity. Coach/parents/injured players can give handball/ground ball/kick as players run through.



LUNGE WALK

Keep body straight, keep knees inline with hips.



HAMSTRING SWEEP

Get low, sweep fingers to the grass, alternate sides.



OPEN/CLOSE GATE

Lift knee to hip height. Sweep hip out to open sweep in to close, alternate sides.



ARABESQUE KNEE HUG

Extend leg behind balancing on 1-leg. Hug knee to chest for gluteal stretch.



GRAPEVINE

Step one foot in front and then behind in a crossing motion. Face both ways. Keep body tall.



INCH WORMS

Pump heels up & down. Then keeping hands fixed, walk feet up to hands.



A-SKIP

Skip forward driving one knee up to 90 degrees, skipping on the standing leg then alternate.



POGO BOUNCES

Keep knees straight Bounce forward in continuous motion keeping heels up.



HEEL FLICKS TO 70-80% STRIDE

While running forwards, flick heels to butt. Keep body tall.

Coaching Tip →

Get creative: You may combine these warm up activities and movement skills into a fun, competitive game. View the Development warm-up video on coach.afl for ideas.



PARTNER LEG SWINGS

Swing leg forwards and backwards or side to side (x10 each).



BALANCE AND HANDBALL

Balancing on one leg handball with a partner (x10 right, left).



PARTNER BUMP 90° STRIDE

3 bumps on each side then run through.

PREP TO PLAY DEVELOPMENT WARM-UP PROGRAM

Following Part 1, the warm up should include 5-10 minutes of movement skills and strength exercises

➔ Deceleration and change of direction ACL injury mechanism



➔ Landing on one leg ACL injury mechanism



Over 50% of serious knee injuries occur in position when decelerating and changing direction, or landing on one leg.


Part 2 Movement Skills

1. Jumping and landing 2. Deceleration 3. Change of direction

Jumping & Landing Jump higher, be stronger in the air and land with balance.


✓ **FORWARD JUMP**

Jump forwards as far as you can, landing in athletic stance. Keep knees in line with hips.



Repeat x5


✗



Hip and knee collapse


✓ **PARTNER PUSH**

Jump high & have a partner knock/bump you in the air. Land in athletic stance. Progression: jump & twist 90 degrees.



Repeat x5

✗




Hip and knee collapse

Deceleration Quick feet, respond to play, prepare for skills.

CIRCLE CONES

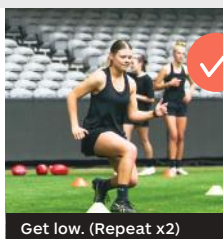
Run forwards to a cone & rapidly circle your feet around it. Run to the next cone and repeat.



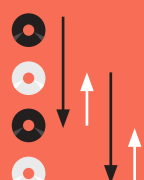
Quick feet

✓ **FORWARD 2 BACK 1**

Accelerate forwards 2 cones & then stop & backtrack 1 cone.



Get low. (Repeat x2)



Change of direction Get low, dodge players and improve agility.



90 DEGREE CUTS

Run forwards 1 cone then cut 90 degrees to the right/left then forwards. Alternate directions.




✓ **PARTNER ZIG ZAG – NO CONTACT**

Start on cones next to each other. Zig-zag and weave in & around each other as you move forwards (avoid contact).

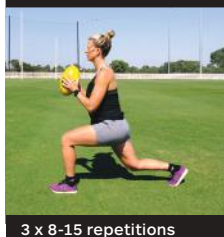
Ensure body is leaning towards where you want to go like an ice-skater.

Part 3 Strength (10 mins)

Can be performed prior to movement skills, or at the end of training. Can be player or coach led. If athletes are unable to do the full amount, let them have short break.

LUNGES

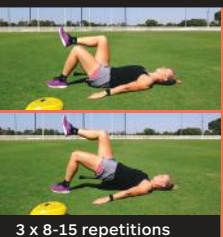
Step forwards and lunge down on your front leg, keeping your hip, knee and foot in line, before pushing back up to standing.



3 x 8-15 repetitions

SINGLE LEG BRIDGE

With one foot on the ground lift your bottom off the ground as high as you can, pushing through your heels.



3 x 8-15 repetitions

SIDE PLANK

Lie on your side with legs on top of each other. Lean on your elbow and lift hips off the ground and hold.



