

# ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8

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# INTRODUCE MOVEMENT COORDINATION & BALANCE

AN **INTERACTIVE** GUIDE FOR COACHES SUPPORTING THE  
DELIVERY OF **ACTIVATE** ACTIVITY AS PART OF EVERY  
TRAINING SESSION AND PRE-MATCH WARM-UP.



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The Activate programmes and activities are appropriate for players of all ages. Visit the [Activate Home Page](#) for more information on the U9-U10, U11-U12, other age grade and Adult programmes.

### THIS IS AN INTERACTIVE PDF.

Use this contents page and the footer to navigate to different sections.

The Activate 8 images and the images in Parts A, B and C are hyperlinks and will take you to the relevant video on YouTube.

This document is viewable on multiple devices. It is best viewed in Adobe Acrobat Reader.

## 1.

# WHAT IS ACTIVATE?

THE GAME OF RUGBY  
REQUIRES A NUMBER  
OF DIFFERENT  
SKILLS INCLUDING  
**AGILITY, BALANCE,  
COORDINATION, SPEED  
AND FUNCTIONAL  
STRENGTH.**

It is well known that players of all ages and abilities can develop and maintain these skills to help improve their rugby performance. Research now suggests that using a specific exercise programme which develops these skills can reduce the risk of injury.

The RFU launched the main Activate programme for U15 and above players in 2017; it extended it to include U13 and U14 in 2021. Research continues to evidence the benefits of using Activate regularly as part of training sessions and match-day preparations.

The Activate Kids U7-U12 resources use the principles of the main Activate programme to provide a framework for those coaching these age groups. The introduction of Activate at an earlier age offers the opportunity to support the development of movement control including **agility, balance** and **coordination** in young children. Something that is important for their general physical development outside of rugby and sport. It also introduces and progresses the players through exercises and practices that are aimed at injury prevention.

Evidence suggests that Activate Kids with its targeted exercises and challenging activities, can help children avoid injury while enhancing their performance. It is a focused and efficient programme to be used at the start of, or integrated into, every training session.



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

Research has shown that developing a player's ability in these areas improves general fundamental movement skills and has the potential to reduce the risk of injury including concussion.

The RFU continues to progress the research and insight into injury prevention as well as to develop further understanding into different playing groups.

## SCHOOL BOY STUDY

**72%** ↓  
IN OVERALL MATCH INJURIES\*

**59%** ↓  
IN CONCUSSION\*



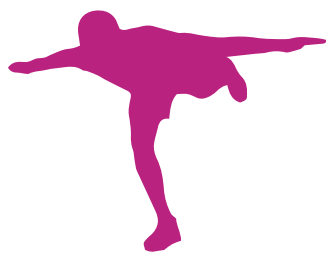
## 2.

# THE BENEFITS OF USING ACTIVATE

ACTIVATE HELPS PLAYERS TO DEVELOP AND IMPROVE FOUR KEY AREAS.

### 1: GENERAL MOVEMENT CONTROL

Develops adaptability allowing for better 'physical' decisions and reaction around the contact areas.



### 2: PRE-ACTIVATION

The progressive nature of the programme improves muscle activation and enables them to respond better to the demands of exercise.



### 3: FUNCTIONAL CONDITIONING

Over time functional power and strength develops which increases flexibility and range of movement.



### 4: PHYSICAL ROBUSTNESS

Develops the muscles, tendons and ligaments ability to endure physical demands and forces placed on them during exercise.





## DEVELOPING THESE FOUR KEY AREAS CONTRIBUTES TO:

- > Support the development of a player's ability, balance and coordination
- > Build a foundation to prepare players for the physical demands of the game in future years
- > Improve general rugby skills and playing performance
- > Reducing the risk of injury including concussion.



# 3.

## U7- U8 ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITY: 15 MINUTE FRAMEWORK

**U7-U8 AGE GROUPS CAN ADD UP TO 15 MINUTES TO THE TRAINING SESSION TIME TO UNDERTAKE ACTIVATE KIDS ACTIVITIES.**

It is important to note that the 15 minutes extra time **MUST** only be used for Activate Kids activities (as per the table below).

Coaches should use the following framework to design and deliver the Activate 15 minutes at the beginning of each training session and as part of a match day warm-up.

Each 15 minutes should be split into 3 parts of 5 minutes, with a particular focus in each part.

