

FEMALE PLAYERS

How to attract, retain and support Female Players at your club



WHY DO FEMALE PLAYERS PLAY?

Female play football for different reasons at different ages – consistent motivations across most participants include wanting to:

- To have fun
- Socialise with friends in an active environment
- Keep fit and healthy
- Feel like they are improving
- Experiences challenge
- Build confidence

WHAT SHOULD YOUR CLUB LOOK LIKE FOR FEMALE PLAYERS?

- Should offer as many different opportunities to participate as possible and not limit the opportunities to play football to one type (eg competitive only) or time or day
- Should have an open and welcoming environment, where all players feel comfortable in coming to play
- Should be adaptable and open to feedback – players will feel far more valued and welcome if they know that they have some input into the direction and opportunities of the club

BARRIERS TO FOOTBALL FOR FEMALES

- Safety and comfort in a traditionally male dominated environment
- Influence of a female peers and parents
- Lack of confidence
- Lack of time/motivation due to other commitments (e.g. study, work, childcare etc.)
- Lack of awareness
- Family commitments, lack of family support or social time limitations
- Dominant gender norms and perceptions, prejudice and misogynistic practices
- Structural constraints and lack of female representation at the club (managerial, administrative or coaching)
- Lack of acceptance and recognition
- Lack of adequate and female friendly facilities
- Cost of participation and lack of opportunities for women from low socio-economic backgrounds
- Location or lack of transportation
- Non-enjoyment of exercise or unsuitable program
- Competitive environment and emphasis on performance and winning
- Age and Ability
- Language, cultural constraints and unfamiliarity with the environment
- Bullying, Abuse, Discrimination or Racism
- Stereotyping and ignorance of women's needs

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO RECRUIT FEMALE PLAYERS

NEED MORE PLAYERS?

Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide social offering, modified, non-competitive or not structured, “street football”
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage girls to bring their friends.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote all the offerings that your club has for female football through as many avenues as possible, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Promotional activities after school “street” football, cultural and religious institutions or other groups that serve girls - Flyers in public places where girls and their caregivers are likely to be, or promoted on social media - Existing players to bring their friends/family (potential discounts for ‘referrals’ or family discounts) - Social Football options
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote to parents/caregivers to play football <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensure that your club is attractive to new mothers by promoting the social side and involvement that exists for parents (eg Kick-On for Women) - Adopt a ‘whole of family’ approach and run a ‘mothers or fathers in football’ day – mums or dads and daughters can play/be involved in football together
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a wide range of options outside of football for families, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social evenings - Trips to games - Space for children to play
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a flexible variety of football experiences all year to ensure that people who miss registrations/ can’t commit for the traditional season can still participate in football (eg MiniRoos Kick-Off program, Girls United and Kick-On for Women, Walking Football etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote that your club offers a wide variety of safe football offerings that cater to female needs and wants including female-only activities, programs targeting mums, older people and different abilities, skill or fitness levels (e.g. Kick-On for Women, Walking Football etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer training to your club on CALD, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander communities and people with disabilities • Resources and online education is also available on the Play Football website • Do not stereotype - women and girls, even within the same background, can have different needs, experiences and family contexts • Engage with community ambassadors to promote the game within their communities, raise awareness and challenge dominant gender and cultural norms
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure your facility is female friendly with clean and appropriate changing rooms and toilets • Apply for facility grants to build outdoor futsal courts that are accessible to the public

SUGGESTED STRATEGIES TO RETAIN FEMALE PLAYERS

REASONS FOR LEAVING FOOTBALL

- Not fun
- Family and work commitments
- Changing motivations and personal factors
- Poor coach experience
- Lack of peer support (image and exclusion concerns)
- Limited program offering (e.g. only play in one format, certain times/days or against males) and lack of clear playing pathways
- Facilities are not female friendly (e.g. no female changing room or bathroom)
- Access to facility and scheduling prioritising male players or teams
- Club culture, violence and negative attitudes
- Experiencing discrimination or sexism, harassment, racism and lack of inclusive environment (e.g. in the form of name-calling, staring, ignoring, refusing to play with or passing etc.)
- Lack of culturally appropriate programs or environment
- Too expensive, flexible payment not available
- Lack of female representation in club management and coaching positions

