

FUN MINI RUGBY GAMES



for 5 to 8 year olds

Colin Ireland

**BetterRUGBY
COACHING** 

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Legal Notices

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Credits

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Foreword

Tag and touch rugby are ideal methods of introducing young players to the concepts of rugby in a fun, enjoyable and safe way. Either version of the game can be played without fear of injury through contact. They allow smaller and lighter players to shine, and are great for mixed gender rugby, as well as for groups with children of different ages.

I wrote this manual because playing a variety of games and competitive practices is the way forward when introducing rugby to new or younger groups. Children love to play and the games are all about playing and having a good time, while developing core movement and coordination.

The games within this manual will help you to:

- Let children experience rugby in their most receptive years.
- Give children a greater knowledge and understanding of rugby.
- Foster positive attitudes to the game of rugby through enjoyable teaching and coaching activities.
- Develop basic physical skills and attributes as a sound base to build on.
- Cater for all levels of ability.
- Develop cooperation and team work.
- Deliver rugby in a fun way and in safe environment.

The manual focuses on “learning in” rugby, where skills, techniques, knowledge and understanding of the game are acquired. It can be used by both experienced and novice teachers and coaches. For those of you with a background in other sports, I’m sure you will see the crossover and transfer of skills and development from one activity to another.

Very little equipment is needed and the games can be set up on any outdoor playing surface or indoor facility. The equipment suggested for the games may not be available to you, but any type of balls or markers can be used.

This manual is an ideal “off the shelf” resource for you to use in the order that is set out or to take out whatever elements or information you require to deliver your rugby lessons or coaching sessions.

I hope you and the children enjoy the games covered within this manual. I’m sure it will be a great resource for your rugby teaching/coaching for years to come.

Yours in rugby



Colin Ireland

25 Top Tips for Coaching Children

1. Be prepared for when they arrive. Have the first game ready to go.
2. Be welcoming, enthusiastic, and remember to smile.
3. Keep explanations simple, let them ask questions.
4. Be inclusive, involve all players.
5. Always encourage and praise.
6. Use a whistle or fun sound like a hooter to gain their attention. Avoid shouting and losing patience.
7. Use visual aids/colours to enhance their observation.
8. Avoid highlighting errors or weaknesses, and do not use negative words.
9. Use your players' names. If a player has a nickname that is fine, but don't make one up, it could upset them.
10. Make sure they know your name or they call you coach, not Sir or Miss.
11. Use the correct size balls. Size 3 rugby balls for this age group.
12. Mix teams around so some players don't always dominate.
13. Encourage natural leaders to be good role models for the class or team.
14. Stay calm and patient with bad behaviour. Sit poorly behaved players out in a sin bin if need be, but ensure they are supervised.
15. Involve the children in problem solving. Ask questions and let them discuss amongst themselves, just guide them in right direction.
16. Have a contingency plan if the practice is not working or they find it too easy or too hard.
17. Politely ask parents and guardians to remain unobtrusive as children need to focus on you and the game.
18. Don't be tempted to join in. This affects your control and is dangerous.
19. Ensure fair play. Don't overlook breaches of rules.
20. Encourage flair and risk taking, they must not be scared to make a mistake.
21. Keep heading sessions to no longer than 20 to 30 minutes max and check the inflation of the balls (not too hard or soft).
22. Use ball games, such as netball and soccer, to introduce co-ordination and passing and movement.
23. Remember, children watch your body language so stay bubbly. Avoid habits like folding your arms, constantly looking at your watch, getting distracted by a keen parent or looking fed up.
24. Keep them busy. Minimum stoppages, except for drinks, and you can use this time for any questions.
25. Use and encourage humour, but take care to avoid overuse of jargon. Remember, what adults see as funny, children may not.

All of the above are in addition to the normal health and safety issues like registers, medical information, field and equipment checks, and the correct playing kit etc.

It is vital that you have an assistant or other adult with you when coaching minors.

How to Use This Manual

The Basic Rules

Every game in the manual has its own set of simple rules. They cover what you need to know to run the game successfully. However, it's also worth bearing in mind these general points.

Tackling: Keep contact to tag tackles or two-handed touch tackles on the waist. Do not allow defenders to grab the ball or the ball carrier. Do not allow any player to fend off or push away a tackler or otherwise prevent them from making the tackle, except through their own agility.

Dropped balls: For these age groups you will find that the ball is dropped frequently. To keep the game running, simply ask the nearest player to gather up the ball and carry on playing. Do not allow any player to dive on a ball on the ground or to kick it.

Encourage the players to carry the ball in two hands to reduce spilled balls and promote better passing.

Kicking: Don't allow any kicking, whether from hand or if the ball falls to the ground.

Passing in any direction: In general, most of the games in this manual allow the ball to be passed in any direction and not just backwards as in senior rugby. As the players improve, you might like to encourage more sideways and backwards passing.

Competitive tag and touch rugby: Please see the chapter at the end of the book called "Tag and Touch Rugby Rules" for an overview of the basic rules for competitive games. Contact your local rugby union for more details on how to play these games competitively.

Engage All the Players

The best games engage all the players all the time. All the players should be tired at the end of a session. If you have too many players, consider splitting the class or squad into separate groups to play simultaneously, rather than simply increasing the size of the playing area.

In addition, some children may manage some skills easily, whilst others struggle. In which case, run multiple games at the same time and let the children progress at their own pace.

You also may want to give individual practice to a player. Do this away from the main activity, while the game continues, but from a position where you can still observe the children.

Ensure that every player in each game has a chance to be fully involved. For instance to chase and be chased, to pass and to catch.

How to Use This Manual

Lesson/Session Plans

The manual is divided into "Lesson/Session Plans", each focused on a key skill – agility, passing and handling, tackling (with minimal contact only) and decision making. The last Plan contains some more competitive situations, which bring all the skills together in more rugby-like games.

The Lesson/Session Plans detail the main objectives and key coaching / teaching points of the games. These are what you want your players to be able to do. Also included are some key questions you might like to ask the children. Obviously, how the children perform will influence what you ask.

Progression: The games in each Plan are ordered so each progresses the skills learned.

- "Getting Started" – These games introduce the skills to be learned. They can be used as warm ups or warm downs as the children develop.
- "Developing the Skills" – These games challenge the children a bit more. You may want to take longer with these games or come back to them more frequently through the year.
- "Improving Further" – These games are for those players who have mastered the skills learnt in the previous games. They generally are more competitive.

You can play the games either individually or organise a longer session to progress from one game to the next. Alternatively, you may prefer to progress across the Lesson/Sessions Plans. For instance, first play an agility game, before finishing with a passing game.

Notes: A "Notes" section is included to help you manage the activities. For instance, to identify the games you have played and in which order, successful or weaker players, or how you have adapted the games to suit the youngsters.

Setting Up the Games

The playing area: You can play the games in a gym, games hall, or outdoor area of grass, blaze, synthetic material or tarmac. The size of the playing area is by no means an absolute and can be varied if you have more or fewer players, and according to the ability of your players. Whether this requires a smaller or larger area depends on the game.

Many of the games require a lot of running around, and you may find the children struggle if the area is too large. You might also want to reduce the size of the playing area when the children first start passing, in particular, before increasing it as they improve.

Equipment: Most of the games require little more than some balls, cones and bibs.

How to Use This Manual

Managing the Games

The Rules: After explaining the game and organising the players, let the game evolve. This means observing the game from the outside. Only intervene or stop the game if it's taking too long for the players to complete, or if there's a safety issue.

Communicate the rules regularly during the game to remind the players what they are expected to do in certain situations. You might call out "PASS, ONE-TWO-THREE" to remind the players to pass within 3 seconds of being tackled, for instance.

What to Call Out: Never be lost for words with these concise and constructive phrases. Remember, this is "what to call out" not "what to shout". You should deliver these games in a way that your players respond to. Always focus on the positives.

Coaching Tips: Quick bits of advice that can help the game run more smoothly.

Agility Lesson/Session Plans

Main Objectives

Coordination and agility skills, an understanding of distances and angles, and basic handling skills. Youngsters at this age tend to have good agility, which is encouraged and developed in these activities.

Coaching/Teaching Points

Look for:

- Lots of movement and activity.
- Changes of pace.
- Sharp changes of direction.
- Smooth changes of direction.
- Fast feet.
- Good balance.
- Good coordination.
- Players abiding by the rules.
- Enjoyment of the game.

What to ask the players:

- What part of your feet are you using?
- How do you keep your balance when changing direction?
- What are you looking for when you are running?
- Can you keep your speed up when you change direction quickly? Show me how?
- Do you find it easier to change direction to one side? Why do you think this is?
- What can you do to fool the defender?

The Games

The games covered in this chapter:

- 1. Shadow Buster** - A fun and effective all-round warm up
- 2. Turned to Stone** - Introducing ball handling
- 3. Zombie Chief** - Promoting fitness and agility
- 4. Nevada Smith** - A fun way to develop agility
- 5. Cat & Mouse** - Mixing agility with ball handling skills
- 6. The Tomb** - Introducing decision making

Game Notes

Shadow Buster

1

The Rules

Set up a large playing square. Ask the players to pair up.

In each pair, one player leads and the other follows (the "shadow"). The lead player has to lose their shadow.

After several seconds call "STOP" and see who has managed to lose their shadow. Then swap the pairs around.

Set Up

Area: 20m x 20m or small gym/games hall.

Equipment: None

Players: Whole class or squad.

Scoring

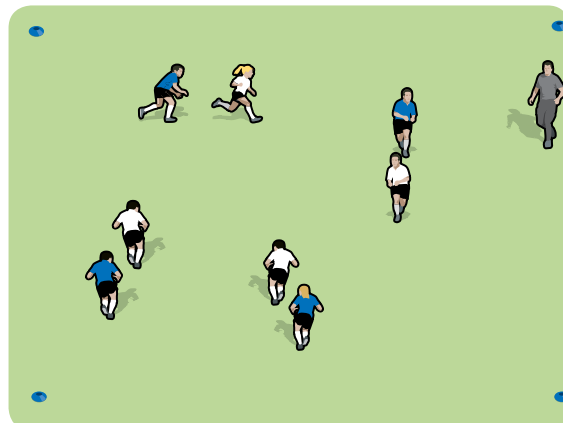
When you call "STOP" each pair counts the number of steps they are apart. The winners are the nearest shadow and furthest lead player from their partners.

What to Call Out

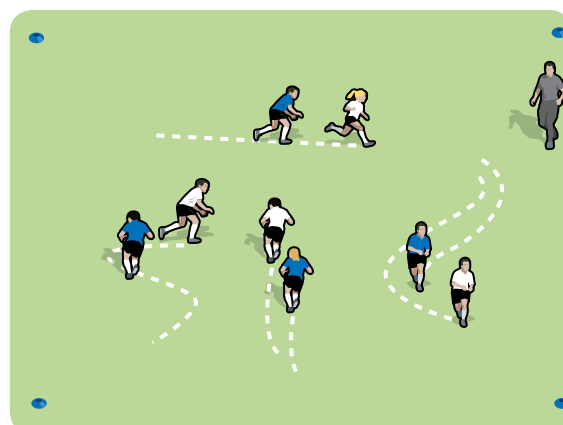
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet to move away from your shadow"

Coaching Tips

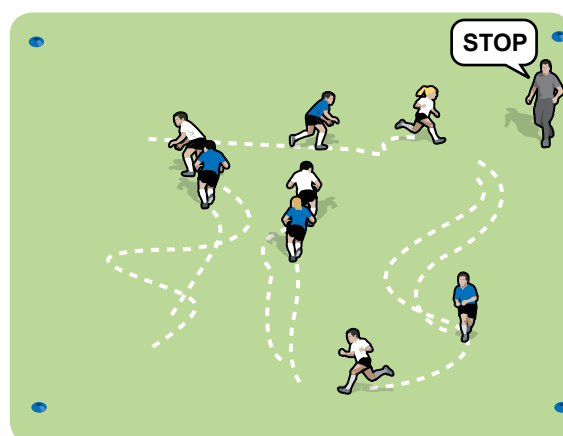
Vary the times before calling "STOP" to create variation and increase the work rate.



Players pair up, the shadow following the lead player.



The lead player tries to lose the shadow.



Regularly shout "STOP" to see which players have lost their shadow.

Game Rating: Getting Started

Turned to Stone

Agility

2

The Rules

Chose about one in four players to be chasers (the "spooks"). Give each spook a ball.

The spooks turn the rest of the players to "stone" by touching them with the ball on the chest or back. They cannot throw the ball and must hold it in two hands.

If turned to stone, the player stands with their legs wide apart. They can be freed by another player crawling through their legs, though this makes them vulnerable to the spooks.

Set Up

Area: 40m x 30m or small gym/games hall.
Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players, bibs (if available).
Players: Up to a class or squad size.

Scoring

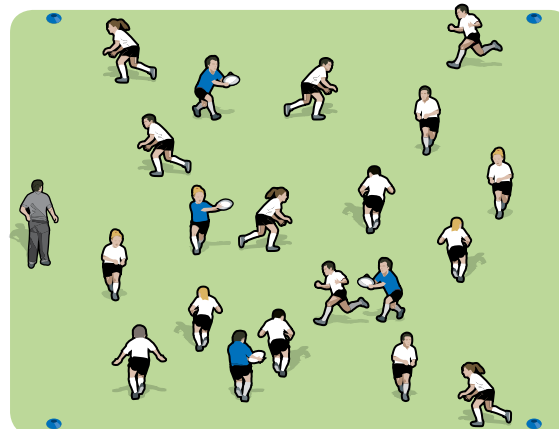
- 1 point for each player turned to stone, with a 5 point bonus if all of them are turned to stone.

