

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Your child is embarking on the important role of a *junior netball umpire*. This is an opportunity for them to learn and grow in the sport, but they need your support. Below is some information on what their role involves, how to support them and how you can help your child succeed and have a positive experience as a new umpire.

What Your Child's Role Involves:

- **Officiating Games:** When your child is the umpire, they are the official in charge of the game. They enforce the rules of Netball. Their job is to keep the game safe, fair, and fun for all the young players on the court.
- **Learning and Leadership:** Remember that your child is *learning* to umpire. This experience will help them develop leadership, confidence, and responsibility. They are essentially leaders in netball. It's a big role for a young person, and it's normal if they feel nervous at first or if they don't get everything perfect. With each game, they'll improve.

Adult Supervision & Support

- **Safety and Support:** Due to their age, junior umpires should always have a trusted adult nearby during games. This could be you (the parent), a club mentor, or another club official. The purpose is to ensure the young umpire has someone to turn to if they encounter any problems (for example, an overly upset coach or spectator) that they may not know how to handle alone.
- **Club Policy:** Our club recommends an adult present when a junior umpire is officiating. This is both for the safety of the child umpire and the smooth running of the match. The adult supervisor can intervene if a situation becomes too challenging, allowing your child to umpire without fear of confronting an angry adult themselves.
- **Emotional Support:** Just knowing you, or another adult, is on the sideline gives your child confidence. If a game gets heated or stressful, a thumbs-up or a reassuring nod from you can mean a lot. Conversely, if something inappropriate happens (e.g. a spectator acting inappropriate to an umpire), an adult can step in immediately. We want to protect our young umpires from any form of harassment. They are children first and officials second.

How You Can Help and Support Your Child in This Role:

- **Encourage Effort, Not Perfection:** Understand that umpiring is challenging, mistakes will happen and calls will be missed. What your child needs most is encouragement. After a game, ask how it went and focus on the positives: "What call were you proud of today?" or "I noticed you blew the whistle nice and loud, great job!" If they mention a mistake or a tough call, reassure them that it's part of learning.
- **Help Them Be Prepared:** Treat umpiring like you would any important event or game they play in. Make sure they arrive on time (typically at least 10-15 minutes before the start) and have the right gear: Umpire uniform, whistle, hair tie to track centre passes, water, maybe a hat/sunscreen if it's hot. Being well-prepared will make your child feel more confident and professional. Perhaps run through a short checklist with them before leaving home until they get the hang of it.
- **Be Their Backup When Needed:** Plan to stay at the courts when your child is umpiring (or ensure another adult is there for them). If a situation arises – for instance, a coach or spectator is confronting your child – you may need to step in or alert an official. Often, a calm parent stepping in can defuse tensions quickly. Do not directly intervene in the game decisions, but do make your presence known if your child is being harassed. Be ready to advocate for your child's safety if necessary. Our club has zero tolerance for abuse of umpires and will support removal of any troublesome spectator if required. Your support is an added layer of security for your child.
- **Communication and Feedback:** Talk with your child about their umpiring experiences. Ask them how they feel about it, and listen to any concerns. If they had a rough game (e.g. they mention "a coach kept yelling at me"), validate their feelings. If needed, you can follow up with the club's umpire coordinator to report any serious issues – the club would much rather know and address it than risk losing a young umpire due to a bad experience. Similarly, celebrate the good games: if they come home excited that "I managed to call footwork correctly!" –give them a high-five and share in their success.

- **Encourage Ongoing Learning:** Show interest in the rules of the game and your child's umpiring activities. Ask them about a rule ("Hey, I'm not sure about the 'held ball' rule – can you explain it to me?"). Teaching someone else is a great way for them to solidify their own knowledge. Maybe watch a short video on the Rules of Netball together if they're unsure of something.
- **Keep It Fun and Positive:** Finally, remind your child that umpiring should be a fun and rewarding experience. Yes, it's a job, but it's also a way to stay involved in the sport they love, gain new perspectives, and even earn a bit of pocket money. Help them see the bigger picture when things are tough: every game they officiate, they contribute to the netball community and club. Without umpires, games can't happen – they are *essential for the sport*. So even on days when it's challenging, they can feel proud for stepping up. Celebrate their bravery and growth.

In summary, your child's venture into umpiring is a journey that will have ups and downs. Your support, understanding, and pride in their efforts will help them thrive in this role. Our club thanks you for encouraging your junior umpire – together we can ensure they have a great experience.

Referee Equipment Checklist

Referees should come to each game properly equipped. Please ensure your child has:

- Whistle
- Uniform - White Shirt with
 - White, black or navy skirt or shorts
 - White, black or navy pants
 - Club uniform underneath
- Something to track centre passes (hair tie)
- Drink bottle
- Hat / sunscreen

Gerrigong Netball Club is committed to providing a safe, respectful environment for everyone involved in our game — umpires, players, coaches, spectators and volunteers.

We have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind, including verbal abuse, intimidation, or inappropriate behaviour directed at:

- Umpires
- Players
- Coaches & officials
- Spectators

If any person is subject to abuse, the following protocol applies:

Step 1 – Verbal Warning

The umpire will follow Game Management actions as per the Rules of Netball for all players, team officials or bench players. Spectators will be advised to adjust behaviour.

Step 2 – Stop the Game

If the behaviour continues, the game will be paused and the person will be asked to leave the venue. This may involve contacting the umpires convenor or another Executive from Kiama Netball Association.

Step 3 – Escalation

If the individual refuses to leave or the situation escalates, the match will not continue until the person is removed. If no association executive is present, police may be called.

Step 4 – Report and Review

All incidents must be documented by the team and reported to the club. Follow-up action may include suspension from future games or formal reporting to Netball NSW in accordance with the Netball NSW Complaints & Disciplinary Policy.

What Parents Should Do:

- Support the umpires — especially our juniors.
- Remind your child that it's okay to stop a game and ask for help.
- Report any abusive behaviour to a club official immediately.
- Lead by example with respectful sideline conduct.