

# HOW TO ORGANISE AND RUN AN AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL 'COME & TRY SESSION'

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'COME & TRY SESSIONS' are a great way to recruit new players for a number of reasons:

- The club can focus recruitment efforts on one main event rather than sporadic initiatives here and there
- They attract people who may be a bit nervous to turn up alone to an established training, if they know there are going to be other beginners there they are more likely to come along
- Attractive to people that are new to a city as they are more likely to say YES to something like this as they will want to make friends
- They are also good for the spirit and the community of the people at the existing club.

'Come & Try Sessions' work well in line with other events, be it a tournament or just a game. This means there is lots of people available to help out, it gives those taking part in the taster session the opportunity to see games being played (and how much fun it is) and increases the socialising aspect. Therefore, consider if you have an upcoming event you could tack this event on to.

In this document you will find:

- a checklist covering the main points needed to be completed before an event, during and after to ensure it is a success
- a full session plan that you can give to your coaches/use yourself in order to run the session with a simple structure with drill ideas to make sure the session is organised, inclusive and fun.

# CHECKLIST

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## STEP 1 - BEFORE EVENT

### 1.1 Organise a social for after the event

*TIP!:* having a social is a great way to get to know the attendees and also for a way for the attendees to get to know each other and make friends, which will persuade them to come back, it's also important to show them that you know how to have fun. Speak to a local pub/bar and see if they can provide some free/cheap food & drink or host a BBQ!

### 1.2 Create a Poster for the event

*TIP!:* Stress on the poster that the event is for beginners. Women can be nervous about joining in a session, so knowing there will be other beginners there is comforting. Include details of the social (if details have not been finalised just mention that there will be a social!) If you need a template for a poster contact [womens@afleurope.org](mailto:womens@afleurope.org)

### 1.3. Create a separate Facebook Event for the Taster Session (so that it stands out)

*TIP!:* Get girlfriends/boyfriends and friends of your current players to come along to the sessions and get as many people as you can to click 'Going' on the event. People attract people! Get everyone you know to invite everyone they know to the invite. There should be hundreds or thousands of people invited if you use your whole network. Also, consider using Facebook advertising, there are some very cheap options and it is very effective.

### 1.4 PROMOTE!

*TIP!:* Contact other local sport clubs e.g. Rugby, Hand Ball, Soccer, Roller Derby and invite them to the event (send the poster and Facebook event). Also contact local colleges and Universities - include an offer to run a private Taster Session if they are interested. On Facebook find as many groups with your city name in as possible and post in them e.g. "Expats in X", "New in X", "Sport X". Send to local online news pages/local newspapers. Try internationals, meetup. Make flyers and posters and put them up in local bars, pubs, sports clubs, gyms etc.

### 1.5 Create a Session Plan - example on the next page

### 1.6 Arrange for members of your club to help out with the session and assign roles

### 1.7 Ensure you have all the equipment you need for the session

### 1.8 Pray for good weather!

## STEP 2 - RUNNING THE EVENT *See the example session plan below*

### 2.1 Collect mobile phone numbers/emails of the attendees

*Whilst doing this, ask the person about how they found out about the event, this is really useful to know for future as what works best for recruitment*

## STEP 3 - AFTER EVENT

### 3.1 Follow up the session

(a day or so later) with an email/message to all the attendees to thank them for coming to the event and to remind them when the next session is and what other fixtures/events are in the year. Make sure you invite them to your Facebook Group where they will be able to find regular updates.

### 3.2 Lesson's Learned

*Discuss with your committee what worked and what didn't work and note this down somewhere safe so that they can be used for any future events (and easy to find as part of any committee handover that may happen).*

## EXAMPLE SESSION PLAN

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**Intro** - When running a 'Come & Try session', it's important to have as many people as possible available to help out. Have one main leader at the start of the session who welcomes everyone and have a number of other helpers who can 'lead' on sessions, especially if you have enough attendees to split the groups up. If possible also have helpers who float around the session to give pointers to individuals. BEFORE the session starts and AFTER the session is finished, make sure you get your current club members to chat to the attendees. Don't let anyone new be left alone, have a chat with them, find out how they heard about the event, ask what sports they have played before etc. The more welcome you make the attendees feel, the more likely they are to come back.

### 1 - WELCOME

Keep the welcome brief, it is key to get players moving and then touching the ball as quickly as possible. Introduce yourself and any of your key helpers, thank people for coming and briefly explain what you will be doing so that players know what to expect. Move on to the warm up to get players moving and interacting.

### 2 - WARM UP

Start with a fun game to get everyone interacting. Try **Ultimate Tag**: All players start "on", players run in a set area and have to tag each other, if you are tagged you have to squat down, you can enter the game again if the person that tagged you is tagged by someone else and so squats down. If two players tag each other at the same time, play rock paper scissors to decide who has to squat down.

**OR** if you have enough balls play **Rob the Nest**: put all the balls together and have a number of cones set up evenly around the balls about 5-8m away. Put the group in to teams of 2-3. On a whistle one person from each cone runs to grab a ball from the middle, once they are back at their cone the next player can go, they can grab a ball from either the middle or from any of the other cones. This continues for a couple of minutes and teams keep stealing balls from other cones (only one person from a team can leave their cone at once.) It's a great little game to get people interacting. Play it a couple of times announcing the winner each time... perhaps on the second/third go get everyone to do it hopping or running backwards....

Follow with the standard warm up that you would use for your club. Get the warm up to finish in a circle, go around the circle and get everyone to say their name and why they are at the taster session/how they heard about it. If there are too many for one circle, get everyone to gather over after the warm up and explain that you are going to split them in to groups. Get a show of hands to see if anyone has played before and split groups evenly until there is 10-16 in a group. Once in groups, complete circle activity as mentioned before.