What to Call Out

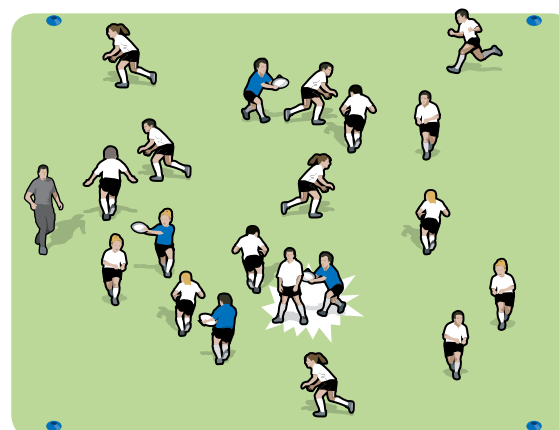
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

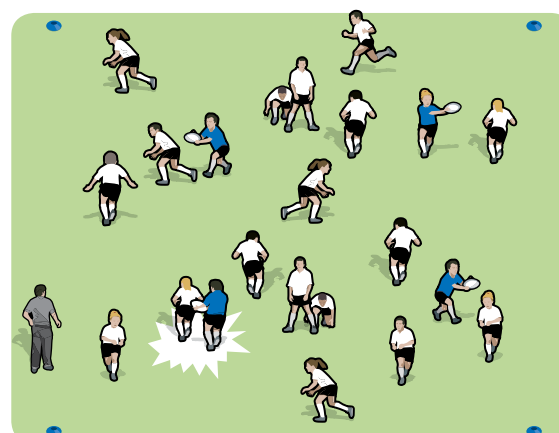
"Fast feet" refers to the speed of movement of the player in confined areas. Acquiring the skill will allow the ball carrier to manoeuvre away from defenders, defenders to get into better positions to make tackles. Jason Robinson (England) and Shane Williams (Wales) are typically regarded as players with fast feet.



The spooks want to turn the other players to stone.



Players turned to stone must stand still with their legs wide apart.



They can be freed by another player crawling through their legs.

Zombie Chief

3

The Rules

Chose one (or two) player(s) to be the Zombie Chief(s). They stand in the middle of the playing area.

Divide the rest of the players into four groups, with one group spread along each side of the playing area. On your signal, the players have to run through the playing area and get to the opposite side without being caught by the Zombie Chief.

If caught (touched or tagged), a player becomes a "zombie slave". They can "capture" other players (who similarly become zombie slaves), but they cannot move from the spot where they were caught. Only the Zombie Chief can move.

Set Up

Area: 40m x 30m or small gym/games hall.
 Equipment: Bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).
 Players: Up to a class or squad size.

Scoring

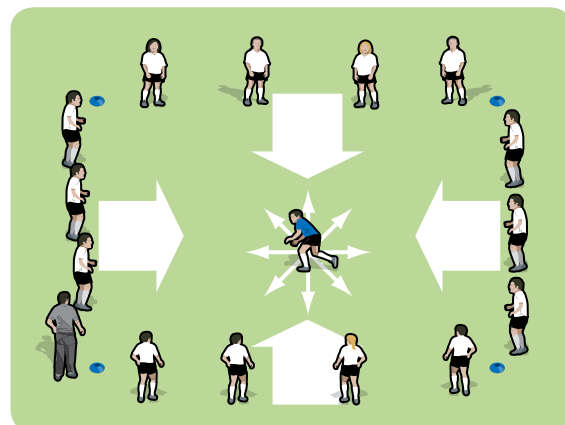
- 1 point to the Zombie Chief for each zombie slave created.

What to Call Out

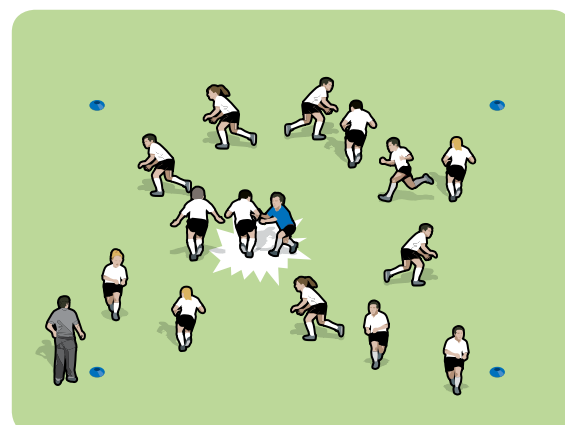
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

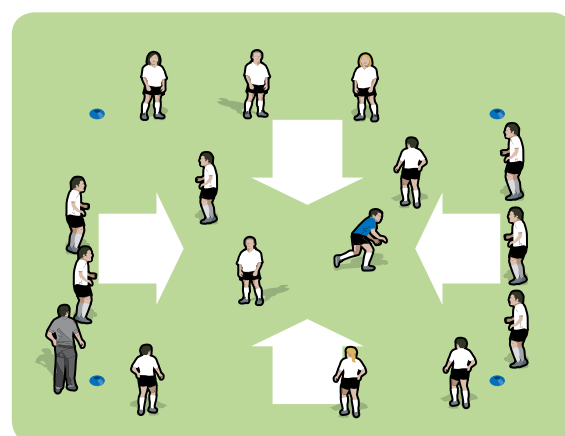
If possible, make sure every player gets a chance to be the Zombie Chief.



The Zombie Chief wants new zombie slaves.



The players run across the square avoiding being made into a slave.



Zombie slaves stand still to capture new victims.

Nevada Smith

The Rules

Set up two teams facing each other at opposite sides of the playing area (the "swamp"). One team is the "bandits", the other team comprises "Nevada Smiths".

Give the "treasure" (a ball) to the first Nevada Smith, who must try and escape from the swamp, either through the side or the far end, without being caught (tagged or touch tackled) by the bandits.

Set Up

Area: 8m long x 5m wide.

Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).

Players: 8 – two teams of 4.

Scoring

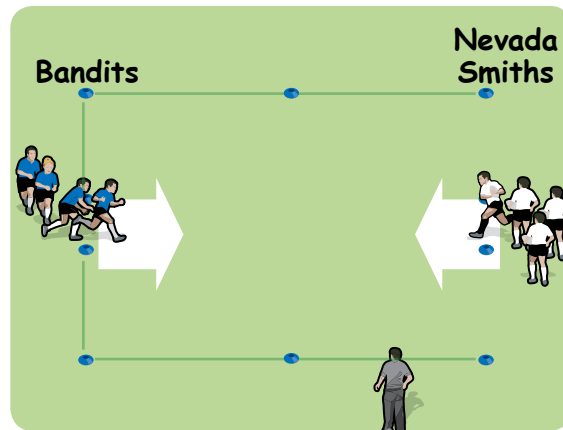
- 1 point for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the side of the swamp with the treasure.
- 2 points for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the end of the swamp with the treasure.
- 1 point to the bandits for each Nevada Smith captured.

What to Call Out

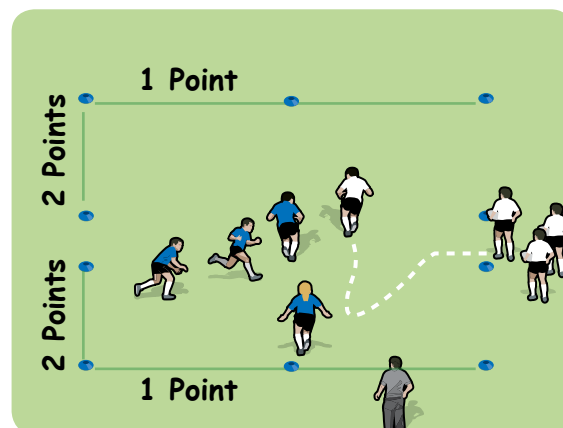
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

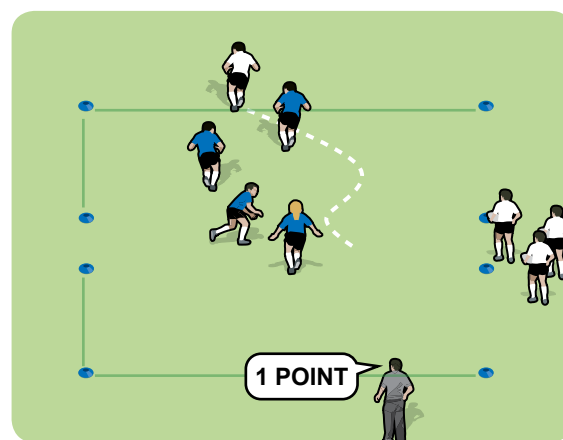
Change the two teams over after everyone in the first team has been Nevada Smith.



Nevada Smith and the bandits face each other across the swamp.



Nevada Smith looks to escape with the treasure without being captured.



Nevada Smith can escape by running out the side or far end of the swamp.

Cat & Mouse

The Rules

Divide the players into four teams, one team of "cats" and three teams of "mice". Each mouse group takes it in turns.

Set up the first mouse group on the corner diagonally opposite the scoring zone "home", with the cats on another corner. Place one ball per mouse throughout the playing area.

The mice have to pick up a ball (the "cheese") and get it "home". The cats have to tag or touch tackle the mice to capture them. If caught, a mouse goes to the "mouse hole" to cheer on his or her team.

Set Up

- Area: 10m x 10m.
 Equipment: 1 ball per mouse, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).
 Players: 16 – 4 cats and three groups of 4 mice.

Scoring

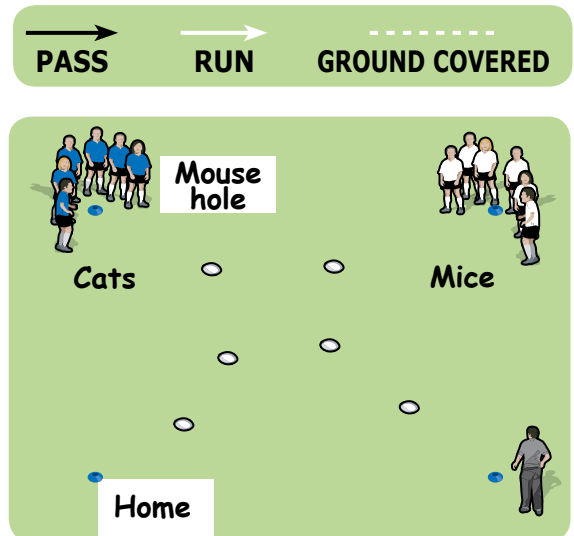
- 1 point to the mice for every piece of cheese they collect.
- 1 point to the cats for every mouse they capture.

What to Call Out

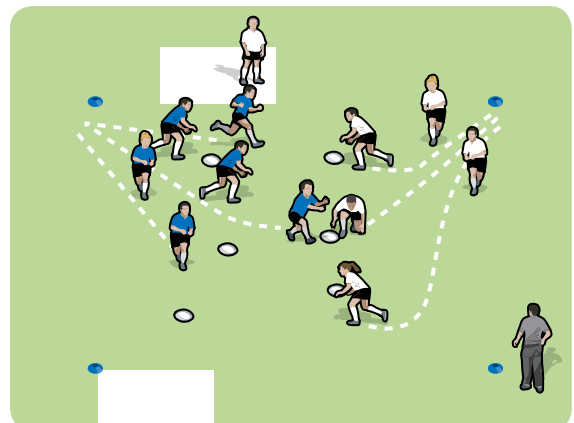
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

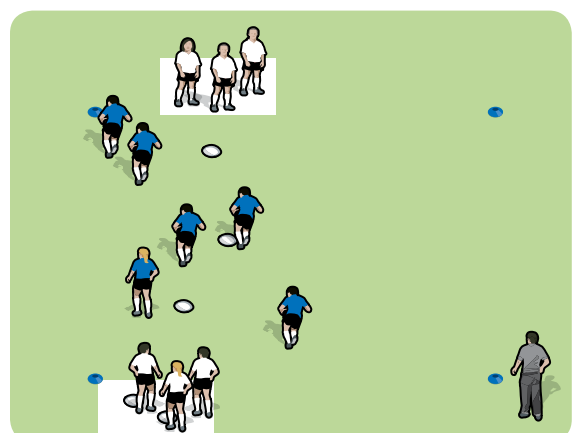
Swap the teams around regularly and make sure all players get to be a cat and a mouse.



The mice want to eat the cheese.



The cats want to catch the mice.



The mice collect the cheese and take it home.

The Rules

This game has a similar set up and challenges to "Nevada Smith". However, it has the addition of a small square (the "tomb") marked in the centre of the playing area (the "swamp").

Set up two teams facing each other at opposite sides of the playing area (the "swamp"). One team is the "bandits", the other team comprises "Nevada Smiths".

Give the "treasure" (a ball) to the first Nevada Smith, who must try and get out of the swamp from the side or far end without being caught (tag or touch tackled) by the bandits. However, this time each Nevada Smith has to touch one foot inside the tomb before escaping from the swamp.

Set Up

Area: 8m long x 5m wide.

Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).

Players: 8 – two teams of 4.