3 x 15-45 seconds

PREP TO PLAY ADVANCED WARM-UP PROGRAM



Recommended as a progression from the Development warm-up program

Enhance performance



Reduce injury by up to 50%*

*based on similar programs

3 Parts

1. Mobility (5 mins)
2. Movement skills (5 mins)
3. Strength & activation (10 mins)

Every training session

Go to coach.afl for game-day warm up poster

Part 1 Mobility (5 mins) Set up →

Players perform the warm up activities to the 4th cone, then jog through to a coach to receive ball. Activities can also be performed on the way back to save time. Purpose: Take body through all movements & activate key muscles. Perform 10 metres of each movement unless otherwise indicated.



Coaching Tip →

Time saver: Combine with warm up ball skills i.e. Kick to a partner at end cone, then do activity. Coach/parents/injured players can give handball/ground ball/kick as players run through.



LUNGE WALK

Keep body straight, keep knees inline with hips.



HAMSTRING SWEEP

Get low, sweep fingers to the grass, alternate sides.



OPEN/CLOSE GATE

Lift knee to hip height. Sweep hip out to open sweep in to close, alternate sides.



ARABESQUE KNEE HUG

Extend leg behind balancing on 1-leg. Hug knee to chest for gluteal stretch.



GRAPEVINE

Step one foot in front and then behind in a crossing motion. Face both ways. Keep body tall.



INCH WORMS

Pump heels up & down. Then keeping hands fixed, walk feet up to hands.



B-SKIP

Skip forwards lifting your knee high. Extend out & rapidly plant it back on the ground before switching to your other leg.



POGO BOUNCES

Keep knees straight Bounce forward in continuous motion keeping heels up.



HEEL FLICKS TO 70-80% STRIDE

While running forwards, flick heels to butt. Keep body tall.



PARTNER LEG SWINGS

Swing leg forwards and backwards or side to side (x10 each).



BALANCE AND HANDBALL

Balancing on one leg handball with a partner (x10 right, left).



SOMERSAULT - JUMP

Somersault forwards and then jump as high as you can from the ground.

PREP TO PLAY ADVANCED WARM-UP PROGRAM

Following Part 1, the warm up should include 5-10 minutes of movement skills and strength exercises

➔ Deceleration and change of direction ACL injury mechanism



➔ Landing on one leg ACL injury mechanism



Over 50% of serious knee injuries occur in position when decelerating and changing direction, or landing on one leg.

Part 2 Movement Skills (5-10 mins)

1. Jumping and landing
2. Deceleration
3. Change of direction

Jumping & Landing

Jump higher, be stronger in the air and land with balance.



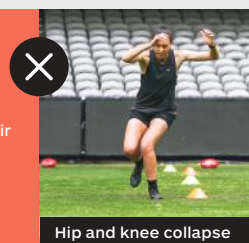
HOPS

Hop as high as you can, driving from your foot, knee and ankle. Keep knees in line with hips. Progression: Hop forwards x 5.



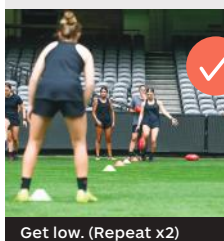
PARTNER PUSH + TWIST

Jump high, turn in the air 90/180 degrees, have a partner bump you. Progression: Run and mark ball + bump in air.



Deceleration

Quick feet, respond to the play, prepare for skills



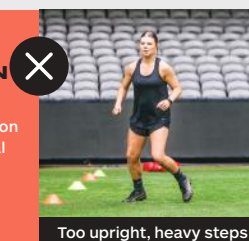
FORWARD 2 BACK 1

Kick to a partner. Accelerate forwards 2 cones, then backtrack 1 cone. Accelerate to 'guard the mark'.



REACTIVE DECELERATION

In a group accelerate forwards and then stop on one leg on the call/signal of a player or coach. Repeat for 20 metres.



Change of Direction

Get low, dodge players and improve agility



PARTNER ZIG ZAG - CONTACT

Start on cones next to each other. Zig-zag and weave in & around each other as you move forwards.



REACTIVE CHANGE OF DIRECTION

Cat and mouse: One player leads a zig zag while the other has to react and try to follow the exact path.



Variations: View the Advanced warm-up video on coach.afl for ideas

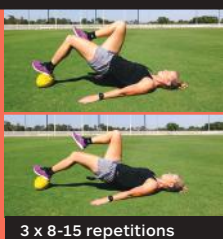
Part 3 Strength (10 mins)

Can be performed prior to movement skills, or at the end of training. Can be player or coach led. If athletes are unable to do the full amount, let them have short break.



