



ScrumReady



A Coaching Guide for Youth
and Adult Players

Leadership · Enjoyment · Achievement · Engagement · Respect



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Introduction

This resource provides coaches with a step-by-step guide to preparing players to play in the scrum. Coaches should use this resource, alongside relevant age grade law variations to ensure players are prepared correctly for playing in the prop, hooker, lock and back row positions.

Every player must be suitably prepared both physically and technically to be able to scrummage. It is therefore important to develop players in a logical fashion, through a staged development programme.

How to use this resource

The resource is broken into four stages based on players' scrummaging experience and ability.



Should a player be new to the front row, the coach should ensure that the player is able to demonstrate basic scrum posture by progressing through the ScrumReady assessment tool, before being asked to scrummage in a live game.

To help you coach players appropriately, this resource provides guidance in stability, scrum posture, neck conditioning exercises and binding options appropriate to the age and stage of the players.

The ScrumReady assessment tool outlines the progressive assessment a player should go through in order to play in the front row. Coaches should ensure front row players are competent at each stage before progressing to the next. If a player does not make it through the assessment (relevant to their age grade law variation), then further training relevant to the experience level of the player should be undertaken (refer to stages 1-4 for exercises)

Age Grade Variations

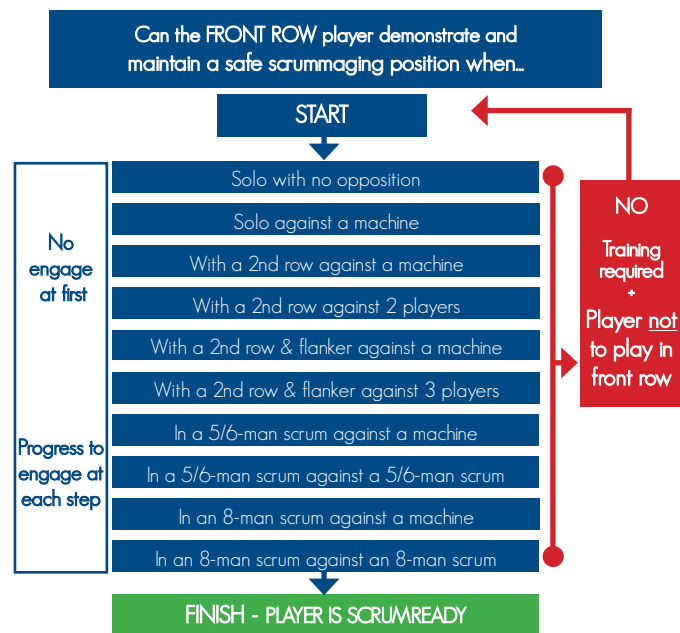
Scottish Rugby's age grade law variations are designed to develop scrummaging skills in a safe and logical manner as a player progresses

through the age grades. At all times, coaches should ensure that their players are fully aware of the appropriate scrum law variations, and are suitably trained in the correct engagement sequence.

At younger age groups (P6 and P7), we encourage every player to learn to scrummage due to the transfer of the scrum posture and movement into other areas of the game (tackle, ruck and maul).

For guidance on scrum law variations for your age group, please refer to scottishrugby.org

ScrumReady Assessment Tool



Scrum Posture

This basic scrum posture should be maintained by every player in the scrum. Some slight variations will occur according to playing position at later stages of the players' development.

Key Coaching Points

1. Head in neutral position
2. Shoulder blades back
3. Chest out
4. Chest is ahead of the knees
5. Tight core (stomach muscles clenched)
6. Hips tilted (bum pointing out/up)
7. Knees slightly bent
8. Feet shoulder-width apart



Front Row Bindings

Hooker bind:

Under the arm-pits of both props

Loosehead bind:

Takes first bind on the hookers shorts

Tighthead bind:

Take second bind over loosehead bind, onto hookers shorts



Waistband bind

Pros:

Allows prop leg mobility

Cons:

Not very tight

Can pull prop down



Second Row Bindings

Around the waist bind

Pros:

Pulls scrum together
Can be more comfortable

Cons:

Second row can slip up prop's back



Pocket bind

Pros:

Very tight bind
Pulls scrum together
Second row wont slide over prop

Cons:

Can reduce mobility if too low



Stage 1 Stability Exercises

Prone Stabilisation

Player assumes a press-up position. Pulls belly-button in as tight as possible, whilst squeezing glutes (bum-cheeks) together to maintain a rigid plank-like position for set period of time. Progression - catch and pass a ball back using one hand while retaining extended position on other extended arm.