Scoring

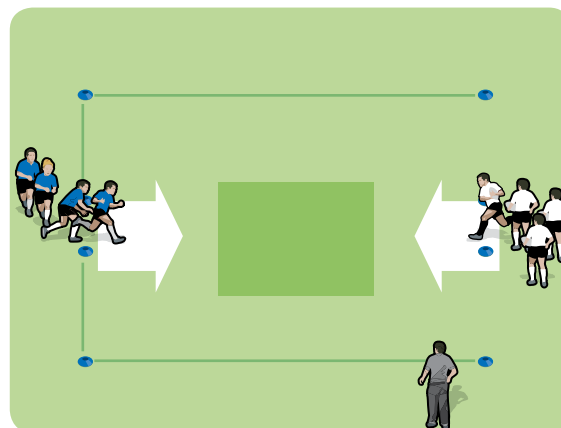
- 1 point for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the side of the swamp with the treasure.
- 2 points for each Nevada Smith who escapes from the end of the swamp with the treasure.
- 1 point to the bandits for each Nevada Smith captured.

What to Call Out

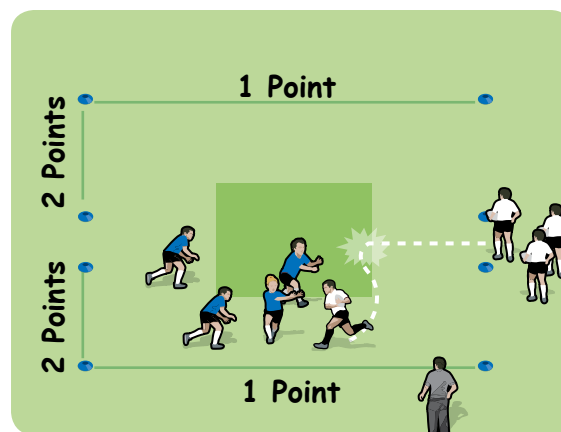
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

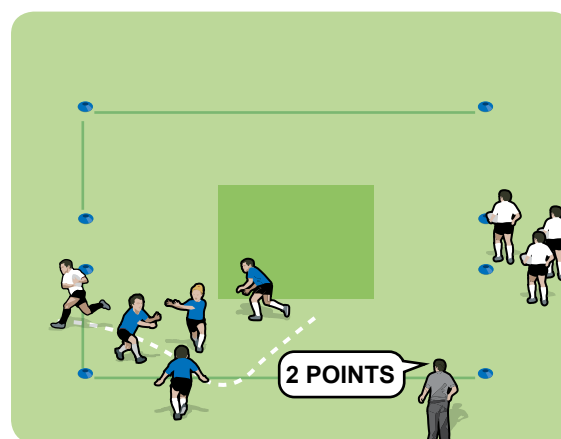
Change the two teams over after everyone in the first team has been Nevada Smith.



Nevada Smith and the bandits face each other across the swamp.



Nevada Smith must put one foot in the tomb before escaping with the treasure.



Nevada Smith can escape by running out the side or far end of the swamp.

Passing & Handling Lesson/Session Plans

Main Objectives

Handling and passing, ball holding and concentration skills, developing balance and an awareness of space.

Coaching/Teaching Points

Look for:

- Lots of movement and activity.
- Holding the ball in two hands.
- Focus on the ball.
- Throwing and catching technique.
- Moving comfortably with the ball.
- Good balance.
- Good coordination.
- Enjoyment of the game.

What to ask the players:

- How do you keep your balance when running with the ball in two hands?
- What are you looking for when you are running?
- Can you keep your speed up when you change direction quickly? Show me how?
- Can you concentrate on the ball while others get in your way?

The Games

The games covered in this chapter:

- 7. Union Jacks** - An intense, all action game
- 8. Action Jacks** - A variation of Union Jacks to develop better ball handling skills
- 9. Fast Hands, Racing Legs** - A fast-paced passing game
- 10. Star Fighters** - Developing more accurate movement and passing.
- 11. Don't Feed the Monkeys** - Working on movement and passing
- 12. Hungry Cavemen** - Promoting passing and team work
- 13. Airball** - A fast-paced skills challenge

Game Notes

Union Jacks

The Rules

Set up eight stations – one on each corner and one on the middle of each side of the playing area. Divide the players into eight groups, so there are three or four players at each station. Give a ball to one player in each group.

On your command, the eight ball carriers (the "Jacks") run across the square to the group opposite them. The Jacks run corner-to-corner or side-to-side.

When they reach the opposite side, each Jack hands the ball over to the first player in that group. They then join the back of that group.

As soon as a player receives the ball, they run to the group opposite, so the game continues at speed.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m
 Equipment: 8 balls (1 per group), bibs (if available).
 Players: 24 to 48 – 3 to 6 players at each station.

Scoring

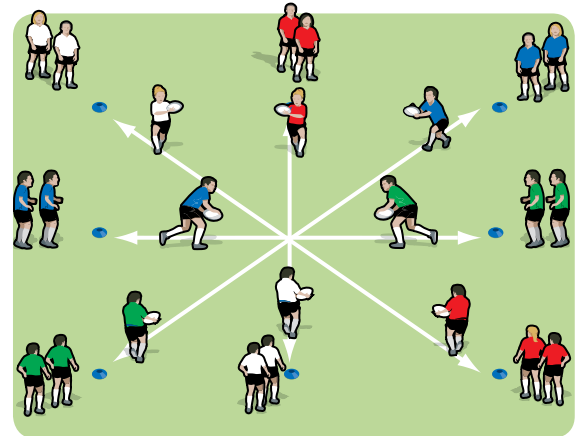
On the stopwatch, how quickly can the groups get back to their starting positions?

What to Call Out

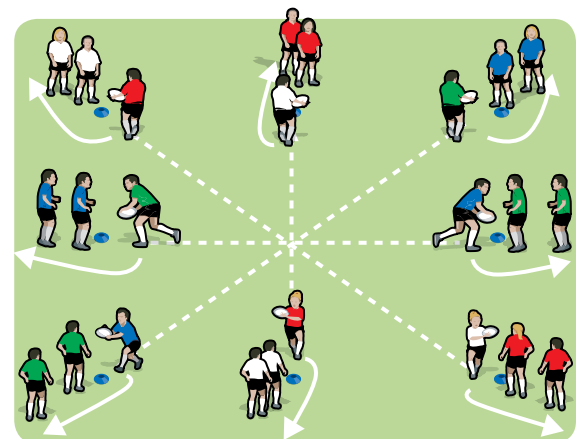
- "Hold the ball in two hands"
- "Look for space"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Use fast feet"

Coaching Tips

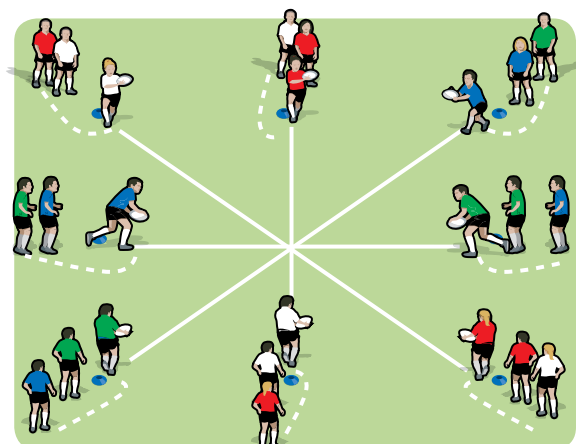
With fewer players, reduce the number of stations to six or four.



The Jacks run across the square with a ball.



The Jacks hand the ball over to the next player.



As soon as they have the ball the next Jack goes.

Action Jacks

The Rules

Start the players in the same positions as the "Union Jacks" game. This time, however, have each Jack to do three things as they move across the square:

- 1) Throw and catch the ball.
- 2) Touch the ball on the ground twice.
- 3) Move the ball all-around their body.

Instead of running to the group opposite, once in the centre of the square the Jacks can choose which group to run to.

Once the Jack reaches their chosen group, they put the ball down on the ground in front of the next player. The next player picks up the ball and goes immediately.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m
 Equipment: 8 balls (1 per group), bibs (if available).
 Players: 24 to 48 – 3 to 6 players at each station.

Scoring

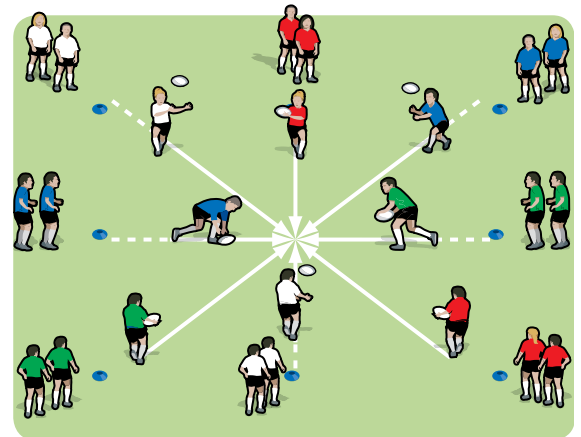
On the stopwatch, how quickly can the groups get back to their starting positions? Or, each player must touch the ball four times and then put a hand up. The clock stops when all the players have raised a hand.

What to Call Out

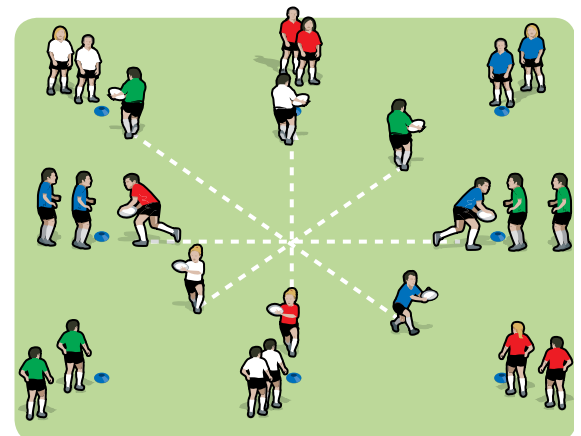
- "Look for space"
- "Hold the ball in two hands"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Swing the ball across your body in a rugby style pass"

Coaching Tips

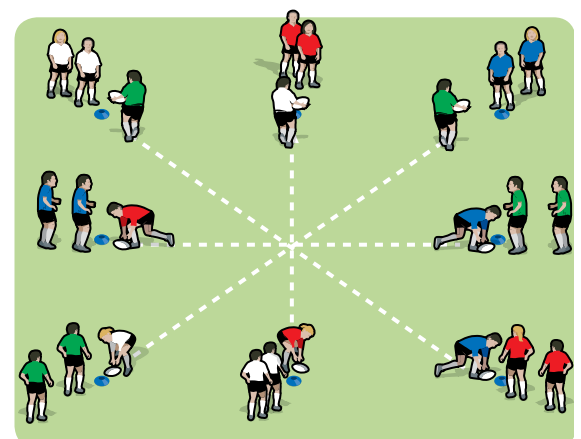
With fewer players, reduce the number of stations to six or four.



The Jacks run across the square completing the tasks with the ball.



Once in the centre of the square, each Jack chooses any group to go to.



The Jacks put the ball on the ground for the next Jack to start.

Fast Hands, Racing Legs

The Rules

Divide the players into four equal groups and set up each group on one of the corners of the playing area. Give one player a ball to start the game.

The players must pass the ball counter clockwise around the playing area. Once a player has passed the ball they follow it to join the back of the next group.

If the players are finding it too easy, add a second ball. You can also make this more of a challenge by asking each passer not to join the next group, but the group after that (the second group round).

If successful, each passer can miss two groups to run round to the third group. Next ask each passer to try to run round back to their original group.

Set Up

Area: 5m x 5m.
 Equipment: 1 ball.
 Players: 12 to 24 – 3 to 6 players at each corner.

Scoring

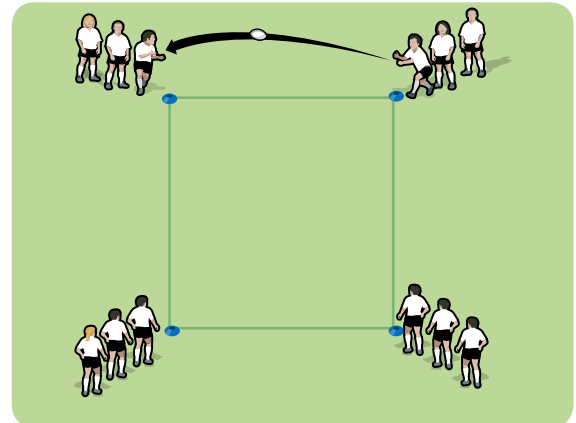
On the stopwatch, how quickly can the groups get back to their starting positions?

