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## LAWS OF THE GAME

These rules have been adapted from the Australian Touch Association Rules

### THE PLAYING RULES OF TOUCH

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#### RULE 1 - DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

*Unless the contrary intention appears, the following definitions and terminology apply to the game of Touch:*

1. *Acting half* is the player who takes possession of the ball behind the player who performs the rollball.
2. *Attacking Team* is the team which has possession or is gaining possession.
3. *Attacking Scoreline* is the line on or over which a team has to place the ball to score a touchdown.
4. *Advantage* is that property or part of play which gives one team the potential to improve its position to score relative to the other team.
5. *Behind* means in a position or direction towards a team's defending scoreline.
6. *Dead Ball* means when the ball is out of play and includes the period following a touch until the ball is brought back into play at the rollball and the period following a touchdown or penalty, until the game is recommenced.
7. *Defending Team* is the team without the ball.
8. *Field Of Play* is the playing area bounded by the sidelines, scorelines, but not including those lines.
9. *Forward* means in a position or direction towards a team's own attacking scoreline.
10. *Full Time* occurs at the expiration of the normal time allowed for play.
11. *Mark (For a Touch)* is the position where the attacking player is at the time of the touch.
12. *Mark (For a Tap)* is the centre of the halfway line for the commencement or recommencement of play; or the position where a tap is awarded as a result of infringement.
13. *Offside* means in a position forward of the ball for an attacking player and in a position liable to penalty for a defending player.
14. *Onside* means in a position whereby a player may legitimately become involved with play.
15. *Rollball* is the normal act of bringing the ball into play following a touch or a change of possession.
16. *Scorelines* are the end boundaries of the field of play.
17. *Sidelines* are the side boundaries of the field of play.
18. *Tap* is the method of commencing the game, recommencing the game after half-time and after a touchdown has been scored. It is also a method of recommencing play when a penalty is awarded.
19. *Touch* is contact on any part of the body between a player in possession and a defending player. A touch includes contact on the ball, hair or clothing and may be made by a defending player or by the player in possession.
20. *Touchdown* is the result of an attacking player, except the acting half, placing the ball on or over the team's attacking scoreline.

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## **RULE 2- THE FIELD AND THE BALL**

1. *Field of Play.* The field of play is rectangular in shape and measures seventy (70) metres in length by fifty (50) metres in width.
2. *The Ball.* The game is to be played with an oval, inflated ball of a shape, colour and size approved. The ball should be inflated to the recommended air pressure.

### **PLAYER NOTES**

- A. A defending player must have both feet on or behind the defending scoreline to be onside, if rollball is within five (5) metres or a tap within ten (10) metres of the scoreline.
- B. The ball must not be hidden under player attire.

## **RULE 3- PLAYER ATTIRE**

1. Uniforms. All participating players are to be attired in t-shirts of the same colour.
2. Footwear. Shoes with safety studs are to be worn by all players. Light leather or synthetic boots with soft moulded soles are permitted.
3. Jewellery and Fingernails. Players are not to participate in any match while wearing any item of jewellery which might prove dangerous. Long or sharp fingernails are to be trimmed or taped.

### **REFEREE NOTES**

Referees are to inspect team clothing and footwear prior to matches.

## **RULE 4- MODE OF PLAY, DURATION AND SCORING**

- 1 Object. The object of the game of Touch is for each team to score touchdowns and to prevent the opposition from scoring.
2. Mode of Play. The ball may be passed, knocked or handed between onside players of the attacking team who may in turn run or otherwise move with the ball in an attempt to gain territorial advantage and score. Defending players prevent the attacking team from gaining a territorial advantage by touching the ball carrier. Either defending or attacking players may initiate touches upon which, play stops and is restarted with a rollball, unless other rules apply.
3. Duration. The game is of thirty (30) minutes duration, consisting of two (2) fifteen (15) minute halves. There is a five (5) minute halftime break. The duration may only be extended for exceptional circumstances.
4. End of Play. When time expires play is to continue until the ball next becomes dead. Should a penalty be awarded during this period the penalty is to be taken.
5. Scoring. A touchdown is awarded when a player other than the actinghalf places the ball on the ground on or over the team's attacking scoreline and within the boundaries of the extended sidelines. A touchdown is worth one (1) point.
6. The Winner. The team who at the end of play has scored the most touchdowns is declared the winner. In the event of neither team scoring, or in the event of both teams scoring the same number of touchdowns, a draw is declared.
7. Competition Points. Points are awarded in competition matches as follows:

**WIN - 3 POINTS**  
**BYE -3 POINTS**  
**DRAW -2POINTS**

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**LOSS -1 POINT  
FORFEIT -0 POINTS**

8. Progression. When a single winner is required and the game is drawn the following will apply:-

(A) SEMIS:

Extra time until a result is achieved. The team scoring the first touchdown is the winner.

