

Football Tasmania

Referee Coaching Guidelines

2026



Contents:

- Overview
- How to Use this Framework
 - The Benefits of Mentoring
 - Why Mentor
 - Our Expectations of You
- Pre-Match
 - Keys for a successful first game as a referee
- During the Match
 - Things to Look For
 - Referee's
 - Assistant Referee's
- Half Time
- Post Match
 - Conducting the Debrief
 - Characteristics of good/constructive feedback
 - Ineffective feedback
- Reports
 - The Different Reports
 - Writing your Report
 - Why There Needs to Be a Report
- Payments for Mentoring



Overview

Mentoring is a powerful tool in the education and development of referees. Without mentors, this process would not be possible. The mentoring process ensures new and experienced referees can develop their refereeing ability and become the best referees possible. Mentoring takes time and patience, particularly when working with newer referees who don't have much experience.

By having a good mentor, referees can receive a different perspective on their refereeing ability, the key areas that are their strengths, and some areas that they should look to develop. Without mentors, referees can find it hard to develop and improve, particularly in the areas that are harder to identify.

So, the aim of mentoring is to create an environment where the referee can feel safe and comfortable addressing various issues with their mentor to help them learn and become a better referee. By ensuring the environment created by a mentor is comfortable, the mentoring experience will be better for all.

Referees, at all levels of the game, are no different, and they need to have quality input from qualified mentors, regularly, if they are going to be able to cope with the challenges that officiating in the modern game demands. It is critical to achieving excellence, that there is a close working relationship between the referee and mentor.

Mentoring is not the same as teaching. It does not revolve around providing solutions. Mentoring means different things with individual referees at different levels. With newly qualified referees and junior referees mentoring should be about empowering and helping referees to control the learning experience for themselves. With more experienced referees it focuses on challenging the beliefs and values they have developed so that they come to a deeper understanding of their role, task and the application and interpretation of the laws.

The key characteristics of a good mentor are friendliness, approachability, and patience. Experience as a referee is helpful but this doesn't need to be particularly lengthy. In many ways, someone who qualified a year or so ago will be an ideal mentor for someone who is newly qualified as the issues that challenge a new referee will still be fresh in the mind of the mentor. Even if the mentor doesn't know the answer to every question, he or she will normally know who can provide it.

How To Use This Framework:

Key Goals for Match Day Coaches:

- Always aim to boost the referee's confidence.
- Keep feedback clear and constructive, focusing on no more than three main points.
- Make sure the feedback can be immediately applied to improve their performance.
- Tailor the feedback to the referee's age, experience, and level of football knowledge.
- Ensure the feedback aligns with current guidelines, and avoid personal opinions or outdated methods.
- Focus on helping the referee develop processes that will lead to better results next time.
- Use positive and forward-thinking language. Instead of saying "wrong" or "incorrect," say "work on" or "development point."

The benefits of mentoring include, but are not limited to:

- Renewed enthusiasm and enjoyment of refereeing.
- Recognition of development and learning.
- Opportunities to share knowledge and experience.
- Increased confidence.
- Feeling of being supported.
- Awareness of strengths and weaknesses.



Why mentor?

- To help develop the next group of officials.
- To stay involved in refereeing, even once retired.
- To help develop your refereeing – learn by teaching.
- To pass on your experience to help referees be the best referee they can be.
- To benefit the game as a whole by improving referee performances.
- To help retain referees.

Our expectations of you:

- Show empathy and compassion towards referees.
- Complete your mentoring report quickly so the referee will receive it before their next match.
- Have patience, particularly with newer referees.
- Ask questions so that the referee can help themselves learn.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of the Laws of the Game.
- Help referees develop their skills with effective solutions.
- Offer suggestions and advice rather than just problems.
- Support referees and their decisions when asked by members of the football community.
- An up-to-date Working with Vulnerable People check.
- Don't offer advice without the referee's approval unless appointed as a mentor.

Pre-match:

- Plan your day, just as you would while refereeing.
- Arrive at a time you feel the referee should be there. Most referees will look to arrive 30 minutes before kickoff.
- Find out if the referee is refereeing or playing before or after the game you have been appointed to. This will help you plan your day, particularly your debrief.
- If the referee has not arrived 30 minutes before kickoff, this is a good time to contact the appointments officer via phone to determine whether the referee will be at the ground on time.
- Reach out to the referee once you arrive at the ground, the earlier the better. This is a good time to gain an understanding of what the referee is working on and the areas they feel are their strengths.
- Ask how the referee feels about the game they are about to referee. This is a great way to make them feel supported, particularly if they are feeling nervous.
- During your pre-match chat, ask the referee what their goals and ambitions are. What do they want out of the match?
- Let the refereeing team prepare themselves as though you aren't at the venue. Don't interrupt when the referee is following their pre-match routine.