What to Call Out

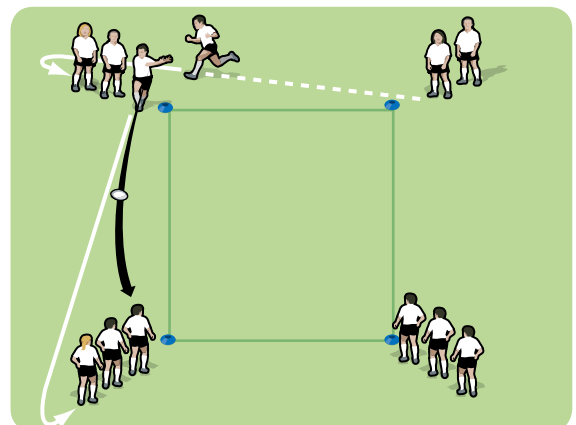
- "Hold the ball in two hands"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"
- "Swing the ball across your body rugby style"
- "Make it easy to catch your pass"
- "Receiver: hold your hands up as a target"

Coaching Tips

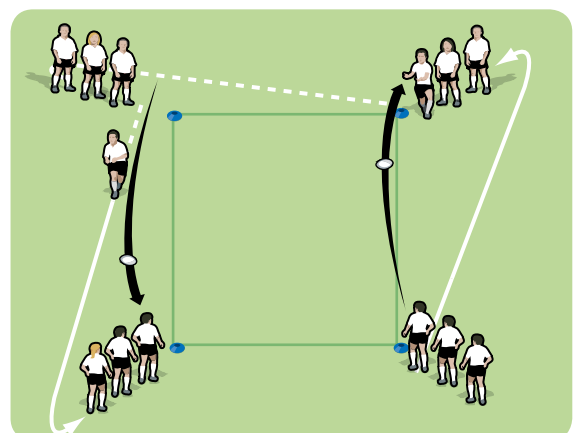
Have the players also pass the ball clockwise round the square, so they practise passing both left and right.



Players pass the ball counter clockwise around the square.



The passer follows the ball to join the back of the next group.



Add a second ball to increase the challenge.

The Rules

Divide the players (the "star fighters") into three teams. Distinguish between the teams with a different coloured bib or band. Give a ball to two of the teams.

Each team has to make as many passes as possible without losing the ball (the "comet"). Any player can intercept a comet. However, players cannot grab the ball from each other.

Any one team could be in possession of both balls at one time.

If a comet goes on the floor, only the nearest star fighter can pick it up.

If a comet goes out of the square, ask one star fighter to get it, to restart the game with a pass. Otherwise, all star fighters must stay within the playing square (the "galaxy") throughout the game.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m.
 Equipment: 2 balls, bibs (if available).
 Players: 9 – three teams of 3.

Scoring

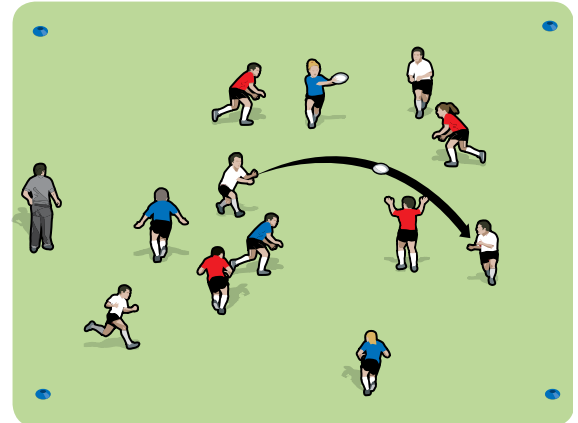
Have the players call out the numbers of completed passes they make as a team in a set time.

What to Call Out

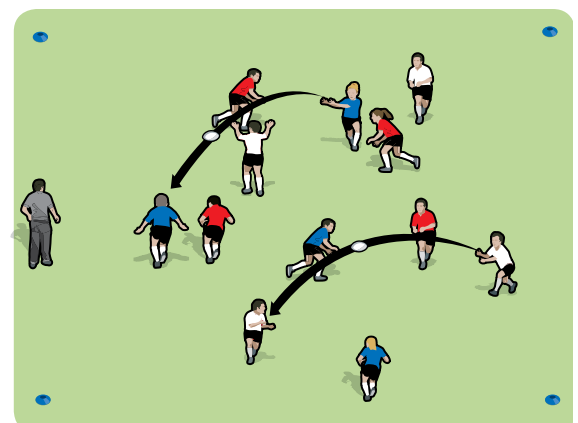
- "Hold the ball (comet) in two hands"
- "Pass by swinging the ball (comet) across your body rugby style"
- "To catch a pass, hold your hands up as a target"
- "Look for space away from rival star fighters"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"

Coaching Tips

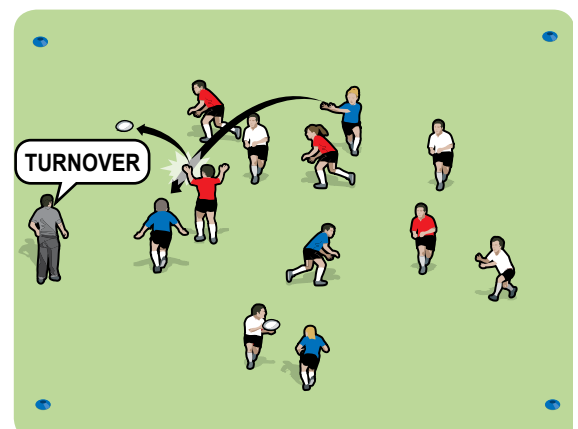
Encourage the players to move with the ball throughout the game.



Two of the three teams have a ball.



Each team passes as many times as possible.



Players can intercept the ball, but cannot grab it from another player.

Don't Feed the Monkeys

11

The Rules

This is a similar game to "Star Fighters", but has only two teams of around four players each. Again, the aim for the players is to make as many passes as possible without losing the ball to the other team.

The team with the ball (the "zoo keepers") have to pass the ball amongst themselves, without the other team (the "monkeys") intercepting it. Monkeys cannot grab the ball from a zoo keeper.

As soon as the monkeys intercept the ball, the teams reverse roles.

If the ball goes on the floor, restart with the other team in possession. If the ball or a player goes out of the playing area, restart with the other team in possession

Set Up

Area: 5m x 5m.
 Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available).
 Players: 8 – two teams of 4.

Scoring

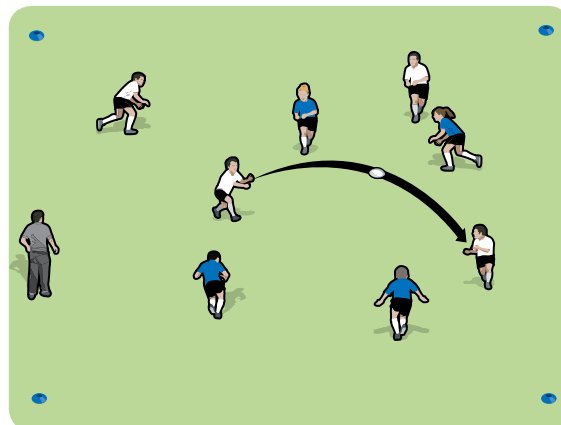
The number of completed passes the teams make in a set time.

What to Call Out

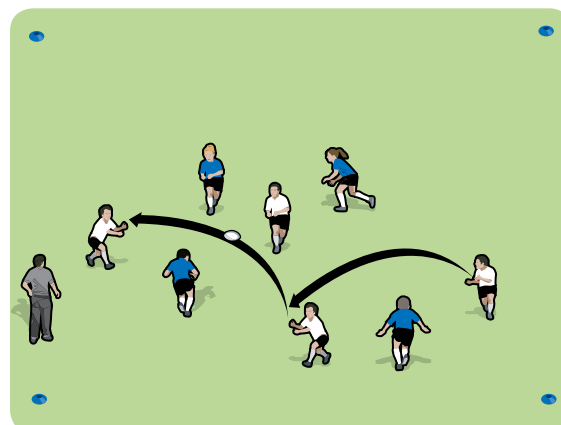
- "Hold the ball in two hands"
- "Pass by swinging the ball across your body rugby style"
- "Make it easy to catch your pass"
- "To catch a pass, hold your hands up as a target"
- "Try to keep the ball moving as it is the target"
- "Look for space"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"

Coaching Tips

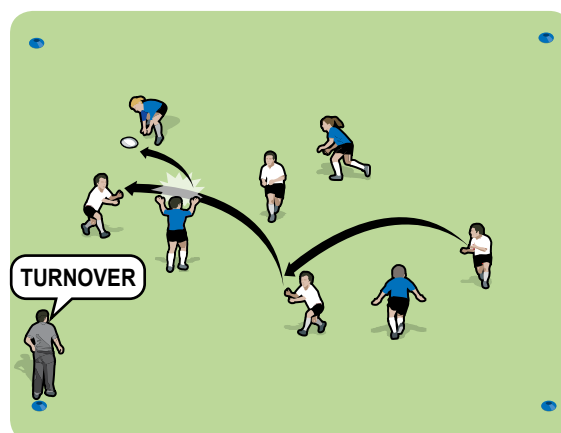
Make sure the players don't stand still with the ball, but that they move into space then pass.



The zoo keepers have a ball which the monkeys want.



The zoo keepers pass as many times as possible.



The monkeys intercept the passes to become the zoo keepers.

The Rules

Mark out two "caves" at each end of the playing area. Divide your players into teams of four and nominate a catcher (the "caveman") from each team to stand in the cave. Each team has to get the ball to their caveman.

Opposition players can intercept and knock the ball down to win it. Dropped passes also mean the teams change possession. Players cannot grab the ball from each other though.

If the cavemen leaves the cave or another player enters it, it's a foul. In which case, give the non offending team a free pass to their caveman.

Set Up

Area: 12m x 12m.
 Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available).
 Players: 6 to 12 – two teams of 3 to 6.

Scoring

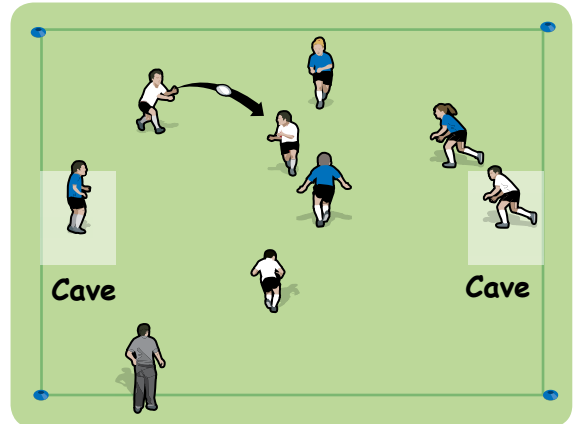
- 1 point each time a team gets the ball to their caveman.

What to Call Out

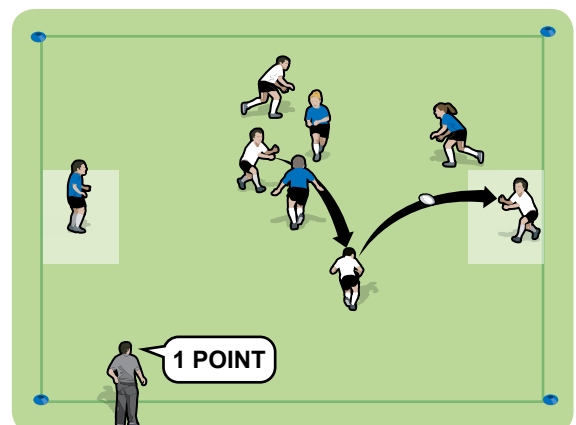
- "Hold the ball in two hands"
- "Pass by swinging the ball across your body rugby style"
- "Make it easy to catch your pass"
- "To catch a pass, hold your hands up as a target"
- "Try to keep the ball moving as it is the target"
- "Look for space"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"

Coaching Tips

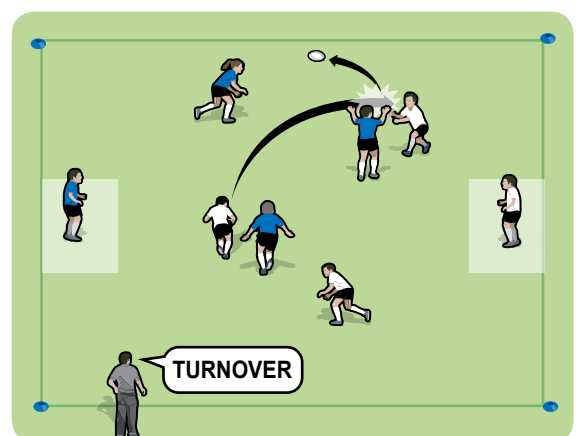
Make sure you change over the cavemen regularly, so everyone gets a chance to be in the cave and on the pitch.



The cavemen wait to be fed.



Each team has to get the ball to their caveman.



Players intercept and knock down passes to win possession.

The Rules

This game must be played by teams of 4 or 5 as you need at least one spare grid in each half of the area.

Players look to throw the ball above head height into the spare grid in the opponent's half. It must hit the ground to score a point.

The opposition must prevent this by catching the ball. They can then try to throw it into their opponent's spare grid.

Players must call to avoid having two players going for the same ball. If two players go for the same ball they incur a penalty point.

Play to 10 points, switching sides halfway through.

Serves alternate and points are scored on every serve no matter what.

If the ball goes out of bounds the team that touched the ball last loses the point.

Set Up

Area: 20m long x 15m wide, in two halves.
Six 5m x 5m grids in each half.

Equipment: 1 ball, cones.

Players: 10 – two teams of 5.

Scoring

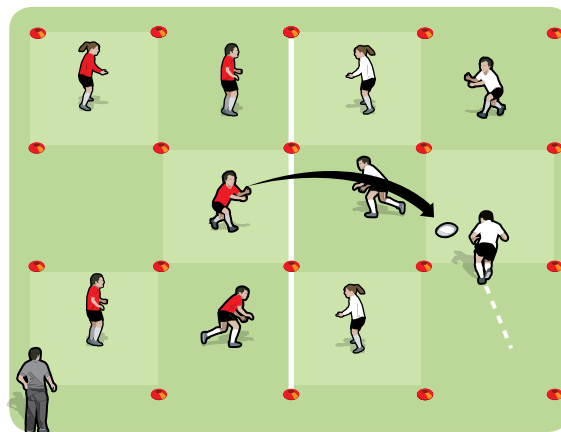
- 1 point each time the ball touches the ground and for each penalty.