Lateral Stabilisation

Player lies down sideways and supports themselves with one Lateral bridge arm. The other arm rests on the hip. Player should keep entire body straight. The legs should be extended and in one line with the spine and the head. Player must not let hips hang down. The forearm of the supporting arm should remain flat on the ground and the hand closed. The angle between trunk and supporting upper arm should be 90 degrees. This position is held until the player can no longer hold perfect form.



Partner Press Ups

One player standing upright, while partner leans forward to player (facing each other). Standing player holds other person on shoulders while they maintain a rigid 45 degree angle (body taut). Standing player then presses partner like a press-up for 20-30 seconds.



Stage 1 Scrum Posture Exercises

Cricket Walk

Player squats down with arms between legs grabbing ankles. Player starts walking. Walks forward, backwards and side-to-side. Player ensures that his/her chest stays up/out and the shoulders stay back.



Partner Shoves

Players work in pairs. One player gets into a good scrum posture on their own. When in position, the other partner challenges the worker by manipulating them and pushing them in different directions. The working player must resist by bracing their core and holding good posture. Switch over after 15 seconds.



1v1 Scrum Practice

Players get in the correct pre-engagement position and engage as the coach calls the engagement sequence. The players work to remain in a good scrum posture before, during and after they engage. Bindings should be made on the oppositions side/back.



Spinner

The defensive wrestler remains stationary on his hands and knees while the offensive wrestler assumes a starting position with his chest in contact with the defensive wrestler's back. On the coach's command the offensive wrestler initiates a spinning movement around the defensive wrestler contacting the ground with only his/her toes and contacting his opponent with only his/her chest. Each time the offensive wrestler reaches his opponents head, he should change directions. The spinning should continue for intervals of 15 seconds to 1 minute. The defensive wrestler should look to maintain a good scrummaging posture throughout.



Duck Walk

Player puts hands behind head, squats down, and starts walking like a duck forwards and backwards. Coach should remind player to keep chest up.



Bear Crawl

On all fours, arms extended, player crawls forwards on feet instead of knees with back in straight position, hips above shoulders. Head should stay in neutral position. Coach should ensure back stays flat. This will be helped by player pushing chest out, and shoulders back.



Stage 1 Neck Conditioning Exercises

Neck Press Ups

One player standing upright, while partner leans forward to player (facing each other). Standing player places hands on partners head while they maintain a rigid 45 degree angle (body taut). Standing player then presses partner like a press-up. Player being pressed braces neck while working player presses.



Shoulder Shrug

Player stands with a tall position, with neck in neutral position. They then raise their shoulders towards ears, keeping arms straight and head in a neutral position. Hold at the top of the movement before returning to start position.



Stage 2 Stability Exercises

Scarecrows

Two partners face each other, one kneeling on the ground and the other stands. The standing player leans over (30-45 degrees) with arms extended from their side. The kneeling partner props the other up by holding just inside their elbow (biceps). The kneeling partner takes a hand away to create a rotational component on their partner. The working player must resist the rotation and maintain proper posture. Switch over after 20-30 seconds.



Core Brace

One partner assumes a position on hands and toes. Knees and hips bent to 90-120 degrees with flat back. The other partner challenges the worker by manipulating them and pushing them in different directions. The working player must resist by bracing their core and holding good posture. Switch over after 15 seconds.



Wobble Ball

Player takes a good scrum posture with one shoulder against the swiss ball. Partner works to wobble the ball, increasing the difficulty for the working player. Player should ensure that a good scrum posture is maintained.