Keys for a successful first game as a referee:

As a mentor, you will often be appointed to a referee's first game. Creating a comfortable environment for a new referee is key to them continuing their refereeing career.

Some of the key things a new referee should work on are:

Positioning:

Does the referee consistently get close to play? Does the referee gain an angled view?

Communication:

Is the referee's whistle loud and clear? Does the referee use their voice to communicate decisions with players? Are the referee's signals clear and correct?

Body Language:

Does the referee look confident, even though they may not be? Does the referee seem interested in the game?

Keeping information simple during a referee's first few games will help them develop quicker and gain confidence in their refereeing ability.

Working with new referee's is a key factor in retain them after their first year.

During the match:

- Maintain a full record of the match to assist with any conflicts the refereeing team may have.
- Record key incidents and discussion points.
- Avoid coaching the referee during the game, save this for post-match.
- Record key areas that the referee does well, and those that the referee should work on.
- Record any areas where a referee is incorrect in law.
- If new referees have a question during the game about the Laws of the Game, answer quickly and then discuss it after the match.

Things to look for:

Referees:

- Pre-match responsibilities:
Does the referee do a pitch inspection, are there problems that need to be dealt with. Are problems dealt with effectively? Does the referee arrive promptly for the game, noting this will change with the level of competition? Does the referee give clear pre-match instructions to their ARs? Does the referee's pre-match routine have a positive impact on the refereeing team's performance?

- Positioning:
Does the referee ensure they are close to play, particularly around the penalty areas? Does the referee always maintain an angled view of play? Does the referee continue to move once they have reached the penalty area? Does the referee use the wide diagonal system to keep the ARs visible? Does the referee use anticipation during the game? Did the referee look for drop zones?
- Foul recognition:
Is the referee's foul recognition consistent? Does the referee change their foul tolerance to suit the heat of the match? Does the referee distinguish between careless, reckless, and excessive force? Did the referee apply advantage when applicable?
- Discipline and control:
Are the cautions administered correctly? Did the referee miss any cautions or sendoffs? Does the referee use the stepped approach when communicating with players? Do the players respond well to the referee's management of the match? Does the referee deal with being surrounded appropriately, i.e., use the captain to remove players before explaining a decision?
- Caution or send-off procedures:
Does the referee isolate players receiving cautions to ensure it is clear who is receiving the caution?
- Whistle tone and signaling:
Is the referee's whistle loud and clear? Does the referee use clear and firm signals to display decisions? Does the referee vary whistle tone and length to demonstrate the severity of fouls?
- Teamwork with ARs:
Does the referee work well with the ARs? Did the referee give clear pre-match instructions to the ARs? Does the referee use eye contact when needed to ensure the team makes the same decision? Does the referee consistently see the ARs flag for offside? Does the referee allow ARs to help with decisions when they are the better-placed match official?



- Injury management:
Does the referee deal with injuries appropriately for the level of competition? Does the referee stop play immediately and get medical treatment for head injuries? Does the referee check to see if a player has stopped bleeding before letting them re-enter the field of play?

- Technical area management:
Are appropriate cautions or send-offs given in line with the Laws of The Game? Did members of the technical area respond well to management from the refereeing team?
- Communication:
Did the referee speak to players when necessary? Did the referee build a rapport with the captains before the start of the match? Did the referee build a rapport with the players in the early stages of the match?
- Body language:
Did the referee use appropriate body language when communicating with players? Did the referee's body language make them seem disinterested in the match?
- Concentration:
Did the referee miss incidents because of a lack of concentration? Did the referee show good levels of concentration during key parts of the match? Does the referee become aware of team tactics used during the game?

Assistant Referees:

- Positioning:
Did the assistant referee remain in line with the second-last opponent? Does the assistant referee remain side-on when moving down the touchline?
- Offside:
Did the assistant referee interpret offside decisions correctly?
- Teamwork with referee:
Did the assistant referee ask questions for clarity during the referee's pre-match instructions? Did the assistant referee help the referee when needed? Did the assistant referee communicate with the referee appropriately? Did the assistant referee help with fouls in their area?
- Substitution procedure:
Did the assistant referee deal with substitutions appropriately?
- Flag technique:
Were the assistant referee's flag signals clear and correct?
- Technical area management:
Did the assistant referee deal with the technical areas appropriately? Did the assistant referee communicate with the referee about issues and cautions/send-offs?
- Concentration:
Did the assistant referee concentrate during the match? Did the assistant referee maintain focus during critical times of the match? Did the assistant referee help the referee identify team tactics? Did the assistant referee miss any key match incidents because of a lack of concentration?
- Foul identification:
Did the assistant referee correctly interpret fouls in their area? Did the assistant referee effectively manage incidents close to them? Did the assistant referee adjust their foul tolerance to suit the referees? Did the assistant referee consistently identify fouls?