What to Call Out

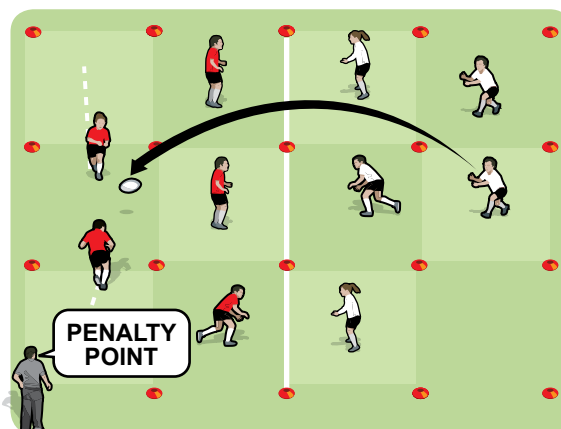
- "Launch the airball"
- "Call your name to catch the airball"
- "Put your name on it"

Coaching Tips

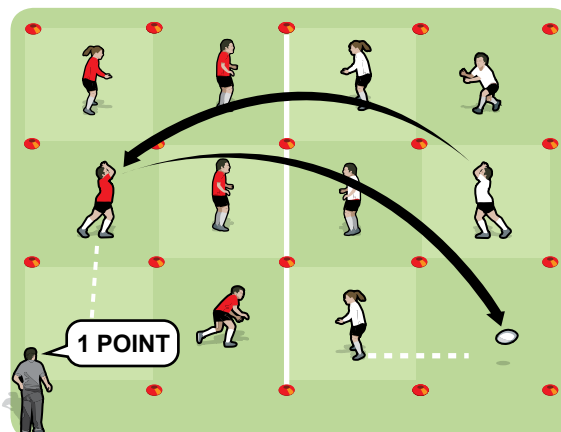
Encourage players to catch the ball as high as possible. This will enable them to return it quicker.



The ball must be thrown into the empty grid.



Two players move into the spare grid incurring a penalty.



The ball hits the ground to score a point.

Tackling Lesson/Session Plans

Main Objectives

Tackling, awareness of the types of tackles, and anticipating an opponent's movements.

Coaching/Teaching Points

Look for:

- Lots of movement and activity.
- Two-handed touch tackles on the waist.
- Players shouting "TACKLE" when they get someone.
- Good balance.
- Good coordination.
- Players abiding by the rules.
- Enjoyment of the game.

What to ask the players:

- Are there different types of tackle?
(Answer: There are basically three – from the side, from the front and from the back.)
- Does moving fast help you to catch the ball carrier? Why?
- Ask players who have done well and made lots of tackles to show the rest of the class examples of how they achieved this.

The Games

The games covered in this chapter:

14. Dragons - A fun way to introduce tackling

15. Tiger Tails - A great tag tackling introduction

16. Tackle Rampage - A quick-fire way to improve tackling

17. Hunters - Promoting tackling and team work

Game Notes

Dragons

14

The Rules

Give a ball (the "golden eggs") to up to half of the players. The "dragons" (the rest of the players) catch the ball carriers with either a tag or touch tackle. The tackle turns the ball carriers to "stone".

If turned to stone, the ball carrier has to stand still holding their golden egg straight out in front of them. They can only be freed by another ball carrier, by touching their two golden eggs together and shouting "FREE".

Set Up

Area: 15m x 15m or small gym/games hall.

Equipment: Up to 1 ball per 2 players, tag belts (if used).

Players: Up to a class or squad size.

Scoring

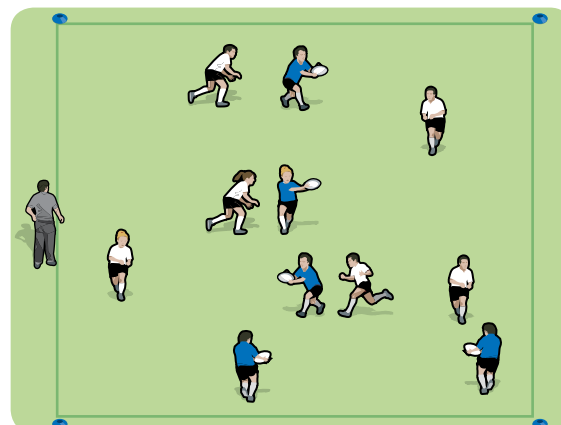
- 1 point to the dragons if they can turn all the ball carriers to stone within a set time.

What to Call Out

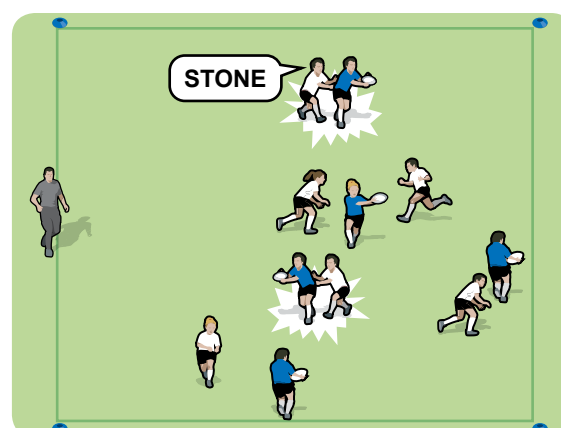
- "Reach out to touch tackle them"
- "Try to anticipate where the ball carrier is going"
- "Shout "STONE" when you catch someone"
- "Shout "FREE" when you free someone"

Coaching Tips

Make sure you swap the dragons and ball carriers regularly.



The dragons want to turn all the ball carriers to stone.



Players turned to stone must stand still holding their "golden egg" straight out.



They can only be freed by another ball carrier by touching their golden eggs together.

Tiger Tails

The Rules

Each tiger has a tag belt or "tail" tucked into the back of their shorts. The tail must be visible so that other tigers can grab it.

The tigers run around inside the playing area, collecting each other's tails by pulling them out of another tiger's shorts. When a tiger collects a tail they add it to their own in their shorts. Other tigers can now collect how ever many tails they have.

If a tail drops on the floor any tiger can collect it. However, the first to touch the tail gets it to avoid a tug-of-war.

Tigers cannot grip their tail to stop it being collected. They need to protect their tail by sprinting away, turning and screening instead.

The game can be played to a time limit (2 minutes, say) and see which tiger has the most tails at the end.

Set Up

- Area: 40m x 30m or small gym/games hall
 Equipment: Tag belts (if used) or old bibs or strips of material for the tails.
 Players: Up to a class or squad size.

Scoring

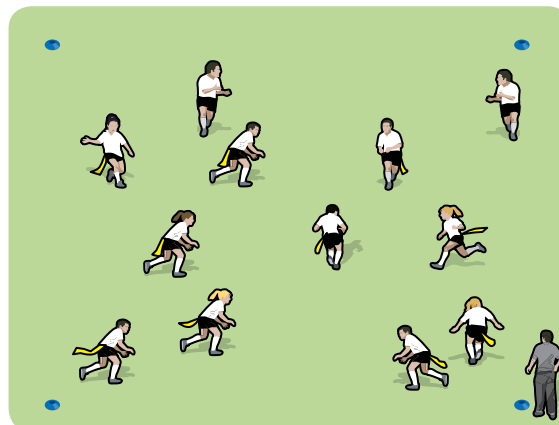
The tiger with the most tails in their shorts wins.

What to Call Out

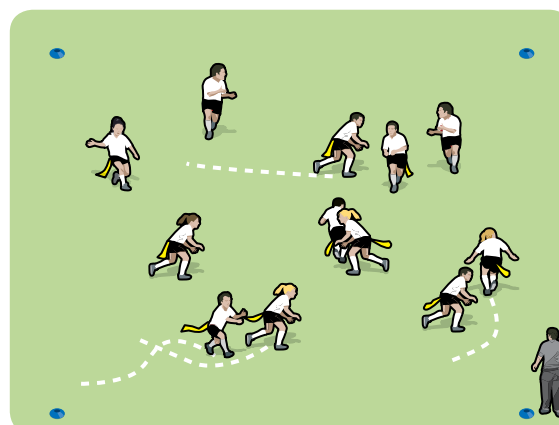
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Take short steps when changing direction"
- "Keep your head up to see what's going on"

Coaching Tips

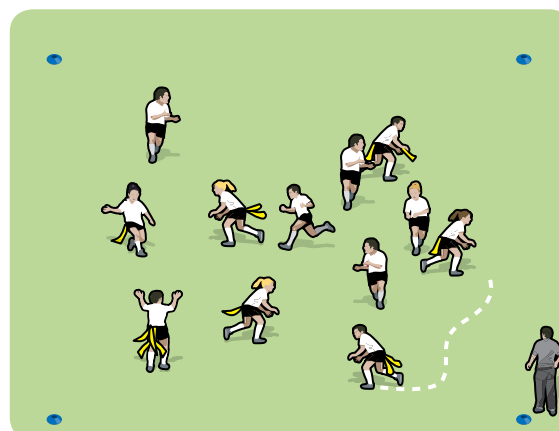
You can make your own tails from material or use old bibs. Avoid using new bibs as they might get ripped.



Each tiger has a tag or "tail" tucked into their shorts



The tigers collect each others tails.



The tiger with the most tails in their shorts wins.

The Rules

Divide the players into teams of four, each team comprising one tackler (the "alien") and three astronauts.

The three astronauts have to move and pass the ball amongst themselves. The alien has to make as many tag or touch tackles (on the ball carriers only) as they can in 30 seconds.

The ball carrier must pass as soon as they are tackled.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m.
 Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players.
 Players: 8 – two teams with 1 defender and 3 attackers in each.

Scoring

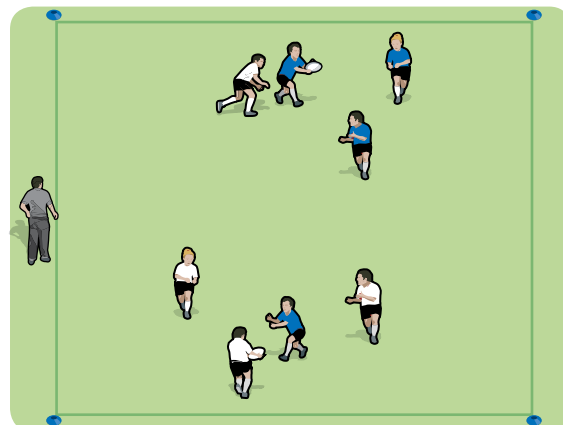
- 1 point for each tackle.

What to Call Out

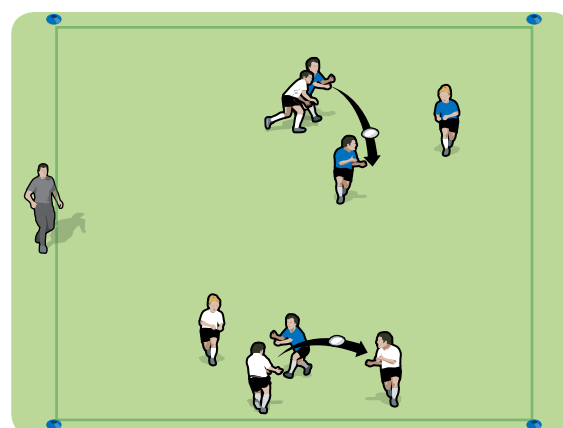
- "Reach with both hands"
- "Try to anticipate where the ball carrier is going"
- "Shout "TACKLE" when you catch someone"

Coaching Tips

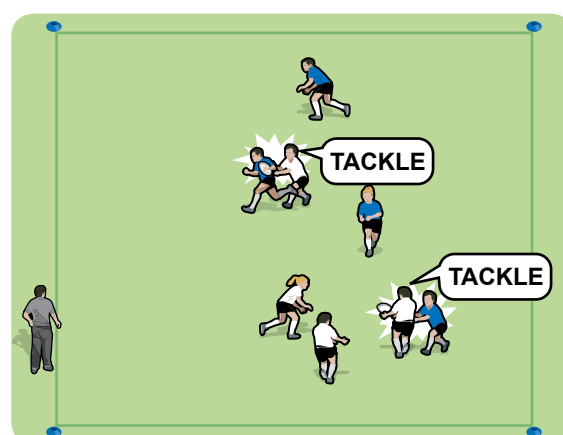
Make sure you don't allow tacklers to get frustrated if they can't catch an attacker with the ball. Swap the teams around regularly.



Each group has one "alien" (tackler) and three "astronauts" (passers).



The astronauts move and pass the ball to avoid being caught (tackled) by the alien.



The alien makes as many tackles as they can in 30 seconds.

The Rules

This game is similar to "Hungry Cavemen" but here the emphasis is on tackling.

Mark out two goals at each end of the area. Divide your players into teams of four with a catcher from each standing in the goal. Each team has to get the ball to their catcher.

If a ball carrier is tackled (using a tag or touch tackle), the ball is given over to the other team (or make the ball carrier pass immediately if you want to keep the game flowing).