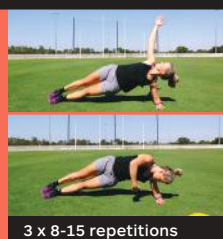
ONE LEG SQUAT

Squat down as low as can be controlled, keeping hip, knee and foot in line. Push back up to standing completely upright.



HAMSTRING BRIDGE

With one foot on the ball lift your bottom off the ground as high as you can. Harder: Slide the ball away.



TWISTING PLANK

Lean on your elbow and lift hips off the ground. With your free arm reach under your body then back up again.

PREP TO PLAY GAME DAY WARM-UP

Game-day warm up should total 15-20 minutes

Part 1 General warm up and mobility (5-10 mins)

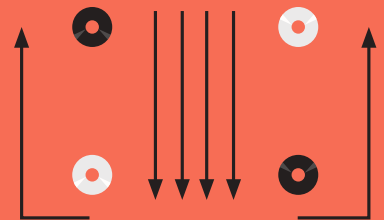
Part 2 Football specific warm up (10 minutes)

15 x 15m area

The game day program is based on the Prep to Play warm up programs – go to coach.afl for training warm-up programs.

Set up

Similar to Prep To Play warm up programs, set up a square of ~15 x 15m and perform each exercise on the way up, then jog back to the start. Alternatively use goal square if no access to cones.



Part 1 Dynamic warm-up (5-10 mins)

Take body through all movements & activate key muscles



LUNGE WALK

Keep body straight, keep knees inline with hips. Don't let the front knee go beyond toes.



HAMSTRING SWEEP

Get low, sweep fingers to the grass, alternate sides.



OPEN/ CLOSE GATE

Lift knee to hip height, Sweep hip out to open Sweep in to close, alternate sides.



ARABESQUE KNEE HUG

Extend leg behind balancing on 1-leg. Hug knee to chest for gluteal stretch.



INCH WORMS

Pump heels up & down. Then keeping hands fixed, walk feet up to hands.



BUTT FLICKS

Keep body tall, while running forwards, flick heels to butt.



B-SKIP

Skip forwards lifting your knee high. Extend out & rapidly plant it back on the ground before switching to your other leg.



GRAPEVINE

Step one foot in front and then behind in a crossing motion. Face both ways. Keep body tall.



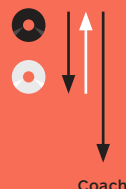
PARTNER LEG SWINGS

Swing leg forwards and backwards or side to side.



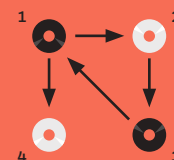
BUMP AND LAND

Jump high & have a partner knock/bump you in the air. Land in athletic stance. Repeat x3.



FORWARDS BACKWARDS

Accelerate forwards to cone or end of goal square, backpedal. Accelerate to 80% max speed.



AGILITY

Using short quick steps, get low and use outside leg to plant & push off.

Part 2 Football specific warm-up (10 mins)

Kicking, marking, handballing and tackling

Ensure players have opportunity to take the body through football specific skills (i.e. kicking, marking and handballing).

Progress to contested skills such as (i.e. tackling, aerial contests and ground balls.)



Reduce head, neck & shoulder injuries



Winning contested ground balls will improve team performance.

Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to perform the skill safely.

Coaching Tip →

"Putting your head over the ball" is an expression coaches may use. However, it's important coaches clearly interpret this for players & discourage them from leading with their head towards oncoming contact.



ACTIVE FEET & AWARENESS
Prepare for ball/opposition movement



GET LOW BEHIND BALL
Get nails dirty



OVERSTRIDE/FLAT-FOOTED
Reaching/squatting for ball



Coaching Tip →

Remind players its okay to make mistakes or fumble, especially when they are trying new skills.



PROTECTION
Front foot, round shoulders



STAY LOW
Drive legs towards target



STANDING UPRIGHT TOO EARLY
Easily tackled or fumble



KEEP EYES ON THE BALL
Until it is secured



LEADING WITH THE HEAD
High risk position for serious head/neck injury

Reinforce 2-3 teaching points prior to any drill.

Practice all directions and timing of contact.

Equipment required: Football, cones, 2 bump bags, and bibs for half your squad.



