



School Years vs. Age Groups

What is the difference between using School Years vs. Age Groups?

With school years, players play with their school "mates", however, it is also known that there is a much wider age discrepancy with school years than if you use a set date like other sports. The age discrepancy within a school year group can be as high as 20 months, which is significant in terms of physical development.

For example, a late developing 10-year-old who is in Year 6 at school would be playing in a Year 6 grade with potentially early developing older 11-year-old players.

Should this matter?

Older more developed physically players are perceived as "better" and we can miss out on talent identification of younger, physically smaller/less developed players. This could be a factor in why some younger players stop playing due to being either intimidated by older players or not recognized as a talent because they are smaller.

How does Age Groups solve this?

By using a set date and grading based on age we are reducing the age discrepancy down to 12 months. This will help improve the playing field for smaller/younger players.

Going back to the example of the late developing 10-year-old, using Under 11 instead of Year 6, means that this player will be playing with other 10-year-old players.

April 1 vs. September 1?

See below from Auckland University Junior Convener Damien Poppelwell:

The Sept 1 rule meant that approx. 45% of our players were going to move to a different grade (by that I mean away from the peers they have played with up to now).

Most schools use either the end of Term 1 (approx. late March early April), as their cut off for whether kids stay on Y0 or move to Y1. I realise that MoE policy states the cut-off can be anytime from the end of Term 1 to the start of Term 3, but in practise most schools do use the end of Term 1 as their cut off. To fact-check myself, I have canvassed several primary school teachers who I know personally, and all have ratified this is the way it works. I've also crunched the data on all our 750 junior members, comparing DoB with the school year to determine how many will be affected by having to move up a grade. If you move your cutoff date to 1 April/May, then that will mean only about 5% of players will be misplaced and must move up a grade, which would be a vastly superior outcome.

Key findings from Sport NZ, and from our grassroots volunteers is that children like to play with their friends, switching to April 1 as a cut-off allows for this better than September 1. April 1 clearly creates less disruption for players and volunteers.

To further reduce issues of players being split from friends, for the transition clubs may apply for a dispensation, however, it is encouraged that if possible players align before they get to the U11 level.

Why use April 1 and September 1 for District Cricket?

The case for April 1 for Club Cricket including Club of Origin that now goes through to Under 17 is compelling. We accept that the ICC set international date for the NZ Under 19 team will continue to be September 1, and that is the date that we will continue to use for ACA rep teams that play in national tournaments. There are valid reasons for both dates and with District cricket being the intersection point between club and representative teams, it is pragmatic to try to find a logical transition between the two.

April 1 will be used for Girls Under 13 and Boys Under 15 District competitions. September 1 will be used for all older District Competitions. While this causes some additional work for District administrators, players will have clarity that they are competing with their club/school friends at younger ages and against their peers to earn higher honours at older age groups.