The players can also intercept and knock down the ball to win it. Dropped passes also mean the teams change possession. Players cannot grab the ball from each other.

If the catcher leaves the goal or another player enters it, it's a foul. In which case, give the non-offending team a free pass to their catcher.

Set Up

Area: 12m x 12m.
Equipment: 1 ball.
Players: 8 – two teams of 4.

Scoring

- 1 point for each pass to a catcher.

What to Call Out

Ball carrying team:

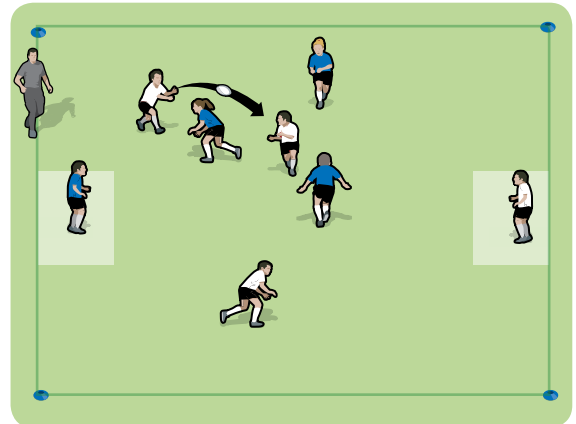
- "Look for space and move quickly"
- "Pass to free players—keep the ball moving"
- "Keep your hands up to take the pass"

Tackling team:

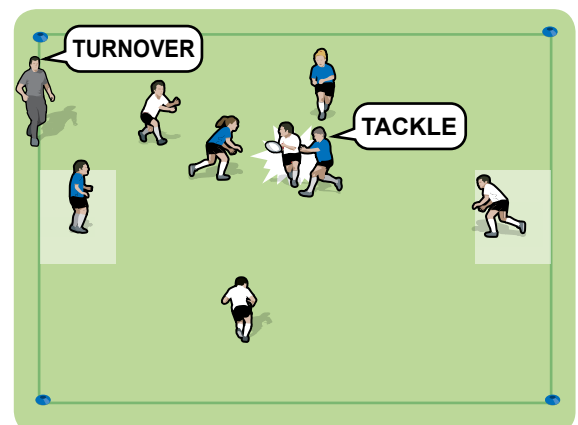
- "Reach with both hands"
- "Try to anticipate where the ball carrier is going"
- "Shout "TACKLE" when you catch someone"

Coaching Tips

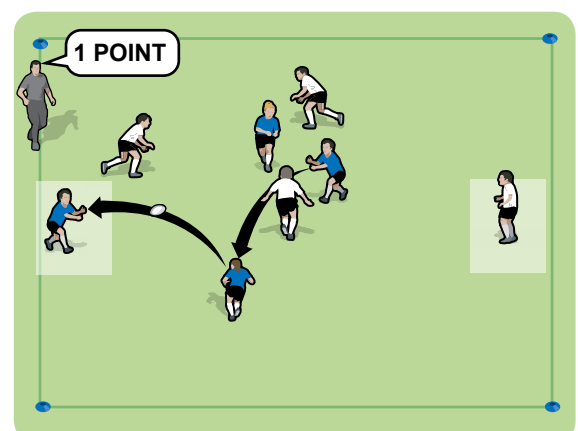
See if you can get the tacklers to anticipate which player is going to receive the pass, so they can tackle them just as they catch the ball.



The two teams battle to get the ball to their catcher.



The ball is given to the other team following a tackle.



Score a point for passes to the catcher.

Decision Making Lesson/Session Plans

Main Objectives

Decision making and problem solving, using the right skills to beat defenders, playing at game speed, and understanding how to score a try.

Coaching/Teaching Points

Look for:

- Lots of movement and activity.
- Good balance and coordination.
- Good passing/catching.
- Lots of tackling.
- Tries being scored.
- Solving the problem in a variety of ways.
- Players abiding by the rules.
- Enjoyment of the game.

What to ask the players:

- How many skills are used in this game?
- How can you beat the defender to score?
- What speed are you playing at? Can you play the games at "game speed"?
- When is the best time to pass?
- How can you move the defender out of position?
- Ask groups that are solving the problems to demonstrate to the rest of the players.

The Games

The games covered in this chapter:

- 18. Tackle Demons** - Promoting team work and problem solving
- 19. Go-Go Forward** - Introducing backwards passing
- 20. The Shadow** - Encouraging communication and concentration
- 21. Mayday!** - Promoting passing and movement

Game Notes

Tackle Demons

The Rules

Divide the players into groups of four, of three attackers and one defender. The attackers have five goes to score a try. They can pass forward and use dodging to do this.

The defender can either tag or touch tackle the ball carrier to beat the attack. The defender also wins if an attacker steps out of bounds.

The attackers have to decide who to pass to score, and when. The defender has to decide who and when to tackle.

Rotate the attacking players after every attempt. Don't allow the defenders to get demoralised if they're unable to stop the attackers.

Set Up

- Area: 5m x 5m.
 Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players, tag belts (if used).
 Players: 4 – 3 attackers and 1 defender.

Scoring

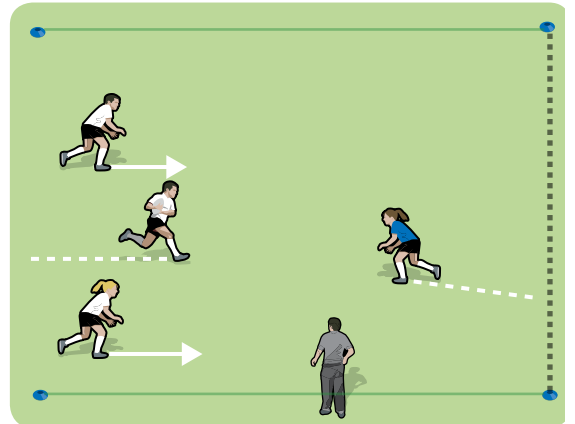
- 1 point for each try.

What to Call Out

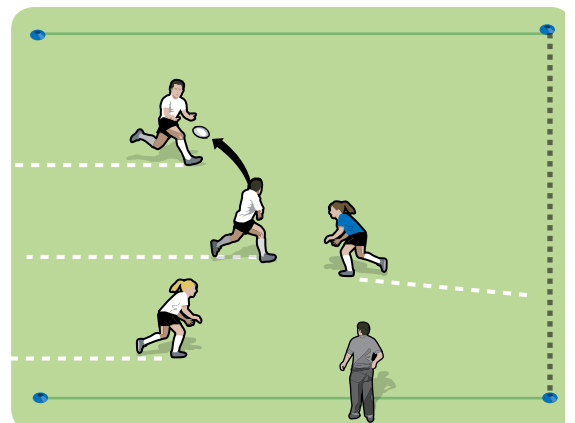
- "Look for space and move quickly"
- "Pass to free players"
- "Use evasion or a pass to beat the defender"
- "Keep your hands up"
- "Make your tackles"
- "Pass quickly - keep the ball moving"

Coaching Tips

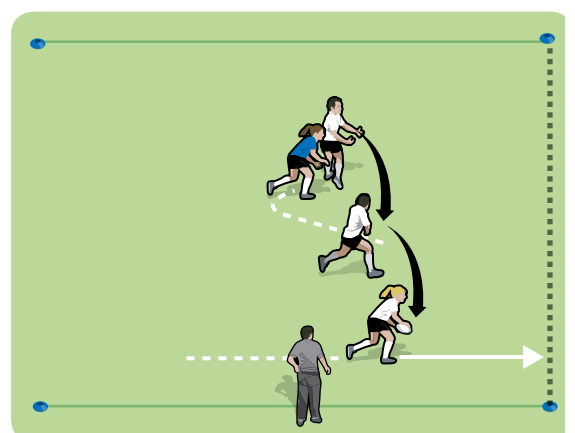
The narrower the channel, the more successful the defender should be. Only assist groups that are struggling to solve the problems.



Three attackers face one defender.



The attackers must beat the defender to score. They can pass forwards.



The attackers use passing and dodging to score.

The Rules

Play "Tackle Demons", but introduce the rule that no pass can go forward.

Divide the players into groups of four, of three attackers and one defender. The attackers have five goes to score a try. The attackers can only pass backwards, but can dodge the defender.

The defender can either tag or touch tackle the ball carrier to beat the attack. The defender also wins if an attacker steps out of bounds.

The attackers have to decide who to pass to score. The defender has to decide who and when to tackle.

Rotate the attacking players after every attempt. Don't allow the defenders to get demoralised if they're unable to stop the attackers.

Set Up

Area: 5m x 5m
 Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players, tag belts (if used).
 Players: 4 – 3 attackers and 1 defender.

Scoring

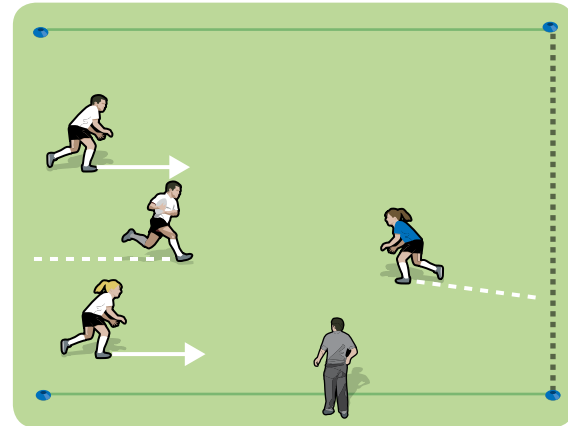
- 1 point for each try.

What to Call Out

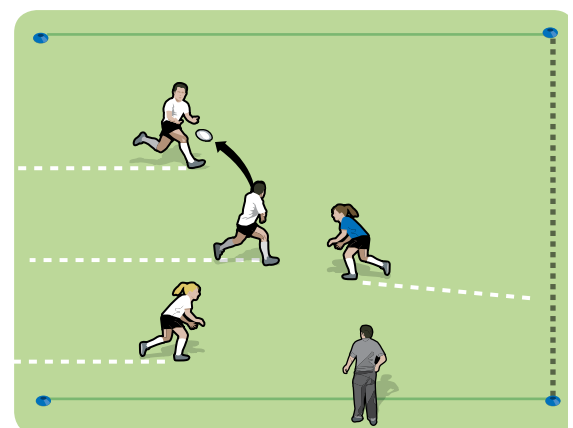
- "Look for space and move quickly"
- "Pass backwards to free players"
- "Use evasion or a pass to beat the defender"
- "Keep your hands up"
- "Pass quickly - keep the ball moving"

Coaching Tips

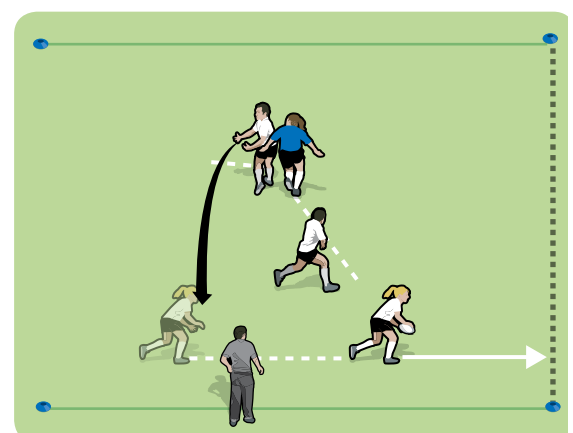
Adding the "no forward pass" rule will disrupt the skills and activities that the players displayed in the "Tackle demons" game. It shouldn't take long for the players to display those skills again, but think about playing "Tackle demons" again if the players aren't able to pass backwards only.



Three attackers face one defender.



The attackers must beat the defender to score.



The attackers can only pass backwards.

The Shadow

The Rules

Divide the players into groups of four. The groups jog around with the players following each other. They have to concentrate to avoid bumping into another group and into each other.

The player at the front of each group holds a ball. The player behind is the "shadow".

You make a call of either "PASS", "POP", "DOWN" or "ROLL". The ball carrier must either:

- PASS - Turn and pass to the shadow, or
- POP - Pop the ball over their head to the shadow, or
- DOWN - Put the ball down for the shadow, or
- ROLL - Roll the ball for the shadow to pick up.

As soon as each player lets go of the ball, they run to join the back of line.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m.
 Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players, bibs (if available).
 Players: 16 – four groups of 4.

Scoring

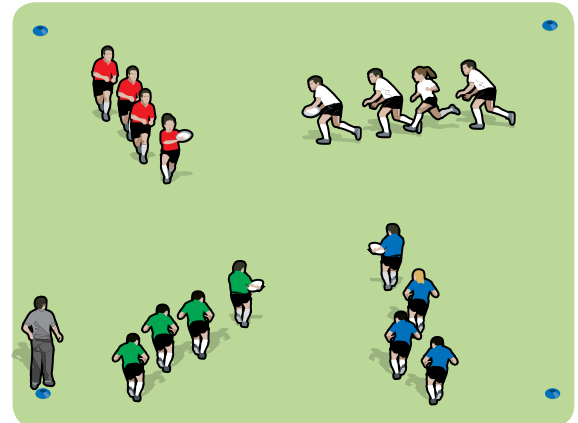
Whichever group can "PASS", "POP", "DOWN" and "ROLL" the quickest wins.