Stage 2 Scrum Posture Exercises

Scrum Position v Pad

Player gets into a good scrum posture, against a partner who is holding a shield. Player in the scrum position wraps their arms around both shield and holder. Player with the shield works to move the person who is in the scrum position forwards, backwards and sideways. The player who is in the scrum position must use small foot movements to keep his/her body in a strong scrum posture.



One Swiss Ball Exercise

Player gets into a good scrum posture on the Swiss ball, with forearms resting on the ball, keeping the chest off the ball. Player works to maintain a good scrum posture, while shifting feet position, to rotate around the ball. Small foot movements are used.



1v1 (Engaged) - Take turns to drive 5 steps

Players get into a good scrum posture, before folding in together to form a 1v1 scrum. Arms should bind on the opposite players back or side. Once steady, one player works to drive the opposite player backwards. Throughout the drive, they try to maintain a good scrum posture.



Single Player Engage On Sled

Player gets in the correct pre-engagement position and engages as the coach calls the engagement sequence. The players work to hold pressure for 3-5 seconds before extending and chasing.



Scrum Position - 1 and 2 ball balance

Player gets into a good scrum posture with their arms outstretched below them and a rugby ball placed under their hands (one hand at each end of the ball). This is held for 10 - 15 seconds. Progress to have one ball under each hand and have pressure from teammate pushing player off balance. Player works to stay in a good scrum posture.



1v1 (Engaged) - Elevator

Players get into a good scrum posture, before folding in together to form a 1v1 scrum. Arms should bind on the opposite players back or side. Once steady, the players lower themselves to the ground by lowering their knees to the ground. This should be done in a slow, controlled manner, while maintaining good body posture. Once in a low position, with knees nearly on the floor, players should raise up again, whilst keeping a good scrum posture.



Stage 2 Neck Conditioning Exercises

Shrug With Theraband

Player places a theraband under feet and stands with a tall position with neutral neck, holding the theraband with hands by his/her side. They then raise their shoulders towards ears, keeping arms straight and head in a neutral position. Hold at the top of the movement before returning to start position.



Prone Neck Lifts

Player kneels on all fours and relaxes head down. They then attempt to curl their head upwards and backwards towards the base of the neck. This is held briefly before controlling the movement back to the starting position.



Stage 3 Stability Exercises

Russian Twist

Player balances on hips with straight back at approx 45 degree angle. Ball is lifted from one side of the body to the other and then back again.



Gorilla Core

Player gets into a good scrum posture, holding a medicine ball close to their stomach. Player then pivots their body in each direction in a controlled manner, while maintaining a good scrum posture.



Stage 3 Scrum Posture Exercises

2v1 (Engaged)

The person working in this exercise is the person on their own. The players fold in to form a 2v1 scrum, with the single person's head between the other two. The single person works to drive the two players back, whilst maintaining a good scrum posture. The couple working in the pairing resist, but allow the single player to drive them back.



1v1 Crabbing Exercises

One player goes down on all fours in a strong scrum posture, with knees on the floor to start with. The second player lines up perpendicular to the player on the ground and rests their shoulders on the back of the player on all fours. They then anchor themselves to the player on the ground by wrapping their arms under the person they're resting on, making sure to get in a good scrum posture. Once in position, the player on the ground raises his/her knees from the ground and crawls forward. The player resting on the back needs to crab sideways while maintaining a good scrum posture.



Prop/Lock v Single Sled

Prop faces a single sled and allows a 2nd row to bind on to him/her. They start by just folding in to the sled, with no hit. Once in position they look to keep good scrummaging posture. Progress to add a full engagement sequence, while keeping a good posture.



2v2 (Prop & Lock) Activity

One prop and one 2nd row bind on to each other. They will be the pair working in this activity. Facing them are two players bound up, side by side. The prop folds down between the two opposite players' heads, to create a 2v2 scrum. Prop and 2nd row work together to drive the opposite players, whilst keeping good scrum posture.