Sections 6 - 8 of this resource provide some examples and ideas of exercises and activities that coaches can use during each of the different parts.

Using only one or two different activities in each part (per 5 minutes) is recommended to allow time to concentrate on the focus areas.

There are loads of ways to introduce the focus areas, so get creative!

More examples and ideas are available on the [\*\*Activate Kids U7 - U8 YouTube Playlist\*\*](#).

Part	Focus	Time
A	<b>Running-based Preparation</b> Running technique, agility, coordination and change of direction. Starting, stopping and landing to develop balance and movement control.	5 mins
B	<b>Upper Body (Head/Neck, Shoulders, Arms, Upper Core)</b> Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins
C	<b>Lower Body (Ankles, Knees, Legs, Hips, Lower Core)</b> Movement control, balance, functional strength and range of motion.	5 mins

## 4.

# HOW TO COACH USING ACTIVATE KIDS

## ACTIVATE FOR U7-U8S IS FOCUSED ON INTRODUCING THE PLAYERS TO MOVEMENT CONTROL.

In order for the Activate Kids activities and exercises to have the most benefit the focus should be on quality over quantity. Even with U7 and U8 players, coaches should look to correct technique and body positions to develop appropriate control and balance. Activate Kids U7 - U8 is about introducing players to key movement patterns, so the players start to learn and understand how to control their bodies through balance and coordination.

Creating good habits at a younger age can have a beneficial impact on players performance as they get older. This requires coaches to play a key role in monitoring their players, to encourage them to focus on technique quality and to communicate the key coaching points that will improve performance.

More examples and ideas are available on the [Activate Kids U7 - U8 YouTube Playlist](#).





# REMEMBER, EVERY SESSION SHOULD BE:

## ACTIVE

Your sessions should include as much activity time as possible, and your practices should involve all of the players all of the time. Avoid any practices which involve players waiting for their turn to participate. If you notice players are struggling to get involved, amend the rules or provide challenges for players to increase their engagement with the session. Using games as the basis for your sessions should help with this.

## PURPOSEFUL

Every session and activity within that session should have a purpose. Let the players know what the purpose is and ensure it is relevant to the Age group you are working with.

## SAFE

If you abide by the codes of practice (applicable to [Age Grade Rugby](#)) and provide purposeful activities and plan effectively, your sessions should be as safe as possible. You should not, under any circumstances, join in as a player, or ask the players to do anything that is outside the rules of play for their age group. For example, you should not be playing 15 a side matches. If you wish to use rules from earlier age groups this is permissible, but you should not exceed the rules for your age group.

## ENJOYABLE

If you get the **Active** and **Purposeful** right your session will more often than not be Enjoyable. However, enjoyment can be increased by adding individual and group challenges and an element of competition. Players may not enjoy their rugby if the session doesn't have high activity levels and if they don't feel they are improving. As a coach/referee you set the tone for this, so you need to enjoy your rugby experience as well.

# 10 TIPS ON HOW TO DELIVER ACTIVATE KIDS:

1.

Take time to become familiar with the framework and plan the activities and exercises before starting each session.

2.

Use players to demonstrate certain exercises and to talk through the key coaching points for the whole group to see.

3.

Get creative! Think about how you can make it fun and engaging. To develop skills the repetition of exercises and body positions is important but they can be delivered in many different ways.

4.

Focus on only one or two key coaching points or Activate 8 positions at a time.

5.

Consider the introduction of a ball or other suitable equipment as a way to challenge players.

6.

Watch players carefully to identify and correct any incorrect technique. If needed, provide feedback. Remember that quality over quantity is the priority.

7.

Ask players questions to help develop their understanding of Activate and why it is used.

8.

Share your ideas. Talk to other coaches both in your own and other clubs to share ideas about Activate activities that work well and what the players enjoy.

9.

Support player development through setting individual player challenges in the different activities/exercises.

10.

Try to differentiate activities for individual players. If a player(s) struggles with some of the activities/exercises:

- > regress and adapt appropriately
- > encourage the player(s) to continue with the exercises as over time they should improve.

More examples and ideas are available on the [\*\*Activate Kids U7 - U8 YouTube Playlist.\*\*](#)



# 5.

# KEY ACTIVATE 8 EXERCISES

The 'Key Activate 8' are the foundation of the coaching points consistently referred to across all the Activate programmes. They form the basis for good form and correct technique.