What to Call Out

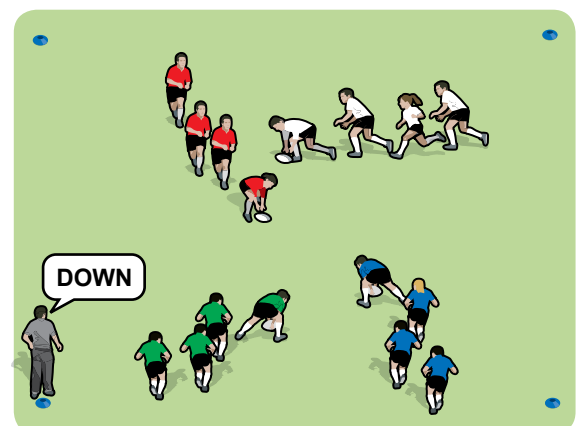
- "Look for space"
- "Stay close to the player with the ball"
- "Move quickly onto the ball"
- "Communicate with your team mates"

Coaching Tips

Gently increase the speed the players run at and their intensity during this warm up. Only assist groups that are struggling to solve the problems.



The players jog around in groups avoiding each other.



Decide how the players pass the ball to the shadows.



The shadow collects the ball. The player behind becomes the next shadow.

The Rules

Divide the players into teams of three attackers and three defenders. Space the defenders equally along the playing area. They can only move sideways to make tackles.

The three attackers have a ball. They use passing (backwards only) and running skills to score.

If the player with the ball is tackled, they call out "MAYDAY" and pass the ball away within 3 seconds.

Give the attack three goes to score. Each attempt ends if the ball carrier doesn't call "MAYDAY!", or pass the ball away within 3 seconds of the tackle, or a pass goes forward or to ground, or a ball carrier steps out of play.

Set Up

Area: 20m long x 5m wide.
 Equipment: 1 ball per 4 players, tag belts (if used).
 Players: 6 – 3 defenders and 3 attackers.

Scoring

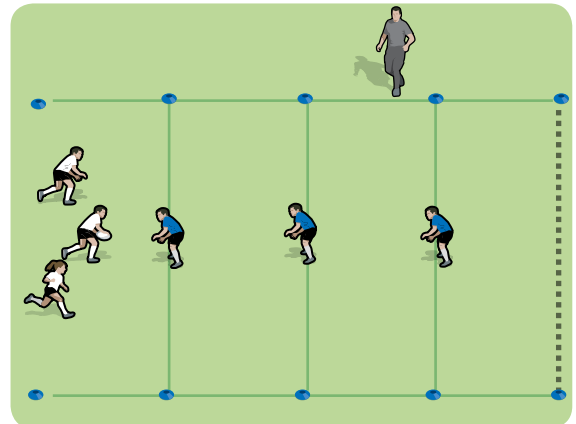
- 1 point to the attack for a try.
- 1 point to the defence for preventing a try.

What to Call Out

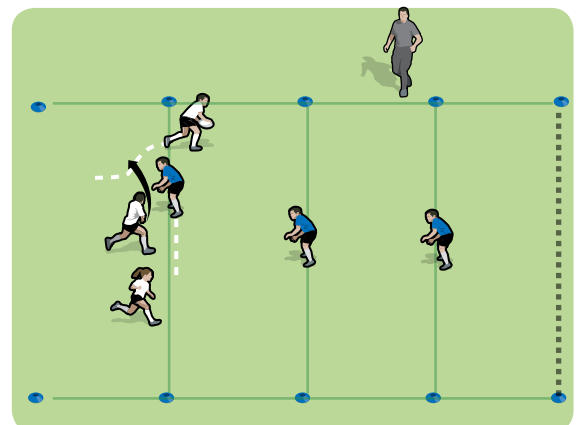
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Beat the defender by passing to a team mate"
- "Support the player with the ball"
- "Run forward"
- "You can only pass backwards"

Coaching Tips

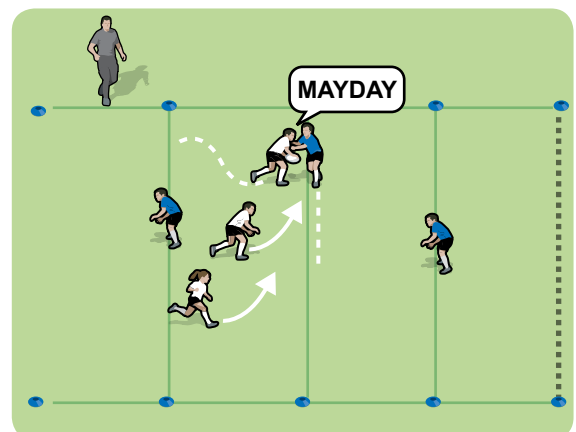
The "MAYDAY!" call is to encourage the other two attackers to move closer for the pass. Only assist groups that are struggling with some ideas on how to solve the problems.



Space out the defenders equally along the playing area.



The defenders can only move sideways to tackle the ball carrier.



Tackled players must shout "MAYDAY" and pass backwards within 3 seconds.

Team Skills Lesson/Session Plans

Main Objectives

Displaying the skills covered in the previous games, and showing an understanding of the game of rugby.

Coaching/Teaching Points

Look for:

- Lots of movement and activity
- The ball carrier moving forwards at pace.
- Support for the ball carrier from behind.
- Passing whenever a player is tackled.
- The ball carrier moving the defender to create space for team mates.
- Players abiding by the rules.
- Enjoyment of the game.

What to ask the players:

- Can you show me how you move the defender around?
- What types of pass are you using? Why these passes?
- What problems are you finding? Can you think of ways to get round these problems?

Games Covered

The games covered in this chapter:

- 22. Turnovers** - Combining rugby skills with fitness
- 23. Behind the Lines** - Promoting communication and team work
- 24. Runaround** - A more rugby-like game

Game Notes

Turnovers

22

The Rules

Divide the players into teams of three. Start the teams from their try lines. Give a ball to the team you want to be the attackers first.

The attackers aim to beat the defenders to score a try, using running, evasion and passing skills. The defence use tag or touch tackles to stop them.

When a ball carrier is tackled, they put the ball down and the whole team returns to their try line. After 3 seconds, the other team pick up the ball and attack.

Set Up

Area: 10m x 10m

Equipment: 1 ball per 6 players, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).

Players: 6 – two teams of 3.

Scoring

- 1 point for a try.

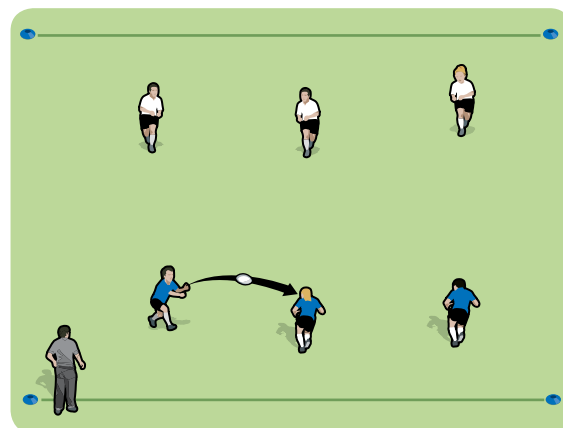
What to Call Out

- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Beat the defender"
- "Pass and move"
- "Support the person with the ball"
- "Run forward"
- "Pass backwards"
- "Shout "TACKLE" when you catch someone"

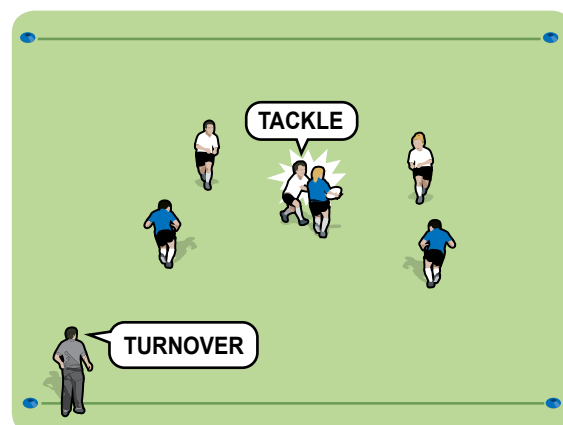
Coaching Tips

Players should discover clever ways to move and pass the ball around.

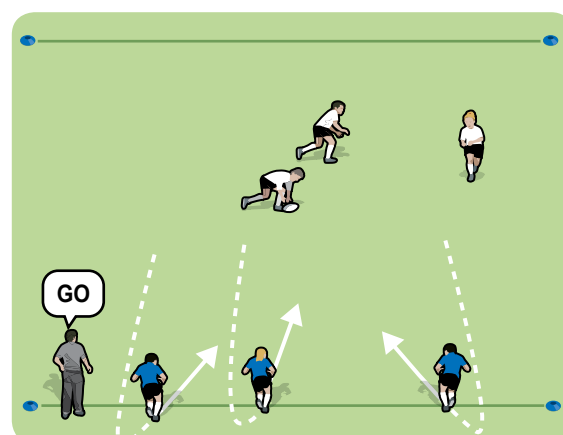
If you have more than one game going at once, you can swap the teams around after every try.



One team attacks from its try line.



Turnover the ball at every tackle.



The attack puts the ball down and runs back to its line. After 3 seconds the other team attacks.

The Rules

Divide the players into teams of five attackers and six defenders. Space pairs of defenders equally along the playing area. The defenders can only move sideways to make tackles.

The attackers have a ball. They use passing (backwards only) and running skills to score. If the player with the ball is tackled, they call out "I'M HIT" and pass the ball away within 3 seconds.

Give the attack three goes to score. Each attempt ends if the ball carrier doesn't call "I'M HIT", or pass the ball away within 3 seconds of the tackle, or a pass goes forward or to ground, or the ball carrier steps out of play.

Set Up

Area: 20m long x 5m wide.

Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).

Players: 11 – 5 attackers and 6 defenders.

Scoring

- 1 point to the attack for a try.
- 1 point to the defence for preventing a try.

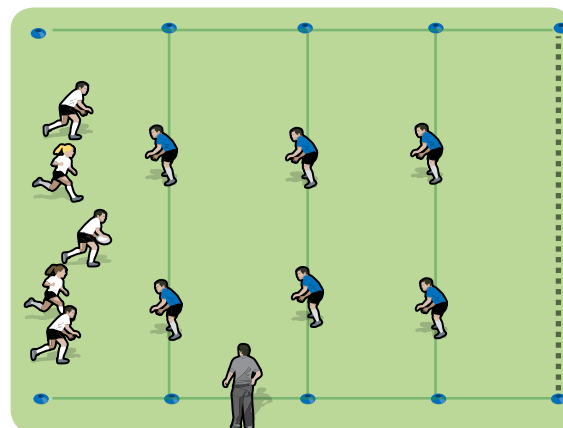
What to Call Out

- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Beat the defender"
- "Support the player with the ball"
- "Run forward"
- "Pass sideways or backwards"

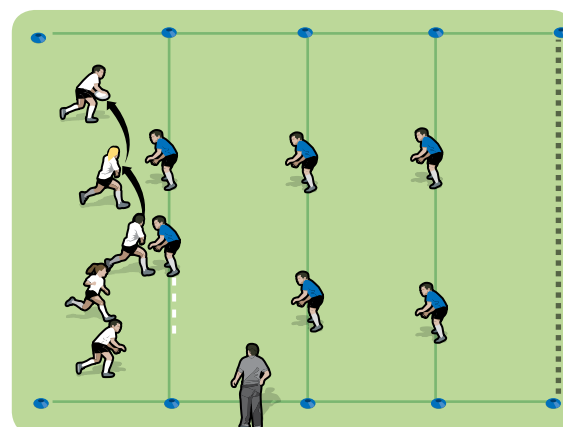
Coaching Tips

The "I'M HIT" call is to encourage the other attackers to move closer for the pass.

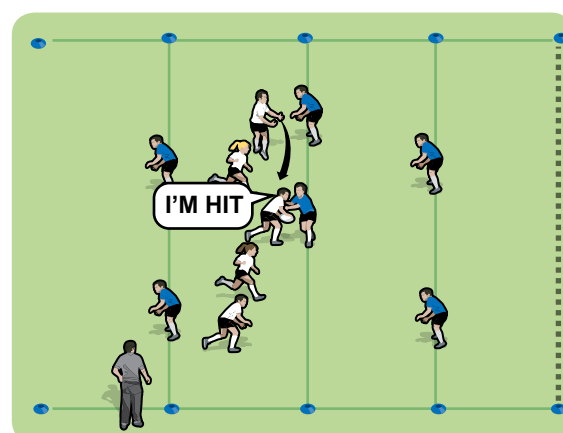
Try these variations also. 1) Change the shape of the playing area to an hour glass. 2) Start the defenders at the sides. 3) Hold back two of the attackers so they support from deep and at pace.



Five attackers face two defenders on each line.



The defenders can only move sideways to tackle the ball carrier.



Tackled players must shout "I'M HIT!" and pass backwards within 3 seconds.

The Rules

Divide the players into four teams. To start, have two of the teams stand along the same side of the playing area. Give a ball to the team you want to be the attackers.

On your signal, both teams run around a marker into the playing area. The attackers use running, evasion and passing skills to score.

If the player with the ball is tackled, they must pass the ball away within 3 seconds. If they don't the defenders win. The defenders also win if a pass goes forward or to ground, or the ball carrier steps out of play.