(B) FINALS:

Extra time until a result is achieved. The team scoring the first touchdown is the winner.

9. Abandoned Games. If a game is abandoned due to any circumstances the controlling referees shall decide the result.

**REFEREE NOTES**

A. Referees should be aware of players who commit "professional fouls" and should take appropriate action.

B. If in attempting to score, a player either makes contact with the corner marker or crosses the extended sideline, no touchdown is awarded and the game is recommenced by the opposition with a rollball five metres from the scoreline and five metres in from the sideline.

**ADMINISTRATOR NOTES**

A. The controlling association should endeavour to provide official time-keepers for all matches. Should time-keepers not be appointed, the referee is to act as the sole time-keeper and therefore is allowed to wear a watch.

**RULE 5-TEAM COMPOSITION AND SUBSTITUTION**

1. Number of Players. A team consists of a maximum of twelve (12) players, no more than six (6) of whom are allowed on the field at any time.

**RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team at the position of the ball at the time the offence is identified.

2. Mixed Competition. In mixed competitions the number of females in the team must be no less than three or as an alternative males over 50 years of age and/or juniors under 18 years of age.

**RULING**

Two touchdowns (2 points) awarded to the non-offending team at the time the offence is identified.

3. Interchange Procedure. All interchanges must occur at the sideline, in an onside position. The players involved must make physical contact prior to the substitute entering the field of play. Following the scoring of a touchdown players may interchange without making physical contact with the substituting players. Interchange may occur on either side of the field unless local restrictions apply. The substituting player must immediately enter the field of play.

4. Substitution. Players may substitute at any time when their team is in possession of the ball, in accordance with the interchange procedure. There is no limit to the number of times a player may interchange.

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A tap awarded to the non-offending team five (5) metres in field from where the substituted player left the field or where the substituting player entered the field, whichever is the greater advantage.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. Should the number of players on the field from one team fall below five (5), the game is finished and the non-offending team is declared the winner. This applies if players have been dismissed for the remainder of the game, but not for injuries or dismissals for periods of time. However the game may continue with the agreement of both team captains.

B. Players who arrive late for a game may enter the field immediately, providing their team does not have six (6) players on the field, subject to local By-laws.

C. If a team is unable to continue to meet the requirements of rule 5.2 because of injury caused during the game, the makeup of the male-female ratio may be varied at the discretion of the referee, provided both captains agree.

#### **RULE 6- COMMENCEMENT AND RECOMMENCEMENT OF PLAY**

1. The Toss. Team captains are to toss a coin in the presence of the referee and the captain winning the toss has possession for the commencement of the first half and also has the choice of direction for the first half.

2. Attacking Team. The attacking team is to start the game with a tap at the centre of the halfway line following the indication to commence play from the referee. All players of the attacking team are to remain in an onside position until the ball has been tapped.

#### **RULING**

A change of possession at the centre of the halfway line.

3. Method. The tap is taken by placing the ball on the ground at or behind the mark, releasing both hands from the ball, tapping the ball with either foot a distance of not more than one (1) metre, and retrieving the ball cleanly. Any player of the attacking team may take the tap. Any onside player of the attacking team may retrieve the ball once the tap has been taken.

#### **RULING**

A change of possession at the mark for the tap.

4. Defending Team. All players of the defending team are required to retire a distance of not less than ten (10) metres from the mark for the tap. Defending players may move forward of their positions once the ball has been tapped with the foot.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the attacking team along a line ten (10) metres directly forward of the original mark.

5. Recommencement of Play. For the recommencement of play following the half-time break, the team losing the toss is to start the game with a tap as described in Rules 6.2 and 6.3 For the recommencement of play following the scoring of a touchdown, the team against which the score was made is to recommence play as described in Rules 6.2 and 6.3.

6. Kicking. The ball cannot be kicked or played with the foot except when taking a tap or at the rollball. The actinghalf may use the foot to control the ball.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team at the position where the ball made contact with the foot.

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Players may take the ball behind the mark for a tap up to a maximum of ten (10) metres. No sideways movement of the mark is allowed.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. Referees are to ensure that there is minimum delay between the scoring of touchdowns and the recommencement of play.