At the U7-U8 age group, whilst the Activate 8 are not the focus, coaches should be aware of the Activate 8 and how they are used to develop safe and correct body positions in the Activate exercises.

The Activate 8 provides the foundation for good rugby specific techniques and skills, introducing and developing these positions early in players develops their general athletic ability which can improve their physical readiness for rugby and other sports.

Coaches are encouraged to start to introduce the Activate 8 to their U7 and U8 players in a fun and engaging way.

## 1. HEAD NEUTRAL OR HEAD LIFT

 WATCH VIDEO



## 2. CHEST-UP

 WATCH VIDEO



### 3. SHOULDER PINCH

SHOULDER PINCH



 WATCH VIDEO

### 4. ENGAGE CORE

ENGAGE CORE



 WATCH VIDEO

### 5. SHOULDER & HIPS LEVEL

 WATCH VIDEO



### 6. HIP, KNEE & ANKLE IN-LINE

 WATCH VIDEO



### 7. SOFT KNEES

SOFT KNEES



 WATCH VIDEO

### 8. KNEE ABOVE TOES



 WATCH VIDEO



# ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8: PART A

# RUNING-BASED PREPARATION

🕒 DURATION **5** MINUTES

RUNNING TECHNIQUE, AGILITY, COORDINATION AND  
CHANGE OF DIRECTION. STARTING, STOPPING AND  
LANDING TO DEVELOP BALANCE AND MOVEMENT CONTROL.



ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8 EXAMPLES & IDEAS



# 1. RUGBY STATUES

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU STOP AND FREEZE?
- HOW STILL CAN YOU BE WHEN IN 'FREEZE'?

## FOCUS:

- > Running movements
- > Starting and stopping
- > Balance control.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to look forward / keep their head neutral.

## 2. STUCK IN THE MUD

 WATCH VIDEO

### PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- WHEN YOU ARE ON, HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN YOU TAG?
- WHEN YOU ARE TAGGED, CAN YOU HOLD A GOOD STABLE POSITION?



### FOCUS:

- > Coordination of arms and legs
- > Balance control
- > Different body shapes and movements.

### COACH TIP:

Vary the action required when a player is 'stuck in the mud' e.g. be an animal or hold a scarecrow position.



# 3. TOILET TAG

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU GET INTO A GOOD SQUAT POSITION WHEN YOU ARE 'ON THE TOILET' / TAGGED?
- WHEN YOU ARE ON, HOW MANY PEOPLE CAN YOU TAG?
- HOW MANY TOILETS CAN YOU FLUSH / SET PEOPLE FREE?

## FOCUS:

- > Change of direction
- > Stopping & starting
- > Balance and squatting control.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to look forward / keep their head neutral and chest up.



# 4. SNAKE RUNS

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU SNAKE RUN KEEPING YOUR HEAD LOOKING FORWARD, WITHOUT LOOKING AT THE GROUND?

## FOCUS:

- > Coordination of arms and legs
- > Balance control
- > Different body shapes and movements.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to look forward / keep their head neutral and chest up.

# 5. SIDE SHUFFLE

 [WATCH VIDEO](#)

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD UP AND LOOK FORWARD WHEN MOVING?
- CAN YOU DO A SIDE SHUFFLE WHILST HOLDING A BALL?



## FOCUS:

- > Sideways movements
- > Weight transfer from front to back leg
- > Maintain the same height.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to look forward / keep their head neutral and chest up.



# ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8: PART B

# UPPER BODY

**HEAD/NECK, SHOULDERS, ARMS & UPPER CORE**

⌚ DURATION **5** MINUTES

**MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH,  
AND RANGE OF MOTION.**



ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8 EXAMPLES & IDEAS



# 1. ANIMAL HOLDS

WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- WHO CAN HOLD AN ANIMAL HOLD FOR THE LONGEST WHILE KEEPING GOOD FORM?
- WHAT OTHER ANIMALS CAN YOU THINK OF?



## FOCUS:

- > **Bear Crawl** – keep shoulders in line with hips, head neutral look through eyebrows
- > **Gorilla Walk** – keep chest up and looking forward not at the floor
- > **Crab Walk** – engage core to keep hips up off the floor.

## COACH TIP:

Let players demo each hold before moving into the game so players know what good looks like.