Once the attackers have scored or the defenders have got the ball, let the next two teams start. Then mix up the teams.

Set Up

- Area: 10m x 10m.
 Equipment: 1 ball, bibs (if available), tag belts (if used).
 Players: 8 – 4 attackers and 4 defenders.

Scoring

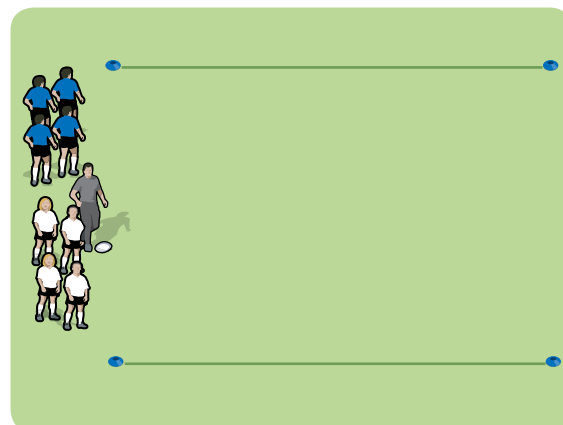
- 1 point for a try.
- 1 point for a successful defence.

What to Call Out

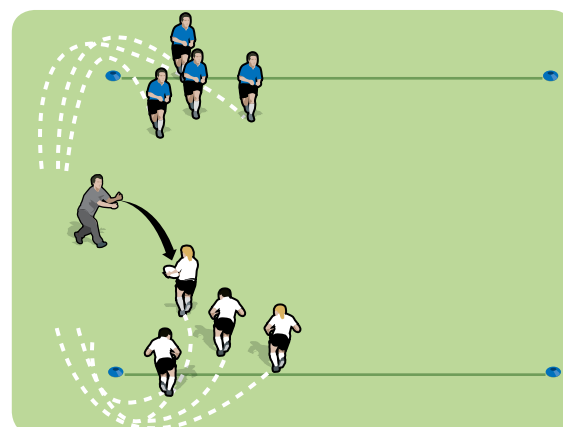
- "Look for space and move into it"
- "Beat the defender"
- "Pass and move"
- "Support the person with the ball"
- "Run forward, pass backwards"
- "Shout "TACKLE" when you catch someone"

Coaching Tips

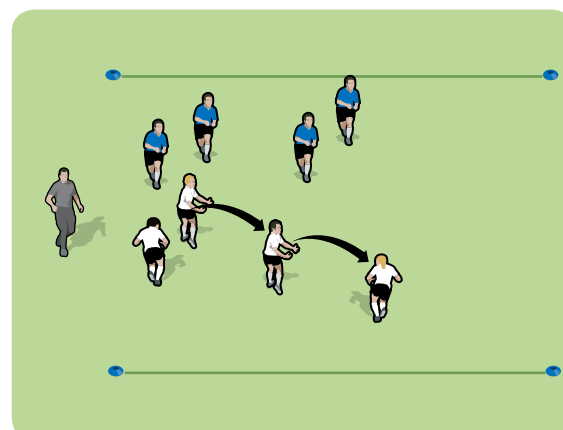
Make sure all the players get to attack and defend. Start the players off from the left and the right, so they have to pass and make tackles both ways.



Attackers and defenders start along the same side.



Both teams run around a marker into the playing area.



The attackers must beat the defenders to score a try.

Tag and Touch Rugby Rules

Though the basic rules of tag and touch rugby appear to be quite simple, younger players might find them complicated. You therefore may find it easier to introduce the rules at their pace. As the players gain experience, and their skills and understanding develops, you can then gradually introduce the rules at your discretion.

The world of tag and touch rugby

Tag and touch rugby have many variations around the world. Fundamentally, the rules for most types of tag and touch rugby are similar. Please contact your local union for details of tag and touch rugby rules for competitive matches.

Contact

Tag and touch rugby are non-contact sports, apart from the tackle where contact should be minimal (pulling the tag belt or a light touch).

- The players should be encouraged to avoid each other. So, the ball carrier must not run into a defender, the defender must not block the ball carrier. Referee the games to ensure players do not "bash" into each other.
- Do not allow hand offs of fends, allow the ball carrier to push away the tackler.
- Do not allow defenders to grab the ball carrier or the ball.

Carrying the ball in two hands

Encourage the players to carry the ball in two hands within 3 metres of an opponent. This is to encourage passing, while preventing the ball carrier from handing off the tackler or instinctively holding on to a tag.

You might like to call out "TWO HANDS" to remind the players of this rule. Also, think about penalising persistent offenders with

Passing

Passing in any direction is a good initial introduction to rugby. As the players improve and the games become more formalised, encourage sideways and backwards passing only. In which case, penalise a forward pass with a free pass to the non-infringing team from where the ball left the player's hands.

Forward pass

Passing "backwards" is a central tenet of rugby. Sideways passes can be the most effective since no ground is lost and the catching player can take the ball at speed.

Loose balls on the ground

You'll probably find that the ball ends up on the ground quite a lot. Do not allow the players to kick or dive on any loose ball! Instead, let them gather up the ball and play on.

Free pass

In competitive tag and touch rugby, the "free pass" is used instead of a kick, scrum or lineout. A free pass is used to start and restart a game:

- **At the start of each half / following a try:** At the start of each half, from the centre of the field. Following a try, a free pass is awarded to the non-scoring team.
- **If the ball goes out of play:** The non-infringing team takes the free pass from where the ball went out of play.
- **Following an infringement:** Award a free pass for any infringement. The non-infringing team takes the free pass from where the infringement took place.

For an infringement over the goal line or within 5 metres of the goal line, the free pass should be taken 5 metres out from the goal line. This is to create enough space for the game to continue.

Tag and Touch Rugby Rules

Taking a free pass

To take a free pass, you (or the referee) calls "PLAY" and the ball carrier uses a two-handed pass to a team mate. Alternatively, you may prefer your players to "tap" the ball with their foot before passing.

- The ball carrier cannot run with the ball before making the free pass.
- The opposition must be 7 metres (or 7 large steps) back from the ball. (You may ask more experienced players to be 10 metres back.) Give the defenders time to move back – 5 seconds should be enough.
- The opposition cannot move forward until after the ball carrier has made the free pass.

As the players improve, consider allowing the opposition team captain to make the "PLAY" call.

Quick penalties

Avoid "quick penalties". That is, free passes being made without your instruction.

Kicking

Do not allow the players to kick the ball, whether to restart the game, pass it to a team mate, or when the ball has fallen to the ground.

Scoring

- Encourage the players to call out "TRY" when they score.
- Do not let your players dive over the goal line to score a try.
- A try is worth one point.

Playing on hard ground

If the ground or playing surface is hard, you may prefer for a try to be scored when a player simply runs over the opposition goal line with the ball.

Some of the games in this manual can finish when a try is scored. However, you may wish to continue playing following a try. In which case, restart the game from the centre of the field with a "free pass" by the non-scoring team.

Scoring in the tackle

A tackled player cannot cross the goal line to score, even within the 3 step / 3 second rule (see "Tackling" below). Call out "PASS TO SCORE" to help the players in these situations. However, a tackled player can score if tackled after crossing the goal line.

Tackling

The basic tackling rules are to limit contact and stoppages whenever necessary:

- Only the ball carrier can be tackled. That is, the ball must still be in the hands of the ball carrier at the moment the tackle is made. If a defender makes the tackle after the ball carrier has passed the ball, the tackle should not be counted.
- Once tackled, the ball carrier must pass the ball within 3 steps and 3 seconds of the tackle. You might like to call out "PASS" and then "ONE, TWO, THREE" to remind the players to pass the ball within these rules.
- The tackler and his/her team mates must back off at least 1 metre from the ball carrier to allow him/her to pass.
- The ball carrier can run or dodge potential taggers, but he /she must not push, "fend off" or "hand off" the tackler. This includes using the ball to fend away defenders. In tag rugby, the ball carrier must not spin around so the tag is not reachable or guard or shield their tag in any way.
- The tackler must not grab the ball carrier, any part of his / her clothing or the ball.

Tag and Touch Rugby Rules

Set number of tackles

In competitive tag and touch rugby, the attacking team has a limited number of tackles (normally 5 or 6) to score. If they do not score before the last tackle in that sequence, the ball is "turned over" to the other team, who now attack from a free pass.

If a free pass is awarded to the attack for an infringement by the defence, the number of tackles required before a "turnover" is reset to zero (as in rugby league). This is a good incentive for the defenders not to deliberately infringe.

Beginners should not be given a set number of tackles before having to "turnover possession". The players are likely to make numerous mistakes as it is, ensuring that teams get to attack and defend frequently.

Reset the tackle count

If you award a free pass for an infringement by the defending team, reset the number of tackles to zero. This is a good incentive for the defenders not to deliberately infringe.

There are additional tackling rules for both the tag and touch rugby versions of the game.

Tag Rugby Tackles

- The tackler removes one or both of the ball carrier's tags. You may prefer the tackle to be completed only when both tags are removed, whether by one or two tacklers.
- The defender holds the tag above his/her head and shouts "TAG".
- The ball carrier must neither shield his / her tag nor deliberately spin around to avoid being tagged.
- Both the tackler and the tackled player will be out of the game for a short period while the tackler hands back the tag to the tackled player.
- The tackled player must replace their tag before rejoining the game.

Returning the tag

Ensure the players exchange the tag in a sporting manner. For instance, hand-to-hand, rather than by the tackler throwing the tag to the ground or the tackled player snatching it back.

Tags on the ground

There should be no tags on the floor at any time. However, occasionally a ball carrier may accidentally flick off one of their own tags while running. In this case, stop the game and allow the player to replace the tage. Restart the game with a free pass to the team in possession from where the ribbon came off.

Touch Rugby Tackles

The tackle is usually in the form of a two-handed touch on the waist. You might want to ask the tackler to call out "TACKLE" as the tackle is made.

Single or double tackles?

I find that a "single" tackle (removing one tag only or using a one-handed touch-tackle) is better when the field is wide and the players few.

A "double" tackle (removing both tags or using a two-handed touch-tackle) means harder work for the defence, so the players have to be in a better body position to make the tackle.

The flexibility of choice can change the game to suit the circumstances. For instance, a high scoring game with two-handed touch-tackles can be changed to a low scoring game of greater skill with a one-handed touch-tackle.

Tag and Touch Rugby Rules

Some More Complex Rules

As the players improve, you may look to introduce other rugby rules.

Knock-ons

A knock-on occurs when a player drops the ball or fumbles it as they attempt to catch it. The ball must both fall to the ground and go forward (that is, toward the opponent's goal line).

In the event of a knock on, award a free pass to the non-infringing team.

Offside

Immediately after a tackle, encourage all the defenders to make an effort to get back "onside" (that is, between the ball and their own goal line). They must not deliberately stand in an "offside" position (that is, between the ball and the attackers' goal line), block the pass or wait for an interception.

Penalise an offside with a free pass to the non-infringing team.

Where players are offside but not interfering with play, try to let the game continue. Only those defenders who interfere with the game should be penalised. Even then try to limit penalties to deliberate and persistent offenders standing within 3 metres of the ball.

Offside only occurs immediately after a tackle. Once the pass has been made from the tackle, let the game continue. There is now no offside until the next ball carrier is tagged.

The offside rule can be introduced at an early stage to allow some flow to the game and develop good habits.

Advantage

As the players improve, try to play "advantage" to keep the game flowing. Basically, rather than penalising infringements immediately, wait and see how the game develops.

If the non-infringing team gains a territorial or tactical advantage following the infringement let the game continue. If they do not, stop the game and award the free pass from where the original infringement took place.

Unless there's a safety issue, try to play advantage wherever and whenever possible.

Tag and Touch Rugby Rules

Game Variations for Tag and Touch Rugby

There are many variations in tag and touch rugby, not only in format, but also in constraints and opportunities. All are aimed to make the best use of the game. Here are some examples.

3 second tag/touch rugby

My personal favourite is 3 second tag / touch. Here the tackled player has 3 seconds to pass the ball once tackled. The referee counts down after every tackle and a turnover is awarded if the ball is not released in time. The tackled player cannot score a try.

Importantly, there is no offside once there has been a turnover.

This encourages support and passing in the tackle, and gives slower forwards the opportunity to play a more active part in the game when taking the ball forward. It makes the players take up better body positions through a potential contact situation.

No mistake tag/touch rugby

This game is better for bigger and slower players, allowing them to rumble up the pitch.

Once tackled, the player must put the ball through their legs at the point of the tackle (with no stealing of yards). All the opposition must retire 5 metres.

There is a turnover when either the ball is dropped, it goes into touch or following a forward pass. There is no limit to the number of tackles a play may take.

The ball is not allowed to be restarted from any situation within 5 metres of the try line. So if a tackle is made in the 5 metre gap in front of the try line, the ball is placed on the 5 metre line. The same goes for a turnover ball.

I would say the main downside of this game is the potential poor body positions it encourages, since there is no need to recycle the ball quickly. However, players soon recognise that better presentation will open more gaps.

In terms of defence, it makes the defence more "honest" closer to the action. The defence either side of the tackle will need to move up quickly to prevent the 5 metre gap being exploited.

I have seen a good defensive side push an attacking line back upwards of 20 metres before the attackers made a mistake and the ball was turned over. However, this defensive pressure can persuade attacking players that going forward and straight is a good way of making ground, rather than "shovelling" on poor ball.