Half Time:

- Any contact with the refereeing team at halftime should be kept to a minimum.
- Ensure the refereeing team has ample time to get a drink or something to eat. This is their time to recover from the first half and prepare for the second half.
- Ask if you can do anything for the refereeing team, something as simple as filling a water bottle can make the experience a lot better for new referees.
- If you make contact with the referee team, this is a good opportunity to ask them how they feel about their performance. Ensure you remain positive and supportive throughout.
- Development points should only be discussed if they will make a large change to the referee's performance.

Post-Match:

Conducting the post-match debrief:

- Speak to the referee pre-match and determine a time and place that suits everyone. This may be straight away or a couple of days after the game.
- Determine a suitable place to complete the de-brief. Remembering, the change room may not be the ideal environment for a discussion.
- Check if the referee has another game or is playing shortly after. If this is the case, then you will need to keep your feedback very short, and potentially meet with the referee another time.
- Have a plan for how to do the debrief and have information ready before starting.
- Allow the referee to self-assess first by asking them how they feel they have performed and what they feel they could do better.
- Ensure that you are positive and supportive of the referee team.
- Ask questions if unsure why key decisions were made.
- Use 2 or 3 key points for discussion, from both positive and negative areas of your report.
- Keep feedback short and concise. Keep in mind whether the referee or ARs have other commitments or games to go to.
- If needs be, use examples like videos to demonstrate your key learnings.
- The debrief should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete.
- Avoid speaking about anything that will not be on the report.
- Ensure the referee understands everything that has been discussed.
- Encourage the referee to read your mentoring report.
- If you don't know the answer to a referee's question, don't be afraid to ask someone who may, or direct the referee to the appropriate person.

Characteristics of good/constructive feedback:

- Provides detail, such as ‘Your positioning was effective because you...,’ rather than just ‘Good positioning’.
- Compares what a referee is doing now with previous assessment advice and reports, such as, ‘I can see you focused on improving your positioning in the final 3rd, the result is much better now than when you pulled up just before the penalty area from the last time’.
- Provides specific coaching and guidance on how to improve, and not just telling referees when they are wrong.
- Conversational – Asking questions, and letting the referee provide an opinion.
- Invites discussion with the referee.
- Is framed to encourage and support the referee’s further effort and improvement in performance.
- Is supported by effective professional learning for referee coaches.
- Ensures feedback is actionable.
- Uses measurable elements.
- Acknowledges effort from the referee team.
- Ties feedback to the referee’s goals.
- Clear, concise, and focused.
- Timely, referees need to receive the information before their next match.
- Based on accurate and credible information.
- Actionable by the referee.
- Specific to the referee’s performance. No need to include something out of the referee’s control.
- Linked to impact. I.e., being close will help sell a decision.
- Offers examples for the referee to learn from.



Ineffective feedback:

- Provides feedback that is about the person (such as, ‘you are the best referee in the league’) or vague (such as, ‘just run faster’, without context).
- Only provides feedback formally without understanding the context of the game, the impact of decisions, or the referee’s decisions.
- Provides a one-way dialogue without the referee’s opinion.
- A lack of clarity about what needs to change
- Feedback that inflates — or bruises — someone’s ego.

The Different Reports:

Mentoring Report:

Tournament Mentoring Report:

To better provide feedback to referees in a tournament environment, from 2023 we will add a simplified mentoring report that can quickly be completed post-match and automatically sent to the referee so they can view the feedback throughout the rest of the tournament.

Writing your report:

- Maintain encouragement and support for the referee.
- Keep points short and concise.
- Ensure clarity and consistency between your debrief and report.
- Use no more than 3 key positives and development areas.
- Give solutions to development areas so that referees can easily work on them.
- When working with new referees try to avoid using incorrect law knowledge in development areas. Mention these during the debrief, but don’t be too strict.
- When working with more experienced referees, note incorrect law interpretations if needed.
- Use the comments box at the end of the report to be supportive and encouraging of the refereeing team. Ensure to clarify anything discussed during the debrief.
- Provide solutions for development areas to assist the referees learning.

Once you’ve submitted your report, touch base with the Referee Development Manager a few days after, to ensure the referee has received your report. Please refrain from sending the report to the referee personally.

Why there needs to be a written report:

- To help the referee improve their performance.
- To allow the referee to remind themselves of the feedback before their next match.
- To motivate the referee to adopt good advice.
- To raise standards of refereeing within Tasmanian football.
- To provide critical information to Football Tasmania about refereeing trends.
- To ensure you get paid for your work.



2026 Payments for Mentoring:

Mentoring Report (Youth Game) \$55

Mentoring Report (Adult Game) \$65

Payments for Mentoring/Assessing are processed each fortnight with referee pays, based on reports submitted. If you haven't submitted your report by 5 pm on Tuesday, you may not be paid that fortnight.