## 2. ARM CIRCLES

 WATCH VIDEO



### PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU CIRCLE EACH ARM IN OPPOSITE DIRECTIONS?

### FOCUS:

- > Look forward
- > Keep arms straight
- > Start with small circles and gradually increase in size.

### COACH TIP:

Get players to visualise drawing different size balls with their arms, fold ball, tennis ball, football etc

# 3. PLANK WITH SHINS ON BALL

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU ROLL THE BALL UP TO YOUR KNEES AND BACK TO YOUR FEET IN 30 SECONDS



## FOCUS:

- > Engage core
- > Keep hips, shoulders in line
- > Head neutral.

## COACH TIP:

Get players to hold in a press up position with hands on the floor if players are struggling hold this position and move on forearms.



# 4. SQUAT & ROLL

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW QUICKLY CAN YOU RETURN TO YOUR FEET AFTER ROLLING?



## FOCUS:

- > Squat to lowest point possible whilst staying on feet
- > Lean forward and tuck head and shoulder towards one side
- > Roll forward onto the tucked shoulder.

## COACH TIP:

- > Make sure players roll on their shoulder not their head
- > The lower players can get to the floor the less impact it will have on the shoulder.

# 5. TUNNEL BALL

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU ROLL THE BALL THROUGH THE TUNNEL IN 30 SECONDS WITHOUT THE PLAYERS IN THE TUNNEL RAISING OR DROPPING HIPS BELOW OR ABOVE SHOULDERS?

## FOCUS:

- > Engage core
- > Hips in line with shoulders
- > Head neutral.

## COACH TIP:

Use a smaller ball for players to roll in the tunnel so players in the tunnel don't raise their hips above shoulder in order for the ball to roll through.



# ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U9: PART C

# LOWER BODY

**ANKLES, KNEES, LEGS, HIPS & LOWER CORE**

 **DURATION 5 MINUTES**

**MOVEMENT CONTROL, BALANCE, FUNCTIONAL STRENGTH  
AND RANGE OF MOTION.**



**ACTIVATE KIDS U7-U8 EXAMPLES & IDEAS**



# 1. ANIMAL MOVEMENTS

 WATCH VIDEO

## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

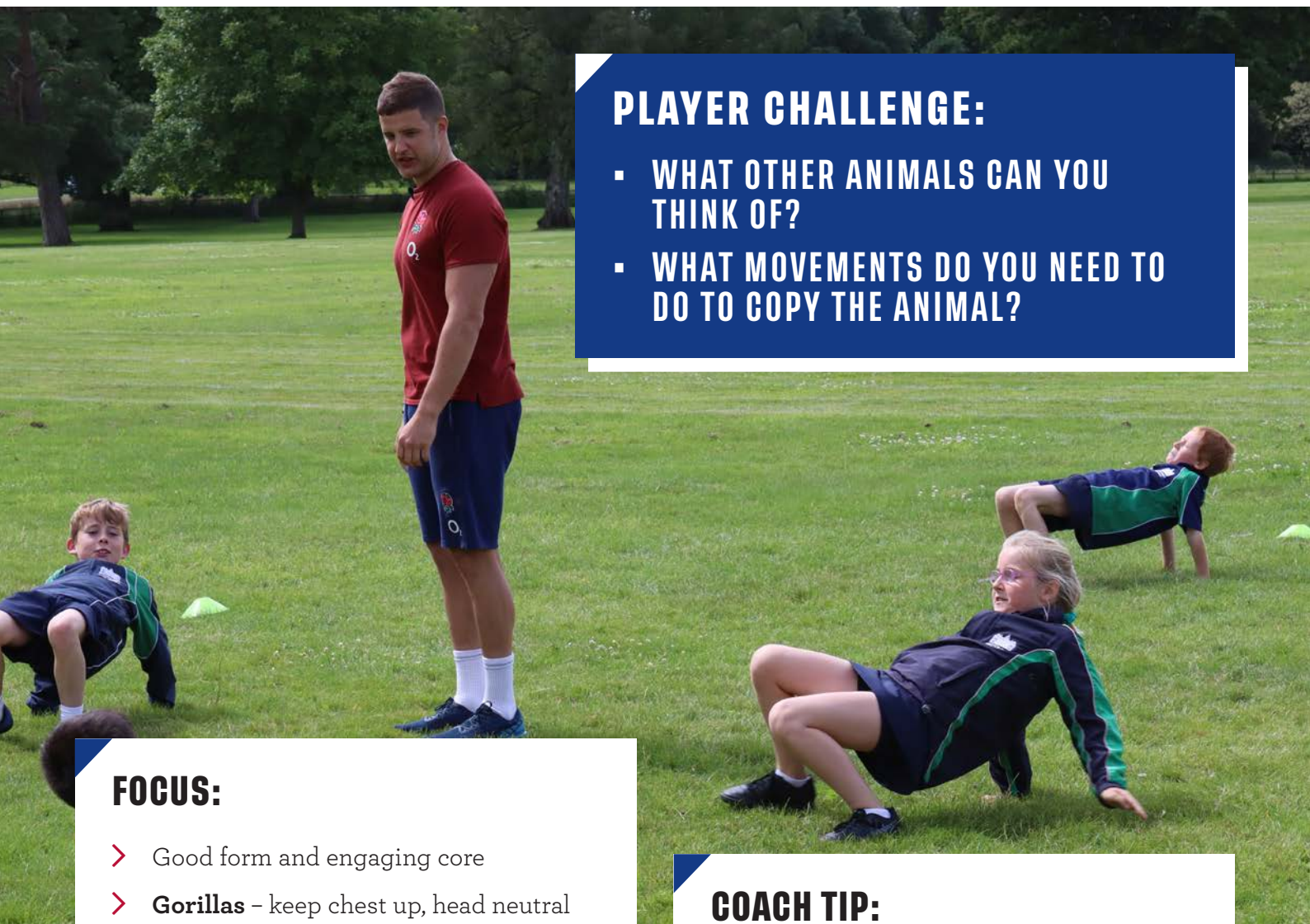
- WHAT OTHER ANIMALS CAN YOU THINK OF?
- WHAT MOVEMENTS DO YOU NEED TO DO TO COPY THE ANIMAL?

