# Riversdale Soccer Club – Junior Team Policy

Riversdale Soccer Club (RSC) is a community soccer club that aims to promote participation, enjoyment, and development for all players.

The aim of this policy is to help players and parents understand RSC’s rationale and process for allocating players to teams and allocating teams to Football Victoria (FV) League categories (Joey’s, Wallabies and Kangaroos).

The Junior Team Policy is guided by RSC’s culture pillars:

**Participation**

* RSC’s goal is to have as many players participating in sport for as many years as possible.

**Growth and fun**

* High quality programs, delivered in a fun way, that grow our players, coaches, referees, and members.

**Respect and positivity**

* A healthy understanding of the impact of our attitude and behaviour on others.

## Team selection policy

RSC’s approach to the selection and size of teams is:

* Driven by the RSC’s cultural pillars;
* Guided by published research;
* Segmented by age; and
* Aligned to [*Football Australia National Training Framework*](https://www.footballaustralia.com.au/sites/ffa/files/2017-09/FFA%20National%20Curriculum_1ma6qrmro1pyq10gzxo5rcn7ld.pdf).

### Team selection guidelines

In forming teams, RSC takes into account (roughly in order of importance):

* The player’s attitude and ability, including desire for a social or performance team (applies from U10 and above).
* The age of the player (this is a primary criterion - older player playing in younger age group is generally not allowed by FV; younger players playing in higher age groups are more likely to be injured by larger bodies).
* The importance of fun in the early years (ages Under 9 and below) including friendship groups.
* A target for a maximum/ideal number of players in the team.
* Team continuity.
* Returning players and new players.
* Player’s registration date and financial status (Players who have outstanding debts will not be included in teams except in special circumstances, e.g. financial hardship).

Our aim is to have as many players participate as possible.

### Team sizes

Flexibility is often required in forming teams. The target size is ideal as this allows a team to have an appropriate number of substitutions, good week to week availability, maximisation of player game time, and improvement of coaching outcomes.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Age group** | **players on pitch** | **Target squad size** | **Max squad size** |
| MicroRoos | n/a | unlimited | unlimited  |
| U7 | 4 | 6 | 8 |
| U8 & U9 | 7 | 9 | 11 |
| U10 to U13 | 9 | 12 | 14 |
| U14 up | 11 | 14 | 16 |

There will be situations where, to meet RSC’s participation objectives, the target number may need to be deviated from. A decision on team splits will be made by the Director of Player Development in consultation with coaches and team managers.

### Team selection process

With hundreds of players to place in teams, the task of team selection and player placement can be difficult. We ask all parents and players to understand that RSC will do its utmost to achieve the best overall outcome for players. However, in some cases some players may not be placed in the team they want.

### Discovery phase: U5, U6 & U7

The emphasis is on fun.

* **Intake**. Generally, players will be welcomed throughout the year. Registrations will not close. In situations where teams grow to be larger than the maximum, they may be split.
* **Team selection**. To the extent possible, friend groups will be accommodated. One of the benefits of community sport is making new friends. In allocating players to teams, preference will be given to those players who played with the club in the prior year, providing they have registered by the due date.
* **Player time**. The aim is for each team member to have equal playing time and rotate through all positions.
* **Coaching**. Coaching will focus on fun exercises to learn through play, stimulating and praising.

### Discovery phase: U8 & U9

The emphasis starts to move to playing as a team, but with a strong emphasis on fun.

* **Intake**. Priority will be given to returning players who register and pay by the due date. After this priority will be given to players based on their registration date. Often new players joining the club after registration due date can join existing teams if they are not beyond their maximum.
* **Team Selection**. In the U8 & U9 ages, players are gently moved towards teams of players of similar attitudes and abilities, under the supervision of the Director of Player Development. There are often opportunities at these ages for players to “fill in” on other teams if they are interested and if a team is below target size. The emphasis is still on fun in these age groups, but players will start to build their own individual skills at different rates. Fun can be accentuated by playing with other children of a similar attitude and ability.
* **Player Time**. The aim is for each team member to have equal playing time and, while being flexible, start to play in preferred positions more often.

### Skill acquisition phase: U10 – U13

A vital phase that emphases the development of individual skills.

* **Intake**. Priority will be given to returning players who register and pay by the due date. After this priority will be given to players based on their registration date.
* **Team Selection**. Grading will be held before the commencement of team-based pre-season activities, by the club’s Director of Player Development
* **Player Time**. The aim is for each team member to have equal playing time, with more emphasis on positions.