Actions

- Create a welcoming and gender equal club room (photos of male and female players, administrators, referees etc.)
- Organise meetings with your female members and participants to establish what they need and discuss what provisions at your club might be most appropriate for them
- Appoint female managers and board members to participate in decision-making and address your players' needs
- Instigate a zero-tolerance policy towards any type of prejudice or behaviour that puts the wellbeing of women and girls at risk. Ensure your committee members and coaches are implementing this policy.
- Use current players to act as welcoming buddies for new players in their team
 - This will help with a sense of belonging and togetherness
 - This will empower current players and help with creating a friendly culture in each team
- Set time aside at your facilities for 'females only' – no limit on age group or ability simple welcome everyone
- Enforce equal access to pitches and resources between female and male players or teams
- Offer programs for children such as MiniRoos Kick-Off to run in conjunction with female programs
- Expose girls and boys in your programs to positive, strong (female) role models.
 - Invite successful women, athletes as guests for all players
 - Utilise community members to be guest speakers or conduct training sessions
- Encourage girls and boys to be positive role models for everyone by sharing their successes outside of sport during group discussions
- Recruit coaches who understand coaching females and fit into the club culture
- Be flexible in the different forms of football that you offer, including:
 - Programs
 - Timings
 - Skill levels and ages
 - Training scheduling
- Involve female players in other aspects of your club and the game as they grow and develop – players may want to coach, referee or help at the club

OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS TO PLAY FOOTBALL

WHY SHOULD FEMALES PLAY FOOTBALL AT YOUR CLUB?

- Playing football exposes females at all levels to positive influences on their life, not just football
- Football is an enjoyable, inclusive sport for a range of skill levels
- Football is a flexible game that can be played in many formats and with varying levels of commitment
- Football can be played all year round, is social and has several health benefits

OPPORTUNITIES YOUR CLUB CAN PROVIDE:

Club Football	Girls aged 4-12 years	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MiniRoos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be mixed or girls teams • Flexible program options • Can be played all year round
Flexible Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer Football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flexible periods and days of delivery
Club Football	Girls aged 13- 17 (Youth)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11- aside (traditional football) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be girls' teams or mixed
Flexible Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football Your Way Program (Girls United) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive • Social Environment • Introduction to football
Club Football	Women 18+ (Senior)	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11- aside (traditional football) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of skill levels • Social and health benefits
Social Football	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5,6 or 7 aside • Futsal • Summer Football • Walking Football 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of commitment need • Can be social or competitive • Usually organised during the week
Flexible Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Football Your Way Programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Kick-on for Women - Soccer Mums - Girls United - Walking Football (55+) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social environment • Introduction to football • Flexible days of delivery • Modified formats

For more information on programs follow this link
www.playfootball.com.au

OFFERING FEMALE PROGRAMS AND FEMALE TEAM ENVIRONMENTS

WHY ARE FEMALE TEAMS AND ENVIRONMENTS BENEFICIAL?

- Females will be more confident in their actions, more willing to try new things and more willing to make mistakes and try again
- Females will feel more comfortable and less intimidated
- Having a gender balanced environment will allow female leaders and mentors to feel more comfortable
- Females are less afraid to receive and give constructive feedback in a more comfortable environment

KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN CREATING FEMALE ENVIRONMENTS:

As a Club

- Promote safe environments and culturally appropriate environments (e.g. involvement females in managerial and coaching aspects, female-only practices, appropriate food, no alcohol etc.)
- Value male and female participation equally, which involves:
 - Marketing and promotion targeted to female audiences
 - Imagery of females on social media platforms
- Have a dedicated committee or volunteer position, aimed specifically at maintaining awareness for female football around the club

Facilities

- Need to be female friendly
 - Changing rooms and bathrooms
 - All-weather pitch
- Equally accessible for both female and male teams and groups, which includes:
 - Timings
 - Age groups
 - All abilities and skill level
- Consider using spaces that female players feel comfortable and safe within (e.g. indoor, community centers etc.)

Flexibility

- Recognising players have different expectations and commitment levels
 - Offer a range of different types of football programs
 - A range of times/days of delivery
 - Flexibility with age groups
 - Consider grouping players based on level, e.g.:
 - Physically, Technically, Psychologically, Socially

Competition

- Offer female teams for all age groups
- Still offer mixed teams for players choice
- Allow playing in flexible uniforms such as in hijabs for Muslim women and girls



Coach

- Appoint a coach who understands key principals for coaching females (please refer to coaching girls' link here)
- It's a good opportunity to give females an avenue to coach in these programs/teams

Players

- To recruit players for these teams and programs, your club with need to promote to targeted female audiences, to communicate that female options are available e.g.:
 - Schools, siblings of existing players, current players
- Promotion through social media, flyers, visits to school/ events or other form of marking (making sure to use female imagery)
- Profile female role models within your club to demonstrate what your club offers for women/girls

Offering mixed environments

- On some occasion's girls will elect to play with boys – especially within the 4 – 14 Year age bracket. It's important to accommodate this choice, below are some recommendations to help integrate:
- Consider individual needs and emotions, not just boys and girls
- Position girls and boys in leadership roles where appropriate
- Maintain a safe space
- Limit sensitive discussions
- Be mindful about ability and mixed-gender physical activity
- Conduct follow up discussions to gauge feedback and effectiveness