Football



Cones



Bibs



Bump bags

PREP TO PLAY GROUND BALL DRILLS

TECHNIQUE: Uncontested ground balls

ACTIVITY 1

3-6 players
10 mins

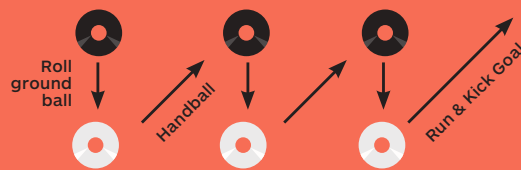
Soccer Ball / Medicine Ball

- Round balls – more predictable
- Medicine ball – forces players to focus on picking the ball up and engaging their core and leg muscles to drive through the ball



ACTIVITY 2

8-10 players
10 mins
10 x 10m area



Coaching Tip

Practice ground balls followed by execution of another skill (i.e. handball or kick) E.g. one-up, one-down in lanes. Increase intensity by making it a competition.

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS: Contested ground balls

ACTIVITY 3

8-10 players
10 mins
10 x 10m area
Drill Variations
Rolling ball,
vary direction of
approach/contact



→ Feeder rolls ball in



→ Front inside foot protection



→ Handball to receiver

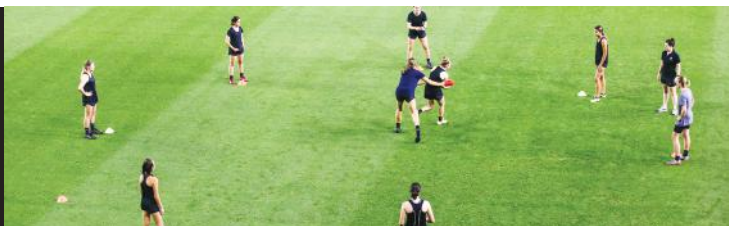


Progression
Replace bump bag with opponent and make it competitive

Small groups: At least 4 players in line, 1 feeder, 1 with bump bag, 1-2 receivers

ACTIVITY 4

8-15 players
5-10 mins
10-15m circle area
Drill Variations
Add a third number.
Smaller area favours
tackler, more inside
tackles



→ Number players '1', '2'... etc.

→ '1' and '6' compete



Progression
Circle of death 30 second repeat efforts:
2 players get ground balls off outside
players whilst getting bumped by 2 players

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 5

14-30+ players
10min
5-8 x 5-8m area
Drill Variations
Larger area, less
defenders favours ball
carrier & opportunity
for clean possession



→ One up, one down grids



Coaching Tip

Get players to take turns feeding the balls.
Coaches - coach!

Reduce head, neck, and shoulder injuries



➔ Increase effective tackles



Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educating players on tackling technique.

COACHING POINTS: Inside tackle (Tackler close to ball-carrier)

Coaching Tip ➔

Provide immediate positive feedback on good execution of tackling.



GET LOW: Stay low
➔ Active feet. Drive legs



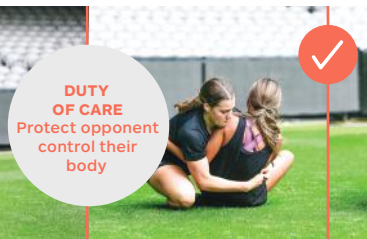
DRIVE LEGS
Use momentum



UPRIGHT
Flat footed



BODY ON BODY: Chin to back
➔ Pin elbows



DUTY OF CARE
Protect opponent
control their body

ROLL & DROP
With control



REACHING
Tackling with hands

COACHING POINTS: Outside tackle (Tackler has to run to close space)



GET LOW
Quick steps & feet close
➔ Inside shoulder



CORRAL TOWARDS SIDELINE
Aim for inside shoulder
➔ Roll & drop. protect opponent, don't sling



OVERSTRIDE
Lunge & reach = ineffective tackles
➔ Higher risk position for serious knee injury

Coaching Tip >

Reinforce a maximum of 2-3 technique points prior to commencing any drill. Practice tackling from all angles. Use simple cues. E.g. "Hit and stick"

TECHNIQUE – Partner walk throughs

ACTIVITY 1 INSIDE TACKLES

3 Group size
5-10 mins, 5 x 5m area
Practice from front, side and behind. Standing next to partner
Progression
Separate 2-3m, Feed ground ball or handball and players increase speed on approach



→ Increase intensity when technique is sound and players feel comfortable

ACTIVITY 2 OUTSIDE TACKLES

3 Group size
5-10 mins, 5 x 5m area
Behind/Side
Tackler stands 5m behind Player 2. Player 3 feeds ground ball
Front
Tackler stands 5m in front of tackler. Player 3 feeds ground ball in front