B. Referees should penalise defending players who attempt to delay play following a touchdown. If the delay is caused by the team scored against, the penalty should be awarded from the centre of the halfway line. If the team who scored is causing the delay, the penalty should also be awarded at the centre of the halfway mark with the offending player(s) dismissed for a period of time.

#### **RULE 7- POSSESSION**

1. General. Providing other Rules do not apply, the team with the ball is entitled to five (5) touches prior to changing possession with the opposing team.

2. Changeover Procedure. Following the sixth touch or the loss of possession due to any other means, players of the team losing possession are to hand or pass the ball to the nearest opposition player, or place the ball on the ground at the mark without delay. Attacking players who request the ball are to be given the ball. Players are not to delay the changeover procedure.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team ten (10) metres forward of the mark for the change of possession or penalty.

3. Ball to Ground. If the ball is dropped to the ground a change of possession results. The mark for change of possession is where the ball first pitches or where the attacking player dropped or passed the ball, whichever is the greater advantage of the team gaining possession.

4. Mishandled Ball. If a player mishandles the ball and providing the ball does not go to ground, play is to continue.

5. Intercepts. Intercepts by onside defending players are allowed. Following an intercept play continues until the first touch is effected. a touchdown is scored or a stoppage occurs as a result of other actions.

#### **PLAYER NOTES**

Should a touch be effected on a player in possession while the ball may not be physically in the hands (e.g. while juggling or trying to maintain control) the touch is to count.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

If the ball contacts the ground while still under the control of a player (e.g. falling over) a change of possession does not result and play is to continue.

#### **RULE 8- PASSING**

1. General. A player in possession may pass, flick, knock, throw or otherwise deliver the ball to any other onside player in the attacking team.

2. Forward Pass. A player in possession is not to pass, flick, knock, throw or otherwise propel the ball in a forward direction (see Player Notes to Rule 7).

#### **RULING**

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A tap awarded to the non-offending team at the mark where the ball was passed flicked, knocked, thrown or otherwise propelled forward.

3. Passing Into Opposition. A player who passes the ball at or towards a defending player and thereby causes the ball to go to ground shall lose possession. However, if the defending player attempts to catch the ball or play at the ball and the ball goes to ground, the attacking team retains possession. Play is restarted at the mark where the ball goes to ground or at the position of best advantage for the non-offending team. The touch count is restarted.

#### **PLAYER NOTES**

A player who, in attempting to control the ball, juggles or knocks the ball forward, is not to be penalised, provided that the player regathers the ball.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. A penalty is to result from a forward pass even if the receiver was in an inside position prior to the pass.

B. Referees are to be aware of players who make any deliberate passes at an opposing player, especially on the fifth (5th) touch.

#### **RULE 9 - THE ROLLBALL**

1. When Required. A player is to perform a rollball under the following circumstances:

(a) when a touch has been effected

(b) when possession changes due to the sixth touch

(c) when possession changes due to a ball to ground

(d) when possession changes due to an infringement by an attacking player at a tap or

(e) when so directed by the referee.

2. Method. The attacking player is to position on the mark, face the opponent's (defending) scoreline, stand parallel to the sidelines and roll the ball backwards along the ground between the feet a distance of not more than one (1) metre. Once the ball is placed on the mark, the attacking player may step forward over the ball.

#### **RULING**

A change of possession at the mark.

3. Attacking Team. Any other player of the attacking team may receive the ball from the rollball and thus become the actinghalf. The acting half may pass or run with the ball. However, if touched, he/she loses possession. The actinghalf is not to delay picking up or gathering the ball. The player who performs the rollball is not permitted to obstruct or otherwise prevent the defending team from gaining possession or effecting a touch on the actinghalf.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team at the mark where the infringement occurred.

4. Voluntary Rollball. A player in possession is not to perform a rollball unless a touch has been effected.

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5. The actinghalf is not permitted to score touchdowns. He is unrestricted as to where he can run and may cross the scoreline to link up with support players. Should the actinghalf place the ball on the ground over the scoreline, whether the ball is released or not, a change of possession will occur five (5) metres from the scoreline opposite where the ball touched the ground.

#### **PLAYER NOTES**

A. The ball must touch the ground in a rollball but does not necessarily have to be rolled. The foot may be used to control the ball.

