

Referee, coach and parent briefing for the New Rules of Play

For all age groups:

The Core Values of the game

TEAMWORK, RESPECT, ENJOYMENT, DISCIPLINE & SPORTSMANSHIP

These should be at the centre of all coaching, training and playing.

Context:

U7 & U8 when asked at a festival what they enjoyed most about the day (in rank order):

1. The post-match hot dog
2. Scoring tries
3. Getting a medal (all players received a medal)
4. Running with the ball
5. Tagging

The response from U9s (rank order)

1. Scoring tries
2. Tackling
3. The post-match hot dog
4. Getting a medal (all players received a medal)
5. Running with the ball

In both age groups, winning did not appear in the responses

Under 7s

This is an introduction to rugby at the earliest years, and as such should be a simple & easy to understand game with minimum intervention from the game coach (referee).

As a consequence the rules of the game have been simplified. They are deliberately uncomplicated and flexible. The referee/coach should see this as an opportunity to coach within a game and if interpretations vary this provides an excellent learning opportunity for the players to review, adapt and modify their play.

A free flowing & continuous game should be encouraged, and the outline rules below offer core guidelines to the game, with enough flexibility for the coach/referee to adapt to the needs and abilities of the players. The game coach should refrain from intervening too often and should only do so if a) it is dangerous/potentially dangerous b) there is an injury or b) there is an obvious and significant advantage to one side

Should the ball be propelled forward accidentally (knock on, dropped pass etc) play should be allowed to continue – it offers opportunity for the defending team to win the ball.

There are limitless tags, and any breaks in play (ball out/throwing tags down etc) should result in the referee (game coach) passing the ball to the non offending team, preferably to players who may not have had much of the ball.

The game coach should also act as a coach to both sides with every child and their development being a priority rather than the outcome of the game.

4-a-side Tag Rugby:

1. Pitch size 20m x 12m
2. Tag belts clearly visible, excess strap tucked away, 1 tag each side.
3. Ball should be passed sideways or backwards.
4. Ball carrier should pass when tagged within approx 3 metres or approx 3 seconds.
5. Opponents must allow them to pass and try hard to get in front of the ball (off side).
6. Ball carrier cannot continue to play until both tags are attached.
7. Tagger cannot continue to play until s/he has returned tag.
8. A try is scored when the ball carrier has placed the ball over the line. Re start from centre with free pass from the game manager or one of the players
9. If the ball carrier is tagged within approx 1 metre of the try line a score can be made.
10. No Physical contact (including fending off with hands, or ball)
11. If a free pass is awarded the opposition should be 3 meters back, toward their own try line. Free passes may not take place within 3 metres of the try line.
12. Players may not dive on the ball

Under 8

This provides an incremental step up from a 4 v 4 to a 6 v 6 game. This does not differ a great deal from the previous Under 8 rules other than one less player and a smaller sized pitch. The children will not now be penalized if they go to ground when they score.

The larger numbers on a smaller pitch offers the children the opportunity to play in more of a team environment whilst maintaining the principles of child development.

By agreement the coaches of both sides may set a 6 tag rule, whereby after the 6th tag possession changes to the defending side with a free pass.

The game coach (referee) should endeavour to adopt a similar approach as that described in the U7 brief outlined previously/

The basic rules are set out below:

6-a-side Tag Rugby

1. Pitch size 45m x 22m (maximum)
2. Tag belts clearly visible, excess strap tucked away, 1 tag each side.
3. Ball should be passed sideways or backwards.
4. Ball carrier should pass when tagged within approx 3 metres or approx 3 seconds.
5. Opponents must allow them to pass and try hard to get in front of the ball (off side).
6. Ball carrier cannot continue to play until both tags are attached.
7. Tagger cannot continue to play until s/he has returned tag.

8. If the ball is propelled forward (dropped, knocked forward or passed forward) a free pass will be given by the opposition unless there is an advantage to the non-offending team
9. A try is scored when the ball carrier has placed the ball over the line. Re start from centre with free pass
10. If the ball carrier is tagged within approx 1 metre of the try line a score can be made.
11. No Physical contact (including fending off with hands, or ball)
12. If a free pass is awarded the opposition should be 3 meters back, toward their own try line.
Free passes may not take place within 3 metres of the try line.
13. Players may not dive on the ball

Under 9

The rationale behind the rule changes is to encourage much more of a continuous game and more involvement for all players. It emphasizes evasion and handling and de-emphasizes contact.

It also recognizes that children of the same age are at different stages of development – physical, cognitive and personal, and seeks to reward an intention to tackle as much as the competence of tackling. By redefining and calling “tackle” every player will increase their handling and support skills, and every player will be able to contribute to defense.

Large and/or confident players will still be able to tackle to ground – preventing forward momentum, and still be able to take the ball forward in the tackle and off load – increasing their skill. The smaller and/or less confident player will be able to contribute significantly in attack through support and off load, in addition to defense where a “grab” will be deemed as a tackle and cause a pass or offload and contribute to an overall defensive effort. – increasing their confidence.

The basic rules are set out below:

7-a-side Transitional Contact game

1. Pitch size 30 x 60
2. No scrums, line-out, rucks, mauls
3. All restarts to be Free-Pass
4. Opponents must be 7 metres back from the free pass
5. Any player who is on their feet and has the ball may be tackled
6. The tackle is any action by the defending team which results in a hold on the ball carrier:*
Note 1: Any tackle level with or above the armpit is to be considered a high tackle.
Note 2: The scrag-type tackle (e.g. swinging the player round by the shirt) must be considered dangerous play and must be penalised.
7. Neither the tackler or any member of the defending team can contest the ball and the tackled player must be allowed to pass or roll the ball
8. The off-side line is the ball carrier – and is over when the next receiver has the ball
9. The referee must call “tackle” when the ball carrier has been tackled **
10. After 6 tackles (ie the 7th tackle) the ball will be turned over (free pass)

**The tackled player may be tackled to ground, but must be allowed to play the ball. If this is a place, pop or roll back the off side line remains in place until the ball is played by an attacker. Where the player is standing or going forward the referee should allow approximately 3 seconds before calling tackle*

***To aid the players and referee it is advised that the referee call "tackle 1", tackle 2" etc after each tackle*

Under 10

The introduction of a non-competitive scrum and competition for the ball in the tackle continues the theme of manageable tactical and technical challenges for the children

The scrum, often seen as almost exclusively a technical area, offers the children tactical challenges in both attack and defense. It places 8 players into a relatively small area of the pitch and creates a variety of spatial options.

The scrum is 3 player, uncontested (the team putting in the ball win it) with the nearest 3 players forming it. By engaging the nearest 3 players, all players will need to be coached the correct body position for the scrum (Tower of Power), which is also the strongest position for the tackle, ruck, maul and eventually for supporting in the line-out. It also assists in delaying early position specialization, in what is a late socialization sport.

The game manager no longer has to call or count the tackles. The ball carrier and tackler can now contest the ball (in accordance to 15-a-side law) with one additional player from each side – effectively a mini ruck and maul. This introduces these aspects of play in manageable, bite-size chunks whilst encouraging evasion, off-load and continuity for the attack.

The basic rules are set out below:

8-a-side Transitional Contact game

1. Pitch size 30 x 60
2. 3 player scrum (nearest 3 players) uncontested
3. No line-out (restart with scrum)
4. Free pass from centre to start the game and after a score
5. Opponents must be 7 metres back from the free pass
6. Any player who is on their feet and has the ball may be tackled
7. The tackler plus one member of the defending team and the held/tackled player plus one member of the attacking team can contest the ball as long as they are on their feet.
8. The off-side line is the ball carrier