→ Increase intensity when technique is sound and players feel comfortable

Coaching Tip >

Cue players to note how a tackle felt, or the sound it made. Good tackle = nice thud/connection sound

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS

ACTIVITY 3 TACKLING GATES

6-10 Group size
5-10 mins
5-8 x 5-8m area
Drill Variations
Smaller area favours tackler

1v1, 2v2 or 3v3

- 2 lines stand diagonally opposite, 2 players run around cones to meet in the middle
- Player feeds handball/ground to nominated ball carrier
- Tacklers score points for stopping ball carrier get through their "gate"



→ Run around cone - meet in middle



→ Cueing: Corral, push ball carrier one way

ACTIVITY 4 CIRCLE DRILL

8-12 Group size
5-10 mins
10-15m circle
Drill Variations
Smaller area favours tackler, more inside tackles

Set up

- Ball starts in middle (Progression: ball is rolled in). Call out 2 numbers. "1" is ball carrier. "6" is tackler
- Ball carrier aims to pick up ball and return to any player (Progression: to certain player or coach)



→ Number players 1-6



→ "1" and "6" compete



→ Close space body on body

Coaching Tip >

Get players to take turns kicking the balls. **Coaches - coach!**

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 5 TACKLING GRIDS

14-30+ Group size
10 mins
5-8 x 5-8m area
Drill Variations
More defenders = more tackles
Smaller area, favours tackler

Progressions

- After 4 handballs, work ball to Group 2, or a backs vs forwards situation suiting your needs (i.e. 3 v 2)



→ 4 attackers, 3 defenders in one grid



PREP TO PLAY RECEIVING, BREAKING, OR AVOIDING TACKLES

Reduce head, neck & shoulder injuries



→ Increase a players ability to break free and reduce congestion



Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to receive a tackle/contact in order to reduce injuries.

Coaching Tip →

Once a player is tackled, encourage them to get and stay low, keep their feet active, and drive their legs to try get out of the tackle.



GET LOW
Active feet and drive legs



STAY LOW



ENGAGE CORE



TOO UPRIGHT
Floppy in the tackle, not driving legs

Coaching Tip →

Reinforce these points with ground ball drills to make players cleaner below knees and avoid tackles.



SPATIAL AWARENESS
Knowing where contact is coming from



PROTECTION
Keep back shouddler away

DUTY OF CARE

Reinforce to players to take responsibility for how they attack the ball safely to protect themselves.



NO AWARENESS/LEADING WITH HEAD
High risk position for serious head/neck injury



ARMS FREE
Dispose of ball



CHOP ARMS or FEND OFF
To avoid approaching tackler



UPRIGHT
Flat footed not getting arms free

PREP TO PLAY

RECEIVING, BREAKING, OR AVOIDING TACKLES DRILLS

TECHNIQUE: Partner walk throughs

ACTIVITY 1
RECEIVING TACKLES
 2-3 Group size
 10 mins
 5 x 5m area

Increase intensity

- ➔ When technique is sound, and players feel comfortable
- ➔ Pair practice helps increase confidence in accepting contact
- ➔ Cue players to keep ball secure



PROGRESSIVE DRILLS:

ACTIVITY 2
BREAKING AND AVOIDING TACKLES
 5-6 Group size
 10 mins
 10 x 15m circle
Drill Variations
 Start players in different positions

- ➔ Groups of 5-6, one handballs to ball carrier, one tackler. Practice chopping arms or fending off and run into a shot on goal



ACTIVITY 3
TACKLING GATES
 6-10 players
 10 mins
 5-8 x 5-8m area
Drill Variations
 Larger = more outside tackles. Smaller favours tackler



➔ Run around cone -meet in middle



➔ Ball carrier aims to exit gates



➔ Stay low, drive legs, arms free

- ➔ 2 lines stand diagonally opposite, 2 players run around cones to meet in the middle. Progression: 2 v 2, 3 v 3.
- ➔ Player feeds handball/ground to nominated ball carrier.
- ➔ Ball carrier aims to get through their "gate" or dispose of ball to receiver behind the gate.

