



Emu Plains Football Club

Junior Player Grading Policy

Welcome to Emu Plains Football Club (EPFC), this document has been produced to help parents & players understand what grading is about & how it will affect them. Please read this entire document and feel free to contact the club secretary about any aspect of the policy, as the club committee reviews this document yearly.

Topics Covered;

1. Grading Background Information
2. Parent Information
3. Junior Player Grading Criteria
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1. **Background Information**

The Nepean District Soccer Football Association, has deemed that all children playing soccer be graded into a team that best suits their ability in order for them to gain the most enjoyment from the whole football experience.

The grading procedure has a twofold application.

- Firstly where there are two or more teams to be entered for a particular age group it will allow the grading committee to place the children into a team suited to their ability and with other children of similar ability.
- Secondly it will allow the grading committee to nominate the team into a division with the NDSFA that will best suit the ability of the team as a whole and allow them to be competitive in that division.

Grading will be carried out using a set of skills tests, both individual and game related. The children will be assessed according to their performance exhibited during these exercises and games.

Once a player has been graded into a team and the grading procedure has been finalised they cannot change teams+.

If any player or parent is not satisfied with the grading that the player receives they may, in writing make a submission for a review of the grade given.

On completion of grading and when the Grading Committee has reached its final decision, the player will be notified in accordance with this policy in writing.

+ See below for more information

2. Parent Information

To help us meet this NDSFA requirement we have devised a criteria based on the following factors & hopefully it contributes to a decision which best suits their ability in order for them to best enjoy the whole football experience

- **Peer pressure** – Other players will soon let their feelings be known when it comes down to ability and from our experience this often does more damage than any ill feelings resulting from the grading itself.
- **Exodus of talented players** – Players of above average skills and their parents will become frustrated and eventually leave for another club that does grade their players in the hope their child is put into a better team.
- **Reduced enjoyment** – Players who play in a grade significantly above their skill level will often feel left out as the more skilful players take control of games. Often this can result in the less skilful players leaving soccer in search of another sport.

Note there are some advantages in not grading players, such as maintaining friendships and family social groups; however this soon becomes an issue in several ways. But not grade the children based on ability would take away the opportunity for some to progress to representative soccer at a later stage. Soccer is a competitive sport. If you would like your child to play at a less competitive level then ask the grading committee if he/she could be placed in a lower grade when grading is conducted at the start of the season.

Playing a competitive team sport teaches children lessons, which they can use right through life such as persistence, team play, friendship and fair play. EPFC aims to give all players a fair go and the opportunity for them to play to the best of their ability and to be good sports.

It's heartbreaking for the Grading Committee to decide between several players of near equal ability knowing that some will be separated from their friends. We cannot however; make exceptions based on friendships, as this will undermine the whole procedure. Children at this age tend to make new friends quickly and this also means that they extend their circle of friends.

An integral part of grading is the information available about the player from his or her coach in the previous year. The grading committee has asked that each coach complete an end of season report assessing player attributes and playing ability. This information is used to help grade the players at the start of the next season.

Grading is conducted at the beginning of the season so as not to disadvantage those players that practise during the off season. Players also grow at different rates. Some become more awkward. Any new players also need to be graded at the start of the season.

The more practice a player does the more they are able get out of the game and the more they enjoy soccer. Eventually they will improve enough to progress to a higher grade or to representative soccer.

For those that wish to practise during the off season, here is a list of the skills, which will be tested during grading at the start of the season:

Kicking strength, running speed, juggling, passing/receiving, one touch passing, dribbling and heading.

There will also be a Game Play situation where the following will be evaluated:

Marking, talking to team mates, passing, positional play, play making and tackling ability.

When practising kicking, passing and dribbling, please use both feet and don't kick the ball with the toes, use the instep instead.

The Grading Procedure is reviewed each year based on suggestions from parents, coaches and the grading committee. Our aim is to continually improve the procedure to make it as fair and equitable as possible.

• Team announcement

Announcing teams can be a very stressful time for Players, Parents and the Grading Committee. Sometimes the Grading committee will have problems placing a select few players into the correct team. So rather than be rushed into a decision on the grading night. Some players will be placed into the lower team so they can be watched in their first trial game before a final decision is made.

- **Late Registrations**

For all kinds of reasons we have new players arrive late, just like any other player they get an equal opportunity to try out for the higher division team provided the team has room for an additional player.