### Game training phase: U14 – U16

* **Intake**. Priority will be given to returning players who registered by the due date. After this priority will be given to players based on their registration date
* **Team Selection**. The Director of Player Development will balance between continuity of previous years teams and graded teams based on attitude and skill
* **Player Time**. Coach’s discretion based on player attitude, performance and team needs, however the aim is for players to generally have similar game time across the course of the season where attendance and attitude is of similar levels.

### Performance phase: U17 and up

* **Intake**. Priority will be given to returning players who register and pay by the due date. After this priority will be given to players based on their registration date.
* **Team Selection**. The Director of Player Development will balance between continuity of previous year’s teams and graded teams based on attitude and skill.
* **Player Time**. Coach’s discretion based on player attitude, performance and team needs.
* **Senior Integration**. Players identified as ready for exposure to some Senior football will be invited to train and play with Senior teams, depending on their level of development and the availability of places.

### Grading

RSC believes that from the Skill Acquisition phase (ages 10-13) it becomes more important for players to be in a team with players and opponents, of a similar attitude and ability. Players whose skills are less developed playing in more developed teams can struggle, lessening the confidence of the less skilled player and reducing the overall experience. Conversely, more skilled players who are placed in teams with less skilled players may also get frustrated with their teammates’ lack of ball control or skills and eventually leave the Club.

Our experience is that, while restructuring teams due to grading can be upsetting in the short term, it provides an opportunity to make new friends and reduces frustration through the season for the reasons stated above.

RSC’s Director of Player Development manages the grading process:

* Dates and criteria for grading will be advertised via the RSC’s various communication channels including website, newsletter and social media sites.
* The Director of Player Development may take input from coaches and others, but their decision is final. Parents may speak to the Director of Player Development to understand the rationale behind grading decisions.
* Grading will involve, but is not limited to, attitude, specific skills such as speed, fitness, foot skills (ability to trap and control the ball), passing (speed and accuracy, passing and receiving with both feet), receiving, shooting, ability to shield, change direction and stay under control, competitiveness, ability to think ahead.
* Grading of all teams is constrained by the total number of registered players. That is, even if we are able to identify a number of players that could play in a higher grade this may not be possible because that age group does not support multiple teams.
* The Committee does not make decisions about individual player selection.

### League categories

Riversdale SC believe that playing with, and against, children of similar ability is a significant contribution to the joy of football.

FV categorises teams of different abilities within each age group by Leagues (Joeys, Wallabies and Kangas).

* The decision on which league each team will be entered into will be made by the Director of Player Development.
* The Director of Player Development will take input from coaches but their decision is final.

### Unviable teams

There are occasions where a team may not be viable due to insufficient players. RSC works hard to identify these situations as early as possible and does everything possible to identify additional players to make the team viable.

* Team members are asked if they can “bring a friend”.
* RSC runs advertising campaigns via social media and school newsletters.
* Although it is hoped that this will not be necessary, in some age groups players may be allowed to play on more than one team to ensure a team’s viability.

RSC will endeavour to notify players and parents as early as possible, but the reality is that player registrations are often received right up to the opening weekend of the season.

### Late registrations

RSC strives to maximise participation. We will do our best to find a team for players who register late, but players and parents are advised to register and pay as early as possible.

There will be situations where late registering players cannot be accommodated in the game day team. The Coach and the Team Manager may offer to have a new player attend training as a gateway to participation in the following year, a split off into another team, or in the event another player pulls out.

Non-financial members

Players and parents are ALWAYS advised to register and pay fees well before the season starts. Players who are non-financial risk being removed from a team unless special payment arrangements have been agreed with the Treasurer. Any family with financial difficulties are encouraged to discuss these issues with the Treasurer.

Playing above your age group

In some cases, players may play above their age group. RSC understands that some players need to be constantly challenged. Therefore, some players may be selected in a higher aged team at the start of the season or during the season to fill-in (for teams who are below target size). Playing-up is at the discretion of the Director of Player Development and the coaches. The Director of Player Development will make the final decision on playing up.

Any queries related to this policy can be directed to the club’s Administrator: Operations@riversdalesc.com.au or mobile: 0472 705 875

They will be able to direct you to the appropriate information channel (e.g. Director of Player Development, Committee member, coach, etc.)