## FOCUS:

- > Good form and engaging core
- > **Gorillas** – keep chest up, head neutral and bounce along the ground
- > **Crabs** – try and make the bridge between shoulders and hips as straight as possible – hips and shoulders in line
- > **Bears** – keeping shoulders in line with hips, head neutral look through eyebrows then move with hands and feet keeping hips and shoulders in line

## COACH TIP:

- > Encourage players to be creative - what different animals and movements can they think of? ( Seal Crawls, Bunny Bounds, Frog hops)
- > Get players to think about their movements - what do their arms, body or legs need to do to copy that animal?



# 2. HOP & STICK FORWARDS



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- HOW FAR CAN YOU HOP AND 'STICK' THE LANDING WITHOUT LOSING BALANCE?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral and looking forward with chest up
- > Keep the knee hip and ankle in line.

## COACH TIP:

- > Encourage players to work on the 'stick' and hold the finish after the hop
- > Reduce the distance of the hop to ensure good quality.



# 3. SINGLE LEG BALANCE

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU CLOSE YOUR EYES AND HOLD THE BALANCE?
- CAN YOU HOLD IT FOR MORE THAN 5 SECONDS?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral looking forward with chest up
- > Soft knees
- > Knee hip and ankle in line.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage them to work on balancing on each foot and set individual challenges to make it harder or easier for the player.



# 4. SINGLE LEG JUMP INTO DOUBLE LEG LANDING

 WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU LAND SOFTLY, WITHOUT MAKING A NOISE?
- HOW FAR CAN YOU JUMP WITHOUT LOSING BALANCE?

## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral looking forward with chest up
- > Soft knees on landing.

## COACH TIP:

- > Encourage players to work on the 'stick' of the landing and hold the finish after the hop
- > Reduce the distance of the hop to ensure good quality.

# 5. SKI JUMPS

WATCH VIDEO



## PLAYER CHALLENGE:

- CAN YOU KEEP YOUR HEAD LOOKING FORWARD WHEN JUMPING?
- CAN YOU LAND YOUR LEGS AND FEET TOGETHER WHEN JUMPING

## FOCUS:

- > Keep head neutral looking forward with Chest Up
- > Soft knees on landing.

## COACH TIP:

Encourage players to have little contact time with the ground, soft knees but minimal knee bend to get quick jumps.



ACTIVATE U7-U8

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