Stage 3 Neck Conditioning Exercises

Prone Neck Lifts With Resistance

Players work in pairs. One player kneels on all fours and relaxes head down. Partner puts some pressure on the back of their partners head. Partner on the floor then attempts to curl their head upwards and backwards towards the base of the neck. The player providing the pressure keeps the resistance on, however allows the working player to move their head through the full range of movement.



Isometric Holds

Player applies resistance to one side of the head with one or two hands. Without causing any discomfort or pain, the pressure is gently increased while resisting at the same time with the head & neck, trying to keep the head in the same position.



Stage 4 Stability Exercises

Two Swiss Balls Exercise

Player gets into a good scrum position on two Swiss balls, with forearms resting on the balls which are in contact with each other. Player then opens up his/her arms while rolling the balls apart and dropping their chest lower. The player must keep a good body position by dropping their knees lower to the ground to keep a flat back.



Gorilla Core Resisted

Player gets into a good scrum posture, holding a medicine ball close to their stomach. They also place a theraband around wrists, with partner holding the ends. Player then pivots their body to the side, while partner resists in the opposite direction using the theraband.



Stage 4 Scrum Posture Exercises

Prop/Lock/Flanker v Single Sled

Prop faces a single sled and allows a 2nd row to bind on to him/her. They start by just folding in to the sled, with no hit. Once in position they look to keep good scrummaging posture for five to ten seconds before driving through. Progress to add a full hit, while keeping a good posture. Progress further to add a flanker, as well as a 2nd row.



6v6 (No Hooker)

Props, second rows and flankers form a scrum with no hooker. There is no engagement, players just bind and fold in. One team acting as the "working" team to push the opposing pack backwards. The opposing pack gives resistance, but allows them to push through. After a few steps, the working team stops and the roles are reversed. Main focus here, is that the players are able to maintain a strong scrum posture when pressure is coming through them. Without a hooker, players will be under more pressure to maintain a strong and stable scrum posture.



Towel Exercise

Active player puts a towel around their waist, while partner holds either end and stands behind. The working player adopts a good scrummaging posture, leaning forward, using the towel to support them. The working player needs to keep their shoulders above their hips by engaging their core muscles.



Tyre Exercise

Player adopts a good scrum posture, with arms out in front of the body and hands on the tyre. Player works to push the tyre along the ground using their legs and hips. Player should aim to push their hips down and forward in order to get the tyre moving, rather than just pushing with the legs.



Team of 3 vs 3 (Engaged)

In groups of six, players work in teams of three. The working three bind in the formation 1:2 (prop with 2nd row and flanker). The opposing three form as a 2:1 (prop and hooker with 2nd row). There is no engagement - players fold in to form the scrum. The working three drive the opposing three backwards, while maintaining good scrum posture. The opposing players give resistance while also maintaining posture.



Stage 4 Neck Conditioning Exercises

Lunges With Theraband/Towel

Working with a partner, one player puts the theraband/towel around their head, while the partner grips the ends of it whilst standing in front of the working player. Player with the band/towel around the head will then perform a backward lunge, keeping a strong and stable neck, resisting the force of the theraband/towel. If working with a towel, the partner should ensure the pressure is kept consistent. Lunges can be backward or to the side.



Partner Neck Bridge

One player goes down on hands and knees. Other player sits with their back to their partner, and rests their head on their partners back with knees and hips bent. The sitting player then maintains neck posture by contracting muscles whilst raising themselves off the ground using their legs and neck. They will move into a position where the thighs, torso and neck form a straight line. They hold momentarily, before lowering back down.





Scottish Rugby recommends that all coaches, teachers and referees undertake the following online courses:

- 1) IRB RugbyReady
- 2) IRB First Aid in Rugby
- 3) IRB Laws
- 4) IRB Concussion Management
- 5) IRB Level 1 Strength and Conditioning



All are free of charge.

Disclaimer - Anyone intending to undertake a physical conditioning programme should seek medical advice from a registered medical practitioner prior to doing so. The information and guidelines regarding the skills of Rugby and associated physical conditioning should only be used following and in conjunction with advice from appropriately qualified trainers, coaches and referees.



Find out more at scottishrugby.org

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