



ESSA Water Polo Competitions 2021 onwards

Patron: HRH Duke of Cambridge

ESSA CADET WATER POLO RULES

Aims and objectives

These have been developed to give clear indications of the control of a game for staff/coaches/referees new to Cadet Water Polo, the pool and equipment set up and, importantly, the approach and spirit in which matches should be played. Cadet Polo aims to attract new players to competitive water polo and to retain them. It should be fun for everyone through an emphasis on attacking and counter attacking play.

Note: ESSA Cadet Polo tournaments will exclude any player from Year 7 & Year 8 who has been a member of their school's ESSA Championship squad. Schools that play in the Championship have to ring fence their squad. A school cannot enter a Championship team and a Cadet team with pupils who have already competed in the ESSA Championship competition.

Age Group play & "spirit" of cadet water polo

There are now two age groups for the cadet competition – U11 (Year 6 and below) and U13. Teams can be single sex or mixed. Schools that have a large number of participants are permitted to enter more than one team but, once a team has been selected, a pupil can't be moved from one team to another. The cadet competition deliberately takes place during the summer term (after the first round of the U13 Championship competition) to make a clear distinction between the two competitions as it's paramount that a pupil competes at the correct level (beginner/competent).

Both U11 and U13 cadet competitions will have two tournaments. The first tournament will be a deemed as 'friendly' and will involve all schools. This should provide an opportunity for all pupils to get familiar with the rules and have fun - this takes place before May half term. The second round of Regional tournaments will also involve all schools, but a trophy will be awarded at these tournaments for each Regional Cadet tournament winning school at both U13B and U11 age groups – this will take place before 1st July. Both age group competitions will be regionally based for both rounds (North led by Bolton School, Midlands led by Northampton Boys School and South led by Allyn's School).

Cadet Polo is an inclusive platform to develop skills and learn the rules of the game before moving on to full team water polo matches. It should be a point of pride that a player / team play to the requirements of the full Laws of the Game. It is clear there may be wide differences in size, swimming ability and match experience in Cadet inter-school games and tournaments. The safety of all must be a priority. The referee may speak to the coaches before or during the game and remind players not to be over-aggressive when playing against younger and smaller players. The referee will be the sole arbiter of decisions during play.

Remember: the aim is to encourage everyone to participate fully, to learn the Laws of Water Polo and to instil the aspiration to play in Championship level water polo.

Control of the game

The referee shall be in absolute control of the game. The authority of the referee over the players and team managers shall be effective during the whole time they are within the precincts of the pool. Under the ESSA Code of Conduct the use of inappropriate language will mean an immediate exclusion from the event and pool area. This covers players, coaches & spectators.

- The Referee will officiate on the same side as the table.
- The distance between the goal lines shall be not less than 15m and not more than 20m depending on pool size.
- Standard pool markings for goal lines, 2m (red), 6m (yellow) and the half way line will be used.
- The ball shall be size 3.
- Team will wear caps of contrasting colour other than solid red.
- Matches will be of 2 periods of play where teams change end at half time.
- Maximum length of a period of play to be 5 minutes of continuous play. The clock will only stop after a goal or for a penalty throw when the substitution of players and the preparation to take a penalty throw might take a long time with inexperienced players.
- There are no time outs.

1. Teams and Substitutes

- Each team will consist of 8 players (boys or girls or a mixed team), 5 of whom play at any one time. One must be the goalkeeper who is identified by wearing a red cap.
- The coach and 3 substitutes to sit & stay behind the goal line. The aim is to encourage the players positively, and to direct their play, but not the degree that the players are unable to make their own decisions. If this is infringed / abused the referee will warn the coach and apply sanctions for repeated incidents.
- The 5 active players start each period of play lining up on/against their goal line. The usual swim off for the ball dropped at half way starts on the referees whistle & will determine which team has first possession.
- Players are to be encouraged to play, pass and move positively (in principle forwards) at all times. The coach should encourage positive play with an emphasis on attack and using as many skills as possible. Goalkeepers are expected to pass the ball swiftly to maximise the amount of outfield play.
- At any time in the game a substitution can be made by a player leaving the pool in the re-entry area nearest to his goal line. The substitute can enter the pool once the head of the exiting player has visibly risen to the surface in the re-entry area. Substitutions after a goal or during the mid-time break in a game can also be made.

2. Scoring & Restarting play

- A goal is only scored when the whole ball has crossed the goal line, between the goal posts and underneath the crossbar. In the "spirit" of the game it is hoped that Goalkeepers shouldn't repeatedly score goals if the pitch size lends itself to this.
- After a goal has been scored the players shall take up any position in their respective halves of the field of play.
- After a foul the restart shall be taken from the location of the ball, rather than from where the foul occurred.

3. Fouls & Exclusions

- Minor Fouls, Major Fouls and Exclusions are the same for all levels of water polo.
- A player excluded for violent play or brutality from a game will miss the rest of the current ESSA tournament & the next ESSA match they would have played in.