Coaching Tip ➔

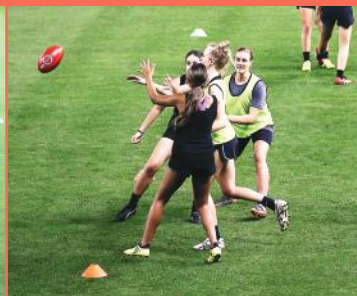
Get players to take turns feeding the balls. **Coaches – coach!**

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 4
 14-30+ players
 5-10 mins
 5-8 x 5-8m area
Drill Variations
 Larger area favours ball carrier



➔ 4 attackers, 3 defenders in one grid



➔ One up, one down grids



➔ Cue ball carriers: get arms free

- ➔ Progression: After 4 handballs, work ball to Group 2, or a backs vs forwards situation suiting your needs (i.e. 3 v 2)

Reduce lower limb, head & finger injuries



➔ Improve athleticism and football performance in contests



Coaches have a duty of care to dedicate training time to educate players on how to approach aerial contests.

COACHING POINTS: Preparing feet & body, and launching

Coaching Tip ➔

Coaching players how to prepare and position their body prior to, during and after an aerial contest is essential, to increase contested marks or spoils and player safety.



SPACIAL AWARENESS
Turn head & read cues of kicker



FOOTWORK – ACTIVE FEET
Run an arc to come forward at the ball



DUTY OF CARE
Educate players that they should not back pedal into a contest



LAUNCH OFF ONE LEG
Take at highest point



INSIDE LEG PROTECTION

EARLY TO THE CONTEST?
Engage body and protect the drop zone

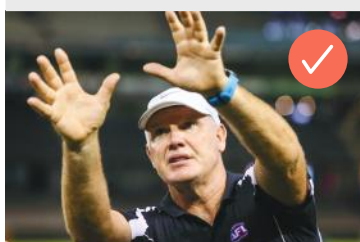


SITTING DUCK
Waiting under ball = vulnerable position and will get out-marked/spoiled

COACHING POINTS: Marking & landing

Coaching Tip ➔

Taking eyes off ball & moving head to the side = dropped marks & finger injuries.



EYES ON THE BALL
"W" hands



HEAD TO SIDE
Not looking at ball



LAND – ATHLETIC STANCE
Next play ready



STIFF LANDING
Unbalanced = High risk position for serious knee injury

PREP TO PLAY

AERIAL CONTEST DRILLS

Coaching Tip >

Reinforce a maximum of 2-3 technique points prior to commencing any drill. Keep cues simple. Use analogies such as 'W' or 'Butterfly hands'.

TECHNIQUE

ACTIVITY 1 STATIONARY MARKING

2-3 group size
10 mins
10m area



> Watch ball into hands

- > Stationary throwing firm ball into hands 2-3m away
- > Stationary kicking into hands with player on knees, then on feet
- > Walking through ball – increase speed as able

ACTIVITY 2 UNCONTESTED FOOTWORK AND LAUNCHING

- > Vary starting positions & flight of ball – players should adjust footwork if fumble, last one standing = winner



Noodle whack drill

- > Players in lines run through for marks and one player whacks them with a foam noodle. Drop out if fumble, last one standing = winner

Coaching Tip >

Cue players to adjust footwork, and body work as needed depending on each contest.

PROGRESSIVE DRILLS

ACTIVITY 3 TOKEN CONTACT

6-8 group size
10 mins
10-20m area

Drill Variations
Vary starting locations and side of contact

- > Use a token opponent with a bump bag to simulate contact
- > Encourage players to protect their body with their inside/lead leg, and launch at the ball



> Protect with inside knee



> Practice both sides & new starting points

Coaching Tip >

Get players to take turns kicking the balls. **Coaches - coach!**

ACTIVITY 4 1v1 CONTESTED MARKING

6-8 group size
10 mins
10-20m area

Drill Variations
Larger square. Or designate starting points to force practice of particular situations



- > 4 cones with 2 players starting in the middle
Instruct to run to the back (or front, or opposite to partner)



> Launch at the ball



> Engage body if early to contest

SMALL-SIDED GAMES

ACTIVITY 5 MARKING GRIDS 4 v 3

8-10 group size
10 mins
15-10m area

Drill Variations
Adjust number of players, size of grid, or ratio of defenders: attackers

Progressions

- > Initially you may have players stationary on the corner
- > Attackers can move around
- > Kicker at each end - defenders to communicate and come forward to find players at the front



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This information was developed during a collaborative project between the AFL and La Trobe University and is informed by the best available evidence and expert opinion from coaches, players and staff.