- **Balancing of Team Numbers**

Balancing of team numbers in the first few weeks directly after grading is sometimes required due to players dropping out of soccer or changing clubs for various reasons. At times there is no easy answer for this problem and the Club would prefer this did not happen but it does and needs to be addressed fairly for both teams.

- **Opting out of the Grading process**

A player can elect not to be graded but will automatically be placed in the lowest division team.

Important note

When a player elects to be graded, they will need to remain in the team that they are graded into and will need to apply in writing to the EPFC Secretary (Subject: Re-Grading) this will be forwarded to the EPFC Executive Committee to have their case for regrading considered. Once the case is considered the grading committee will be advised of the decision & the grading committee will advise the player in writing.

3. Junior Player Grading Criteria

Skills Test (U9 – U15)

Individual Skills

- **Kicking.** Use safety cones set at a spacing of 5m in order to judge distance and have each player kick the ball along the cone line, repeat this 3 times and average out the distance. Score 1 point for up to 10m, 2 for 10 – 15m etc and 5 for 25m plus. Take note of kicking technique (no toe bashing allowed)
- **Passing.** Set 5 balls up and have the players pass each one back to you, firstly with their dominant foot and then with their weaker foot. Score for accuracy and technique
- **Receiving (trapping).** – Roll a ball to the player and judge how they trap the ball using both feet, pay particular attention to the control they have over the ball and the positioning of the ball once it has been stopped
- **Dribbling.** Use the same cones that were used for the kicking drill and get the players to dribble the ball in and out through these, out and back. Encourage the players to use both feet watch for ball control and record time taken to go through all cones.
- **Juggling.** Get the players to juggle the ball with both feet and thighs and record how many times they can juggle the ball
- **Running.** Once again use the cones set up to 30 metres. Get the players to sprint out and back and record the time taken (repeat this again at the end of grading session and average the times)
- **One Touch.** Pass the ball to the players and get them to pass it back to you with only one touch. Grade on accuracy and technique.
- **Goal Keeping.** Assess this as a 1 on1 with the proposed keeper
- **Heading.** Grade only U10's and up but have all players go through exercise. Throw ball to players and ask for an Attacking and a Defensive header, Look for timing of header and balance when heading

All skills above will be carried out on a rotating basis and done at least twice (time permitting) during session with the appropriate sized ball for player's age group. Each player will be awarded a score according to competency, 1 – 5 (1 being lowest and 5 being best) These results do not in anyway mean your child is not a good soccer player, they are only a guide for the grading committee.

Team Skills

Player skills to be observed during game play

- I. **Passing.** Observe the accuracy and weight of the players passes, also note if the best option for the pass was taken
- II. **Marking.** Observe if the players know the principle of marking when defending and if they demonstrate this
- III. **Communication.** Does the players talk to one another during the game and relay information, Man on, push forward, time etc

IV. **Positional Play.** Does the player understand what is required of playing in a position and do they demonstrate such?

V. **Tackling.** Can the player tackle and how well, observe their timing of the tackle the balance and lead up to the tackle.

VI. **Playmaking.** Observe if the players control the direction of the play and continue it in the same direction

Whilst the game situation is being played if 1 player starts to dominate the way things are proceeding the remove them from the game so that all players will get a fair opportunity to demonstrate their skills

This process is sometimes not an easy task so as such it may be necessary to conduct the grading over a few sessions for some players in order to place them in the correct team to match their ability.

Some players will be placed into teams temporarily in order to see how they perform in a trial game and the final decision will be made after these games.

All parents will be notified of their child's team positioning prior to season commencement

4. Grading Notification

Notification of the outcome of the grading will be given to the player in writing, as mentioned previously.

If a player elects to be graded, they will need to remain in the team that they are graded into and will need to apply in writing to the EPFC Secretary (Subject: Re-Grading) who will forward the letter to the EPFC Executive Committee who will review the case for regrading. Once the case is considered the grading committee will be advised of the decision & they will advise the player in writing.

5. Team Sizes

Under 9 = 11

Under10 & Above = 14

6. Grading Personal & Confidentially Statement

The results of grading are personal & confidential; these results remain the property of EPFC & will be destroyed at the conclusion of the grading process for that year (28 days after the last grading day). No person other than the members of the Grading Committee & Executive Committee will be able see the grading report, documentation or any notes made about a player or team during the grading process.

Assessments about U8 players at the beginning & end of the season are for the sole use of the grading committee for the following season & will be kept by the club secretary till needed the following year when they to will be destroyed.