### 3 - STATIONS

Run a number of stations using the suggestions below. Get all groups to start with Station 1 - 3 first then switch. After the first 2/3 stations, move them on to complete your choice of the remaining stations. If only one group, after stations 1 -3 decide which of the other stations you want to do.

#### Station 1 - Handballing

Explain the basics of the handball. Laces up in palm of hand, variations of the part of the hand to use, correct momentum of the 'holding' hand and pulling the arm back all the way on the 'passing' hand. First of 'passing' hand should end up in the palm of the 'holding' hand. Do a quick demonstration.

Depending on size of group, number of helpers and number of balls - set up an appropriate number of lanes with a helper at the end of each lane as a coach (ideally 3/4 in lane). The coach handballs to the player, and players are instructed to hand ball back and run around the coach - continue.

If anyone is visibly struggling with the technique, get a floating helper to take them to one side to do some one on one handballing.

Progress to a normal handball lane with even numbers on each side to get the players having lots of touches.

### **Station 2 - Marking** (taking a marking and marking types), can combine with Station 1

Explain what a mark is and get someone to demonstrate taking a mark. Explain the 3 main types of marking; chest, out in front, overhead and explain what situations you would use them for (chest = in the wet!)

Set up lanes similar to the hand balling and the coach should pop the ball up high for the players to mark either out in front or overhead "at the highest point". If ability permits - make it a contested mark and get the players to come out in pairs and kick the ball higher and see if one can mark it.

### **Station 3 - Kicking**

Explain the basics of the kick - laces out, thumbs pointing at the laces, dropping the ball directly on to the foot, kicking with a straight leg using laces of boot, ball should spin backwards. Do a quick demonstration.

If balls permit, get players to kick in pairs, if not put them in to 3's or fours. Walk around and give tips to individuals or pairs/groups.

Progress to a normal kicking lane with even numbers on each side to get the players having lots of touches.

### **Station 4 - Shepherding**

Explain a shepherd and how it should be carried out to protect your team mate; get low, keep a feel/eye on the player you are shepherding, COMMUNICATION. **Drill one** - Group the players in to three's and give them one bib each. One player tucks the bib in to the back of their shorts, another player is their protector and has to stop the third player from grabbing the bib. Get them to do this for about 30 seconds and then switch, they should be exhausted afterwards! **Drill two** - Get everyone to stand in a circle and give everyone a number from 1 - X. Roll the ball in to the middle and call three numbers, the first number called picks up the ball, the second number called is the Shepherd and the third number called is the attacker trying to get the ball. The Shepherd has to stop the attacker from getting the ball from the player with the ball who is moving around the circle. Use players for a demonstration before starting.

### **Station 5 - Goal Kicking**

Ask players if they know how a mark should be taken, get them to demonstrate (they may have done it in a previous station if a large session). If a mark hasn't yet been explained, explain and do a demonstration. Put the group in to 3's - one stands behind the goal, one will be kicking at goal and the other will be standing on the mark. Get players to kick from different angles and switch the positions.

### **Station 6 - Tackling**

Tackling is one of the best parts of our game, so throw in a tackling drill, the players will love it as it's not something they are used to. The tackling drill is both about making AND taking a tackle so is also good for safety.

Explain that a tackle has to be between shoulder height and knees and anything above or below is illegal, also explain that you cannot push in the back.

Pair the players up and have them facing each other on their knees. The player being tackled needs to hold a ball (if not enough balls use a jumper/water bottle). Teach the players the right way to tackle, wrap their arms around the player and the ball and pull them down with their own weight sideways to the floor, putting your head on their side. Make sure to demonstrate first!

Progress to practice tackling from standing and explain that players should drop to their knees to pull the player down and to avoid pushing in the back.

### **Station 7 - Bouncing \*fun station\***

If an extra station is needed, try teaching players how to bounce as this is a fun skill to learn! Also, useful to explaining the travelling rule as often it gets forgotten as it isn't impacted by the other skills.

## **4 - GAMES**

Before starting a game give a brief overview of the rules; holding the ball, taking a mark, NO THROWING, bouncing/touching ball to floor etc. If you didn't do a tackling station, then explain briefly a proper tackle but go on to say that for the games you will just do 'wrap tackling' - demonstrate a wrap tackle 'big hug'. If you only have a low number of attendees at the session, then

run a mixed game with some of the guys from your club and even put in a rule that only girls can score if deemed necessary.

#### **Handball Game**

Depending on numbers - set up a mini handball game (s) about 5 - 9 aside. Goals will be four cones set in a square (about 2m by 2m). Aim of the game is to hand pass the ball to a player standing in your attacking square. Defenders aren't allowed in their defensive square. No kicking! Wrap tackles only!

#### **Full Game**

Progress to a proper game, ideally 9-12 aside but any numbers work! Be lenient on the rules but explain when an error is made very clearly. Allow tackling (if everyone has mouthguards and same gender, if not wrap tackle only!)

#### **6 - WRAP UP**

Gather all players over and ask for anyone to put their hand up and say one thing they learnt about the sport, or something positive about the Session/another player (hopefully a couple of people volunteer to say something). Explain any details relevant to your club and thank players for coming and tell them what the plans are for the social afterwards (if you organised one). Make sure you take the contact details of the players and send a follow up email/message with details of regular trainings and social media links etc.

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Created by Lisa Wilson.

For support or more information contact [admin@afleurope.org](mailto:admin@afleurope.org)