B. The player performing the rollball must be stationary and will not be penalised if the rollball is performed while balancing on one foot providing the ball passes on the inside of the supporting foot.

C. Defending players who are offside at the rollball are liable to penalty and should remain out of play until a touch has been effected or until they have assumed an onside position.

D. The player performing the rollball cannot retrieve the ball.

E. Any defending player involved in a touch must immediately retire to a position along a line five (5) metres forward of the touch or to their own scoreline.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. The mark for a penalty awarded is along a line five (5) metres forward of the mark for the rollball and nearest the infringement.

B. The acting half is permitted to use the foot to control the ball. However, play must not be delayed. Defending players may move forward as soon as the actinghalf has made contact with the ball.

C. A player in possession may run or stand with the ball extended towards the ground without penalty.

D. In an attempt to encourage a free-flowing game, referees should warn offside players and use the advantage rule as applicable (e.g. if a warned offside player moves to make a touch, the referee may call "play on" rather than stop play and penalise the offender). However, if the referee hasn't warned the player (or team) he cannot call "play on" and must allow the touch or penalise the offending player.

E. Players who delay the rollball are to be penalised.

G. The actinghalf is not permitted to score touchdowns.

H. There is no requirement for the ball to be picked up to commence rollball, but the referee should ensure the rollball takes place at the mark.

#### **RULE 10 - THE TOUCH**

1. General. See Definitions, Rule 1.24. Players of both defending and attacking teams are to use the minimum force necessary to effect touches.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team and, as a minimum, a warning to the offending player.

2. Passing after Touch. A player is not to pass or otherwise deliver the ball after a touch has been effected.

#### **RULING**

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A penalty awarded to the defending team at the mark where the touch occurred.

5. Claimed Touch. A player must not claim or otherwise call for a touch unless a touch has actually been effected.

#### RULING

If an advantage is apparent, the referee will indicate "play on", otherwise a tap is to be awarded to the attacking team where the touch is claimed.

#### REFEREE NOTES

A. Unless the referee is sure no contact was made, the referee should acknowledge all claimed touches and call back the player in possession for a rollball. Should the referee observe a defending player claim a touch without contact and unless there is an advantage to the attacking team, a penalty and warning are to be awarded under Rule 10.5.

B. On the rare occasion that the referee is unable to distinguish between a pass before a touch and a pass after a touch and provided the ball does not go to ground, the touch counts as a "simultaneous touch". The ball is returned to the attacking player for a rollball. If the ball goes to ground on such occasions, or if it is the sixth touch, a change of possession is to result.

C. Mandatory penalties should not be awarded when players fail to feel slight touches. However, deliberate run-ons are to be penalised.

#### **RULE 11 - BALL ON OR OVER SIDELINE/OVER SCORELINE**

1. On or Over Sideline. The ball becomes dead when it or a player in possession touches or crosses the sideline and a change of possession results. However, if a player in possession is touched prior to crossing the sideline, then the touch counts and play continues with a rollball at the mark where the touch occurred.

#### RULING

The team not responsible for the ball touching or crossing the sideline restarts play with a rollball five (5) metres infield from where the ball or the player in possession touched or crossed the sideline, or at the position of best advantage for the attacking team.

2. Touched Over Attacking Scoreline. If a player in possession is touched after crossing the attacking scoreline and prior to the scoring of a touchdown, the touch counts. Play is restarted with a rollball five (5) metres infield from where the player in possession crossed the scoreline.

3. Actions Near Attacking Scoreline. When a touch is effected within five (5) metres of the attacking scoreline, a player in possession may move directly behind the mark a distance of up to five (5) metres to the broken line to restart with a rollball.

#### **RULE 12- BALL TOUCHED IN FLIGHT**

1. Intentional Contact by Defender. If the ball goes to ground following a defender's attempt to gain possession, the attacking team retains the ball and the touch count restarts. This also applies if the defending player deliberately knocks the ball to ground. The mark where the rollball occurs is where the ball first pitches or where the defender touched the ball, whichever is the best advantage for the attacking team.

2. Intentional Contact but not to Ground. If a defending player touches the ball in flight and the ball is retrieved by an attacking player, play continues and the touch count restarts at the next touch.



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3. Intentional Contact and Touched Again by Attacker. If an attacking player attempts to gather the ball after a deflection by a defender and the ball goes to ground, the attacking team retains possession and the touch count restarts for Rule 12.1 above (see Referee Note A, below).

#### **RULE 13-OFFSIDE**

1. Attacking Team. A player in the attacking team is offside when that player is forward of the player who has possession or who last had possession. In general play offside attacking players who interfere with play should be penalised.

#### **PLAYER NOTES**

A. Attacking players who are offside are non-effective and should return to an onside position as soon as possible.

B. Offside defending players must at all times make an effort to retire to an onside position.

C. A defending player must have both feet on or behind the defending scoreline to be onside when a rollball occurs within five (5) metres, or a penalty tap within 10 metres of that player's scoreline.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. Defending players who are retiring should not normally be penalised while taking no active part in the game.

#### **RULE 14-OBSTRUCTION**

1. Attacking Team. Players of the attacking team are not to obstruct defending players from attempting to effect a touch. A player in possession must not run or otherwise move behind the referee or other players in the attacking team in an attempt to avoid a touch.

Obstruction here is defined as a deliberate attempt by an attacking player to gain an unfair advantage by preventing a defending player from effecting a touch.

#### **RULING**

A tap to the defending team at the mark where the infringement occurred.

2. Defending Team. Players in the defending team are not to obstruct or otherwise interfere with attacking players supporting the player in possession.

#### **RULING**

A tap awarded to the non-offending team at the mark of infringement providing the stoppage is not to the disadvantage of the attacking team.

#### **RULE 15-THE PENALTY**

1. General. A penalty is to be awarded for an infringement by any player in accordance with the rules contained herein. The method of taking a penalty is a penalty tap.

2. Location of Tap. The mark for the penalty is normally at the location of the infringement unless otherwise detailed in specific rules. For infringements which occur on the boundaries, within five (5) metres of the defending scoreline or outside the field of play, the location of the penalty tap is to be five (5) metres infield (or on the five metre line) from where the infringement occurred.

3. Method. A method of taking the penalty tap is detailed in Rule 6.3. The ball does not have to be lifted from the ground for a tap. However, the ball must be at or behind the correct mark prior to the tap being taken. (see Player Note C)

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#### RULING

A change of possession at the mark.

4. Attacking Team. Players of the attacking team are to be onside at the tap.

#### RULING

A change of possession at the mark.

5. Defending Team. Players of the defending team are to be onside at the tap as detailed in Rule 6.4.

#### RULING

A tap awarded to the attacking team along a line ten (10) metres directly forward of the original mark and nearest 10 the infringement.

6. Penalty Touchdown. A penalty touchdown will be awarded if any action by a player or spectator deemed by the referee to be contrary to the rules or spirit of the game, prevented the attacking team from scoring a touchdown.

#### **RULE 16- ADVANTAGE**

1. The principle of advantage to the non-offending team is to apply at all times, providing some advantage is readily obvious. Once a team is given the advantage that team does not necessarily forfeit the right to other action as described in these rules.

#### **PLAYER NOTES**

A. Players should at all times play in accordance with the Rules of Touch and allow the referee to interpret advantage.

B. Players who use unnecessary force or whose actions unfairly prevent any other player from gaining an advantage will be liable to penalty.

#### **RULE 17 - DISCIPLINE AND PLAYER MISCONDUCT**

1. General. Players who infringe the Rules of Touch are liable to penalty or other appropriate action according to the seriousness of the infringement. Penalties are to be awarded in accordance with applicable rules.

2. Frequent Ill-discipline. A player who continually breaches the playing rules is liable to dismissal. Team captains are responsible for the conduct of players in their respective teams and should be aware that undisciplined players are disruptive to the spirit of the game.

#### **REFEREE NOTES**

A. The referee is the sole judge of time in relation to dismissed players.

B. A referee is required to advise the team captain as to the reason for a player's dismissal.

C. Referees may suggest to captains to replace infringing players for the remainder of the game otherwise the player may be sent off and suspended and the team reduced in playing numbers.

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**RULE 18- THE REFEREE AND LINE JUDGES**

1. The Referee. The referee is the sole judge on matters of fact and is required to adjudicate on the rules of the game during play. The referee may impose any sanction necessary to control the game and in particular, award penalties for infringements against the rules.
2. Authority of Referee. Players, coaches and officials of both teams are under the control of the officiating referees.
3. Area of Control. The playing area under control of the referee extends from within the boundaries of the field of play, to an area which covers substitute players and officials involved in the particular game.

**PLAYER NOTES**

Team captains may respectfully enquire of the referee, matters of varying interpretation or causes of penalties. Any discussion is to be brief and polite and must not delay play. Other team members should not talk to the referee.